

Public Document Pack

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

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

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 4th May, 2021 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 22)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes
 - a) Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 23 - 84)
 - b) People and Communities Committee (Pages 85 - 110)
 - c) City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 111 - 146)
 - d) Licensing Committee (Pages 147 - 150)
 - e) Planning Committee (Pages 151 - 172)
 - f) Brexit Committee (Pages 173 - 176)
7. Motions
 - a) Equality for LGBTQ+ Community (Pages 177 - 178)
 - b) Immediate need to tackle the waiting lists for diagnosing autism in children (Pages 179 - 180)
 - c) Charges for the Use of ATMs (Pages 181 - 182)
 - d) Mater Hospital Services (Pages 183 - 184)
 - e) Ban Conversion Therapy (Pages 185 - 186)
 - f) Pay Rise for Public Sector Workers (Pages 187 - 188)

- g) Statue of Mary Ann McCracken (Pages 189 - 190)
- h) Extension of the Belfast Bikes Scheme (Pages 191 - 192)
- i) War Years Remembered (Pages 193 - 194)
- j) Recent Violence and Public Disorder (Pages 195 - 196)

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzanne Wylie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief Executive

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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

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

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Verner declared an interest in relation to the motion on a 10 Per Cent Pay increase for Council Workers, on the basis that her husband was employed by the Council, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed.

Councillor Hussey declared an interest in respect of the motion on a 10 Per Cent Pay increase for Council Workers, in that he was involved in the national pay negotiations, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being considered.

Councillor Brooks declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading "Brexit and Port Health – Transition Update", on the basis that he was employed by Mr. Gordon Lyons MLA, who had acted for a time as Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the meeting.

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Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the motion on Mullaghglass Landfill Site – Legal Action, in so far as his employer, the Public Health Agency, had an interest in this issue, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed.

Councillor Bunting declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading “Bonfire Approach 2021”, in that she acted as the Secretary to the Belvoir Area Residents’ Group, which had applied for the micro grant and cultural leadership programme funding, and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to the motion on Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service, on the basis that he was on the Board of the Ligoniel Improvement Association, which hosted the Tribunal Service, but did not leave the meeting as he considered his interest to be non-pecuniary.

Councillor Newton declared an interest in respect of the motion on Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures, in that his employer worked for the Bank of Ireland, and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading “James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign”, on the basis that he was involved in that initiative. However, as the matter did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave 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 meeting of the Council of 1st March be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, together with a number of Members, extended their condolences to Councillor Spratt on the recent death of his father, Mr. Jimmy Spratt, a former MLA and Castlereagh Borough Councillor.

The Council agreed, at the request of Councillor Groogan, to extend its condolences to the families of Stacey Knell, Karen McClean and Sarah Everard, who had recently lost their lives as a result of violent attacks.

Alderman Kingston highlighted the fact that Mr. Gerry Copeland, the former City Events Manager, had retired recently from the Council and, together with Alderman Rodgers, highlighted the significant role which he had played in delivering many high-profile events in the City.

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Councillor McReynolds paid tribute to Ms. Yolanda Fusciardi, the former Dog Control Manager, and Mr. Stephen Stewart, the former Estates Officer, who had also retired recently.

The Lord Mayor confirmed that he would be writing to these and other former officers who had retired recently, thanking them for their service and wishing them well for the future.

Change of Membership

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Mulholland with the High Sheriff (Councillor Long) on the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Council approved the change.

Minutes

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

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

(The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the following minute, on the basis that it made reference, amongst other things, to a letter being forwarded to his wife, the Justice Minister.)

Amendment

Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations

Moved by Councillor Canavan,
Seconded by Councillor Baker and

Resolved – That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading “Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations” be amended to provide that:

- i. the letter to be forwarded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland should also:
 - (a) highlight the Council’s disappointment at the Chief Constable’s assertion at a public meeting of the Northern Ireland Policing Board earlier that day that the Police

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Service, on the basis of separate legal advice, could not rescind a Fixed Penalty Notice once it had reached the court and that it would be a matter for the individual concerned to contest it or for the Public Prosecution Service to withdraw it if it was deemed to have been issued inappropriately; and

- (b) call upon the Police Service to reconsider its position on the matter; and
- ii. the letters to be forwarded to the Minister of Health, the Minister for Justice and the Northern Ireland Executive's Adherence Group should make reference also to the Chief Constable's comments.

Amendment

Alleygating Programme – Phase 5

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor McKeown and

Resolved – That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading "Alleygating Programme – Phase 5", be amended to provide that a list of criteria be drawn up against which Members will assess potential locations for alleygates in Phase 5, as an interim measure, while awaiting the outcome of the full review of Phases 1-4. This may include but not be limited to issues of crime and/or antisocial behaviour in the area, street cleansing and fly tipping issues and the potential effectiveness of gates. This list will be brought to and agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in advance of potential locations for alleygating being brought to the Area Working Groups. Lists of potential locations which have been identified by Members previously will also be included for consideration in Phase 5.

Amendment

Revision to Scheme of Allowances

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading "Revision to the Scheme of Allowances", be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to an increase only in the rate of Dependants' Carers' Allowance.

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

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<u>For 25</u>	<u>Against 32</u>
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Gormley, Heading, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McKeown, McLaughlin, Murphy and Walsh.	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Flynn, Groogan, Hanvey, Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, McAllister, McCullough, McDonough-Brown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton, Nicholl, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt and Verner.

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Council granted approval for the City Solicitor to discuss with the Department for Communities the potential for establishing an independent decision-making process around the Scheme of Allowances.

**Request for Matter to be
taken back to Committee**

Bonfire Approach 2021

Councillor Beattie requested that the Chairperson agree to the minute under the heading "Bonfire Approach 2021" being taken back to the Committee to enable further information to be obtained.

The Chairperson approved the request but it was declined by the Council.

Amendment

Bonfire Approach 2021

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading "Bonfire Approach 2021", be taken back to the Committee to enable further information to be obtained.

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

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Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition and amendment, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, were approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker,
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 2nd and 9th March be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 3rd March, be approved and adopted.

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

Update on Tourism

At the request of Councillor Hanvey, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Update on Tourism" be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing omission, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 3rd March, were 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 10th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Pre-Determination Hearing of 23rd February and the Planning Committee of 16th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Stakeholders' Committee

Moved by Alderman Haire,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 4th March, be approved and adopted.

Brexit Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 11th March be approved and adopted.

Independent Economic Study

Councillor Walsh requested that the Council agree to commission an independent economic study to explore opportunities on how best to exploit the unique position which Belfast occupied currently. The study should include, but not be limited to, harnessing economic opportunities on the island of Ireland, fostering new trading and economic relationships with other nations in the European Single Market and maintaining the valuable East/West relationship.

The Chief Executive explained that, since the proposal would place an additional financial burden upon the Council, there was a requirement to refer it initially to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

Accordingly, the Council agreed that a report on the potential for commissioning the economic study be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It agreed also that a briefing session be held, to which all Members would be invited, to receive an update on the work which had already been undertaken by Council officers and other agencies on that issue and that relevant economic experts be invited to contribute to the discussion.

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Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 11th March, were approved and adopted.

Motions

Presentation to Shared Island Unit/All-Party Working Group

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

“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.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Donnelly.

At the request of Councillor McAllister, the proposer agreed:

- i. to amend the first paragraph of his motion to read as follows:

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, the economy, the Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor, Brexit and the Northern Irish Protocol and an All-Island approach to the climate crisis; and

- ii. to add the words “without a prejudiced outcome” to the end of the second paragraph.

On a recorded vote, thirty-nine Members voted for the motion, as amended and set out below, and nineteen against and it was declared carried:

“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, the economy, the Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor,

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Brexit and the Northern 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, without a prejudiced outcome.

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.”

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

Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures

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

“This Council:

- notes the plans announced by Bank of Ireland to close 103 branches across the island of Ireland, including three in South Belfast;
- notes the expectation set by the Financial Conduct Authority 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 Financial Conduct Authority that it may be harder than usual to reach all customers under the current restrictions and engage with them on closure proposals effectively;

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- supports the call from the Financial Services Union that there should be no closures of branches during the pandemic and its call for a moratorium on closures until the end of 2022; and
- agrees to write to the CEO of Bank of Ireland to call for such a moratorium.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Gormley.

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

**Violence against Women and Girls
Strategy - Raise Your Voice Training**

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Mulholland proposed:

“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.

The Council welcomes the recent developments made by the Minister for Justice regarding a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and so the Council agrees to write to the Northern Ireland 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 Executive listens to the voices of women and girls to provide direction and meet their needs within such a strategy.

The 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. The Council believes that this should set a precedent for all hospitality venues, workplaces, and events within this City to do the same.

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The 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.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

At the request of Alderman Copeland, the proposer agreed to amend her motion to provide for the inclusion of the words “and girls” after the word “women” in the third and fifth paragraphs.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the Council and passed:

“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 girls and we are committed to doing everything within our powers to make Belfast more safe, fair and equal for all women and girls.

The Council welcomes the recent developments made by the Minister for Justice regarding a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and so the Council agrees to write to the Northern Ireland 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 Executive listens to the voices of women and girls to provide direction and meet their needs within such a strategy.

The Council will work with voluntary organisations, such as Women’s Aid, to promote the wider campaign to address violent acts perpetrated against women and girls.

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. The Council believes that this should set a precedent for all hospitality venues, workplaces, and events within this City to do the same.

The 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.”

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Legislation to Tackle the Third Party Sale of Pups

(The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this motion, on the basis that a proposed amendment called upon the Council to write to his wife, the Justice Minister.)

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

“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.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Bunting.

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to provide for the replacement of everything after the word “Belfast” with the following:

The Council reaffirms its support for and acknowledges the important work of operation Delphin, the multi-agency approach to tackling the illegal puppy smuggling industry throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Furthermore, the Council commits to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Justice to:

- reiterate our call for the introduction of legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups and kittens;
- seek the strengthening of powers for local councils, port authorities and the Police Service to address the issues outlined including, but not limited to; powers to seize pups at the ports without proper documentation and powers to issue prohibition notices on unlicensed breeding establishments;
- ask that more resources be put in to checks on documentation for consignments including pups travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain;
- seek the creation of a central database of licenced breeders across all councils, with unique identifiers given to each breeder;
- seek changes to microchipping, including a new unique number for pups related to their breeder, so that pups can be traced back to their point of origin, and a point of responsibility; and
- seek support for the creation of a public information campaign, raising awareness of the impact of puppy farming and the animal welfare issues surrounding this cruel trade.”

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At the request of Councillor McKeown, the proposer agreed to amend his motion further to provide that the letters to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Justice include a request for a register to be established of persons who had been convicted of animal cruelty.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out below, was put to the Council and passed:

“This Council expresses concerns regarding the illegal and cruel practice of puppy farming and the smuggling of puppies through the Port of Belfast.

The Council reaffirms its support for and acknowledges the important work of operation Delphin, the multi-agency approach to tackling the illegal puppy smuggling industry throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Furthermore, the Council commits to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Justice to:

- reiterate our call for the introduction of legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups and kittens;
- seek the strengthening of powers for local councils, port authorities and the Police Service to address the issues outlined including, but not limited to; powers to seize pups at the ports without proper documentation and powers to issue prohibition notices on unlicensed breeding establishments;
- ask that more resources be put in to checks on documentation for consignments including pups travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain;
- seek the creation of a central database of licenced breeders across all councils, with unique identifiers given to each breeder;
- seek changes to microchipping, including a new unique number for pups related to their breeder, so that pups can be traced back to their point of origin, and a point of responsibility;
- seek support for the creation of a public information campaign, raising awareness of the impact of puppy farming and the animal welfare issues surrounding this cruel trade; and
- request that a register be established of persons who had been convicted of animal cruelty.”

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Mullaghglass Landfill Site – Legal Action

Prior to presenting his motion, Councillor Baker was granted approval by the Council to insert the words “and the site operator” after the word “Agency” in the initial paragraph of the motion.

Accordingly, in accordance with notice on the agenda, he proposed:

“This Council must immediately prepare legal action against the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the site operator 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.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has 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.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Walsh.

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

**Support for Sign Languages Act and the
Addition of Sign Languages to School Curricula**

Prior to presenting his motion, Councillor McMullan was granted approval by the Council to amend the final paragraph to provide that a letter be forwarded also to the Minister for Education.

Accordingly, in accordance with notice on the agenda and with the assistance of Ms. J. Beck, a registered sign-language interpreter, he proposed:

“This Council notes that 15th – 21st 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 18th 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, that 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).

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This Council believes that 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, the Council expresses its support for sign languages to be added to school curricula to ensure that all children learn from the earliest opportunity.

Therefore, the Council will write to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Education 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."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

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

10 Per Cent Pay Increase for Council Workers

(Upon the amendment to this motion being moved, Councillor Spratt declared an interest, on the basis that he was employed in the public sector, and left the meeting for the remainder of the discussion.)

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

"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.

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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.

The Council believes that:

- 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; and
- 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.

Therefore, the 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;
- call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim;
- 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; and
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for its pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can

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support the campaign; including encouraging all local government workers to join a trade union.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Michael Collins.

At the request of Councillor Heading, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to provide for the deletion of everything after the words “Therefore, the Council resolves to” and the insertion of the following:

- support the pay claim submitted by Trade Unions representing all public sector staff for a substantial increase;
- write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for a pay increase for public sector workers to be funded with new money from central government;
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the Council can support the campaign; and
- encourage all staff to join a union.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the Council and passed:

“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.

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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.

The Council believes that:

- 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; and
- 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.

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- support the pay claim submitted by Trade Unions representing all public sector staff for a substantial increase;
- to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for a pay increase for public sector workers to be funded with new money from central government;
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the Council can support the campaign; and
- encourage all staff to join a union.”

Standing Order 23

At this point in the meeting, the Lord Mayor drew the Council's attention to the fact that, in accordance with Standing Order 23, any meeting of the Council which has lasted continuously for five hours shall stand adjourned unless the Council shall by resolution decide to continue sitting.

The Council resolved to continue to sit to deal with the remaining business.

Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service

In accordance with notice on the agenda, the Lord Mayor called upon Councillor Ferguson to propose the following motion, which was being seconded by Councillor Matt Collins:

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“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The 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.

The 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, the 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.”

Councillor Ferguson informed the Council that, since her motion had been submitted, a meeting had taken place between the Council, the Department for Communities and the Citywide Tribunal Service to discuss the Service’s funding requirements. She pointed out that the Department for Communities had offered some funding, however, that had fallen short of what was required to meet the Service’s costs until the end of the current financial year. With that in mind, she sought and was granted approval by the Council to amend her motion to read as follows:

“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The 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.

The Council, therefore, 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, the Council will provide £128,500 through its reserves, if necessary and refers the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the proposer agreed to amend her motion further to provide that the Council seek an urgent meeting with the Minister for Communities, with a view to securing the long term future of the Citywide Tribunal Service.

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After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out below, was put to the Council and passed:

“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The 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.

The Council, therefore, calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately release core funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service of £256,769 per annum, in order to meet the growing need and pressure which the service faces and calls for an urgent meeting with the Minister, with a view to securing its long term future.

Until then, the Council will provide £128,500 through its reserves, if necessary and refers the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 12th April, 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, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson,
Cobain, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett,
Groogan, Hanvey, Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly,
Kyle, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister,
McAteer, McCabe, McCullough, 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 Gormley and M. Kelly.

Motion of Condolence - His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

Upon the commencement of the meeting, the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff each paid tribute to His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and extended their deepest condolences to Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family.

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Alderman Kingston then proposed:

“This Council received the news of the death of His Royal Highness the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, with sadness and, on behalf of the City of Belfast, extends its most sincere condolences to Her Majesty The Queen and the Royal Family.

Having served with distinction during World War Two, the Duke has supported Her Majesty in undertaking royal duties at home and abroad for

**Special Meeting of Council,
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over seventy years. It was with The Queen that he last visited the City Hall in 2014, attending lunch in The Great Hall and signing the VIP visitor book.

Founded by His Royal Highness in 1956, The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme has also offered important development opportunities to several generations of our young people in Belfast.

In recognition of his sustained, distinguished and impactful service, and mindful of the restrictions of this pandemic period, this Council with many others expresses its sympathy. Accordingly, the Council has opened an online Book of Condolence. As a further mark of respect, the City will observe eight days of mourning for His Royal Highness.”

The motion was seconded by Alderman Copeland.

The following Members also spoke to the motion:

Alderman Haire and Rodgers and Councillors Bunting, Garrett, Howard, T. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons, McAllister, O'Hara and Pankhurst.

The motion was then put to the Council and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd April, 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 Ferguson.

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 March 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 April, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in respect of items 5c – Heritage Trail Sign Policy – City Hall and item 5d - James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign, on the basis that he was involved in the James Connolly Heritage Trail initiative, and left the meeting whilst those items were being discussed.

Restricted Items

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

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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.

Medium Term Financial Plan/Commercial Plan

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan and seeking approval to adopt the Council's first Commercial Plan.

He explained that the Medium Term Financial Plan needed to be based on a fair and honest appraisal of the Council's financial position and of its capacity to release resources internally and generate additional external income. The Financial Plan needed also to reflect the funding environment within which the Council operated and reference was made to the Covid-19 pandemic and earlier Primark fire as being examples of how the financial demands placed on the Council could, without warning, increase in severity.

The Director reported that, following the completion of the rate setting process for 2021/22, the Council had a good understanding of the current financial position, although this could be impacted by any Covid-19 funding decisions made by the Department for Communities. He drew the Members' attention to revenue estimate movements for the period from 2016/17 to 2021/22 and pointed out that the Council's financial strategy over that period could be summarised by, amongst other things, keeping the annual rates increase below 2%, maximising external funding and using growth in the rate base to support recurrent funding of new priorities such as regeneration and the Belfast Region City Deal.

He highlighted the fact that Members were ambitious for both the City and its residents and referred to new emerging priorities such as climate mitigation and adaptation, economic recovery and inclusive growth. Officers would, over the coming months, be working to develop detailed plans around those priorities, including the revenue and capital implications for the Council. Further reports would be submitted to the Committee outlining ways in which the Council could generate additional income, support the growth in the rate base, maximise external funding opportunities and deliver additional efficiencies.

The Director went on to draw the Committee's attention to the Commercial Plan, which would play a key role in maximising the use of existing resources and income generation moving forward. The Plan, which had been revised to reflect the feedback received from each of the Political Parties, would seek primarily to contribute to the Council's investment plans and efficiency programme and to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to support that work, the following six strategic aims had been identified:

- i to maximise opportunities to deliver more for our citizens, including those which are most vulnerable;
- ii to make better use of our assets for our citizens by achieving positive outcomes and superior value;

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- iii to ensure the delivery of our services in the most cost-effective way;
- iv to contribute towards meeting the significant financial challenges faced by the Council by ensuring that we achieve value-for-money;
- v to adopt a commercial culture, whilst retaining strong public, community and social values; and
- vi to work with partners who share our vision and ambitions and continue to put the best interests of Belfast's residents at the heart of everything we do.

The Director explained that the Council would, over the next three years, focus upon two work streams to assist it in delivering its strategic aims, namely, enhancing culture and competency and making better use of assets and delivering sustainable and value-for-money services and concluded by recommending that the Committee approve the Commercial Plan.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update on the Medium Term Financial Plan and agreed, with one Member voting against, to approve the Commercial Plan.

Malone House - Options Paper

The Director of Finance and Resources reminded the Committee that it had, earlier in the meeting, approved the Council's first Commercial Plan.

With that in mind, he submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which presented a number of options around the future uses and management arrangements/operating models for Malone House, which was situated within Barnett Demesne.

He explained that, since 1983, Malone House had become a venue for weddings, conferences, social functions, private dining and other events, with catering operations currently being provided by an external catering company, which operated under an agreed contract with the Council. However, it was recognised that there was now a need to examine future uses and management arrangements/operating models, with a view to addressing both the current and potential future needs of local residents and visitors.

Accordingly, he drew the Members' attention to the following options:

- Option 1 - 'Do Nothing'/Status Quo;
- Option 2 - 'Do Minimum' – catering operation is insourced i.e. delivered by the Council;
- Option 3 - A suitably experienced and dynamic individual(s)/ business(es) is identified to operate Malone House;
- Option 4 - Alternative use or management/operating model for Malone House; and

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Option 5 - Dispose of Malone House (included for illustrative purposes only).

The Director reviewed each option in turn and stated that, on balance, it was considered that Option 3 offered the greatest potential to make better use of this important physical asset, in terms of fulfilling the needs of local residents and visitors, and he recommended that the Committee adopt that option.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to adopt Option 4.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McAllister,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to adopt Option 3, as recommended within the report.

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

<u>For 12</u>	<u>Against 8</u>
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Bunting, Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McReynolds and Pankhurst.	Councillor Black (Chairperson); and Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Groogan, McLaughlin, Murphy and Walsh.

The amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion and passed.

Good and Harmonious Working Environment

In response to an issue which had been raised by a Member in relation to background images being displayed by another Member during this and previous remote meetings, in the context of promoting a good and harmonious working environment, the Committee agreed to refer the matter to the Party Group Leaders for consideration.

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Council Appointments

The Committee noted that, following recent recruitment exercises, Ms. Debbie Caldwell and Ms. Catherine Matthews had been appointed to the posts of Climate Commissioner and Operational Director of City and Neighbourhood Services (Waste Control), respectively.

**Update on Organisational Recovery
and Covid Management**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided information on:

- i. the opening of Council services and facilities, as part of a series of relaxations which had been announced by the Northern Ireland Executive under its Pathway out of Restrictions; and
- ii. the Council's ongoing work around organisational recovery and Covid-19 management.

Belfast Destination Hub – Acquisition of Site 10

The Committee:

- i noted the update on the site acquisition process for the Belfast Destination Hub, following the Committee's decision of 18th September, 2020 to authorise officers to examine options for the acquisition of the Corporately endorsed preferred site at Royal Avenue/North Street (Site 10), including seeking legal advice and real estate valuation;
- ii noted the position regarding the City Deal Outline Business Case timeline and the criticality of a decision on the acquisition of a site;
- iii agreed that a site visit be undertaken to Site 10 and that a further briefing session be organised, to which an external expert valuation specialist and economist would be invited;
- iv agreed that the leaders of those Political Parties who were not represented on the Committee be invited to the site visit and briefing session; and
- v noted that a report requiring a decision on the acquisition of the site would be submitted to its meeting in May.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion – Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st April, the following motion on Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service had been proposed by Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins:

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“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The 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.

The Council, therefore, calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately release core funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service of £256,769 per annum, in order to meet the growing need and pressure which the service faces and calls for an urgent meeting with the Minister, with a view to securing its long term future.

Until then, the Council will provide £128,500 through its reserves, if necessary and refers the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”

The Director of Finance and Resources reported that the Council had, in the previous year, provided funding of £75,000 to the Citywide Tribunal Service, following the completion of a due diligence exercise. The Department for Communities had contributed £70,400 over the same period but it was his understanding that it had yet to allocate funding for this year. He confirmed that, should the Committee be minded to provide funding of £128,500, as called for in the motion, £75,000 could be made available immediately from the Council’s reserves. The Council would, however, be required to undertake additional due diligence to justify the allocation of the remaining £53,500. He added that the City and Neighbourhood Services Department had provided the Service with £15,000 of grant funding towards the development of a sustainable financial model, moving forward, and that work on that was continuing but would be unlikely to be completed within the current year.

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Ferguson highlighted the importance of the Citywide Tribunal Service and pointed out that it had been forced to operate year-on-year without a clear core funding commitment. She explained that the Service could provide Council officers with valid reasons for the increase in its costs and referred also to the increased workload which staff were facing, particularly around the Personal Independent Payment tribunal process, and the uncertain operating conditions in which they were working. She urged the Committee to support her request for £128,500 to be allocated to the Service to allow it to remain open for the period ahead and concluded by stressing the need to meet with the Minister for Communities at the earliest opportunity to discuss its long-term future.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed to allocate funding of £75,000 from the Council’s reserves to the Citywide Tribunal Service for this year; and
- ii. agreed, in principle, to allocate the remaining £53,500 to the Citywide Tribunal Service, subject to all due diligence requirements being met, with a report on the outcome of that process being submitted to a future meeting.

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**Motion- Uplift on Universal Credit –
Response from Minister for Welfare Delivery**

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

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

The Council also recognises that, since March 2020, the unemployment claimant count has doubled to at least 60,000 in Northern Ireland and with a recession expected in the spring only to worsen the situation for many households. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has failed to provide certainty that the £20 uplift on UC will remain beyond March 2021 meaning many families are potentially facing a loss of £1,040 a year to their incomes overnight. Charity Action for Children has warned that more than one in 10 families in the north are already having to choose between paying bills and eating meals.

The Council calls on the UK government to put a protective shield around struggling families by ensuring that March's Budget makes clear that Universal Credit will not be cut by £20 a week in the spring. Finally, the Council agrees to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting he maintain the £20 uplift on Universal Credit in April 2021 and extending the £20 uplift to all legacy benefits.”

The City Solicitor reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had noted a response from HM Treasury, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and had agreed that a further letter be forwarded to the Chancellor highlighting the importance of the uplift payment, given the high levels of poverty in Northern Ireland, and urging him to extend it beyond March, 2021.

He reported that Will Quince MP, Minister for Welfare Delivery, had, within his response to that letter, pointed out that, since the start of the pandemic, the Government's priority had been to protect lives and people's livelihoods. With that in mind, the Chancellor had announced in the recent Budget that the Government would be extending the temporary £20 a week increase in Universal Credit for a further six months, until the end of September, taking it well beyond the end of this national lockdown. Eligible Working Tax Credit claimants would receive a one-off payment of £500. The Minister had concluded by stating that it was right that the Government should now shift its focus to supporting people back into work and that it had a comprehensive Plan for Jobs which the Budget would build upon.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Governance

**Freedom of the City – Frontline
Workers and Covid-19 Response**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the options available to deliver a public facing programme to recognise the work of the city’s frontline during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The options are set out to safely deliver a programme in the context of ongoing Covid-19 and inclusive of budget implications.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the proposal within this report and to agree the recommended option for a programme of events from May – October, 2021.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 22nd May 2020, it was agreed to award the Freedom of the City to healthcare workers and all those working tirelessly on the frontline to care for vulnerable citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic, with Members agreeing that a report outlining proposed arrangements for this to be submitted in due course. Therefore, this report sets out a proposed programme to include both a reflective event of commemoration as well as a citywide recognition event with community participation.

Frontline Workers Freedom of the City

- 3.2 The Council has agreed to stage an event to recognise the contribution of all frontline workers during the Covid-19 crisis. Following consideration of the likely timeline for the return of live events in line with the roll out of the vaccination programme, this report sets out a recommended way forward.

**PROGRAMME OF EVENTS aligned to City Recovery and UNESCO
City of Music bid**

- 3.3 The concept would be to deliver a programme that would run from May 2021 through to autumn 2021. The beginning and end of the

programme would be symbolically marked with an event. The final event would include the Freedom of the City ceremony.

Strand One: Reflection through the Symbolism of Planting Trees

- 3.4 May 2021: Announcement/ launch of the programme with an appropriately reflective event to recognise the challenges the city has faced, including the loss of lives. It is proposed that this should be a tree planting event.
- 3.5 This element of the concept would entail symbolically marking the Freedom of the City with tree planting which would run alongside the wider programme of events, allowing for a physical memorial to the shared experience of the pandemic. Our public spaces have seen considerably higher usage and have been critical in supporting physical and mental wellbeing. This concept also ties in with ongoing Council strategies such as One Million Trees.
- 3.6 This strand of the programme would support the planting of a memorial tree in the grounds of Belfast City Hall, subject to appropriate planning considerations. It is proposed that a distinct evergreen variety be selected to provide a year round memorial. The planting of the tree in May this year would launch the Freedom of the City programme.

Strand Two: Honouring the Contribution of City's Frontline Workers and Communities

- 3.7 The second strand of the programme will be developed around the theme of music. Music has played an important part in people overcoming the challenges of Covid-19 and creatively is the ideal art form to signal the beginnings of recovery. In addition, 2021 marks the submission of the city's bid to be recognised as a UNESCO City of Music. We already have Committee approval to award 5 City of Music bursaries that will create 5 'musicians in residence' for the city. It is envisaged that this cohort of artists would be joined by a further 5 musicians to deliver a Freedom of the City music programme. This residency programme would be launched in May and would be delivered across the city working with up to 10 different groups, all of them having had a particular experience of Covid. This could be a community group, a group of frontline workers, a school, a women's group etc. Each 'residency' will produce their own version of 'Mix the City' - a unique music composition that tells their Covid story. All groups will then come together to create an overall composition that symbolises the city of Belfast – A Mix of the City.

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- 3.8** By Autumn 2021, a Belfast Album would be created to be released. An official Freedom of the City event could then take place at the City Hall or alternative appropriate venue.
- 3.9** This main stage event would include profiled acts, breakthrough artists and a live performance of the new Belfast track with all the community participants. In addition, there would be a screening of a specially commissioned film that captures the city's response to Covid and personal stories.
- 3.10** A series of satellite events could take place (with digital link-ups) to maximise community participation through a 'music version' of the clap for carers moment with a performance of Mix the City led by musicians on the main stage with audience participation across the city.
- 3.11** The overall programme would include:
- Direct Community Participants: 150 via 10 groups
 - Core musician team of 10
 - Headline music acts at final event
 - The Current Lord Mayor would launch initiative in May with incoming Lord Mayor participating in closing event in the Autumn
 - Film produced capturing the individual 'Belfast Stories' of Covid. This could also contribute to Belfast Stories/Belfast Destination Hub Story Collection strand of work, as would the music commissioned
 - Potential to work with a media partner

Covid-19

- 3.12** Officers are aware of the implications on mass gatherings in the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic. The cultural, arts and events sector has been one of the many societal areas impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Restrictions are likely to remain in place impacting the number of people permitted to gather indoor and outdoor. A timeline for the return of local, national and international events has not yet been set out however discussions are emerging around the likely return of events previously cancelled or postponed. This has obvious implications for the delivery of any chosen option. It is for this reason that any option with an 'event' element has been proposed for no earlier than September 2021. The date of this final event can continue to be flexible to ensure that Covid guidance and public safety remain at the forefront of all plans.

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- 3.13** The proposed programme seeks to reflect the remarkable efforts of the city throughout the pandemic and has at its core an ethos of being both a caring and a creative city.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14** The programme costs would be met from within existing budgets due to plans for a city event to mark the bid for UNESCO designation.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.15** The proposed programme of events is open to all and, as such, will have the potential to promote good relations and equality by bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds. City of Music Events are part of the cultural strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed to proceed with the commissioning of a stained glass window to be installed in the City Hall to mark the contribution which those working in the Health Service had made to the lives of the citizens of Belfast, in line with a motion which had, on 3rd May, 2016, been referred by the Council to the Diversity Working Group for consideration but had yet to be progressed.

Council/Committee Meetings - Post 6th May, 2021

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to propose arrangements for holding Council/Committee meetings following the expiry of the legislation permitting the hosting of remote meetings.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** The Committee is requested to agree to changes to Standing Orders, as set out in the report, to enable the current arrangements for the hosting of remote meetings to continue.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1** As Members will be aware, the Council has had to alter its normal decision-making processes during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that it is following Public Health Agency guidance on social distancing and essential travel, while maintaining continuity of critical services, and is currently holding Council and Committee meetings remotely via Microsoft Teams.

- 3.1.2 The authority to meet remotely is governed by Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020. The aim of this provision is allow local authority meetings to be held remotely, including remote access by members of the public, subject to the relevant national authority making the appropriate regulations.
- 3.1.3 The relevant legislation was made by the Northern Ireland Assembly - The Local Government (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of District Council Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 – and came into effect from 1st May, 2020.
- 3.2 **Key Issues**
- 3.2.1 The key issue is that, whilst regulations are currently in place, these expire on 6th May, 2021, meaning that, without steps being taken, the Council and its Committees can no longer meet remotely to make decisions after that date and would be required to be physically ‘present’ to make decisions.
- 3.2.2 There is currently no provision to allow the Assembly to extend the regulations as they were enacted in exercise of the powers conferred by section 78 (3) of the Coronavirus Act 2020 – *‘The regulations may make provision only in relation to local authority meetings required to be held, or held, before 7th May, 2021.’*
- 3.2.3 This is a UK-wide issue and a number of organisations [the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO) and Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) have been lobbying the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to change primary legislation to enable local authority remote meetings to take place beyond the current statutory deadline of 6th May 2021. The Secretary of State has indicated that he has no plans to extend the date, as it requires primary legislation and there is no vehicle to do that in time for May.
- 3.2.4 Accordingly ADSO and LLG, in conjunction with Hertfordshire County Council, have commenced legal proceedings in the High Court to allow for the continuation of local authority meetings beyond 6th May (as of 27/3/21 the claim has been issued in the High Court and they are awaited for the case to be listed for hearing).
- 3.2.5 However, that challenge is to the Local Government Act 1972 which applies to local authorities in England, so even, if successful, the Department of Communities will have to determine whether this applies to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 which governs Council/Committee meetings and proceedings in Northern Ireland.

- 3.2.6 The Permanent Secretary to the Department for Communities has indicated that she is aware of the position and that the Department is working on the introduction of the legislative changes needed to ensure that powers to operate remotely are extended.
- 3.2.7 She has also stated that, due to legislative time pressures, it is possible that there may be a short period between the lapse of the current legislative cover and the introduction of changes when councils may need to consider other arrangements.
- 3.2.8 Therefore, in the absence of new legislation, the authority to hold remote meetings will expire on 6th May, 2021 and Members are being asked to consider changes to Standing Orders, which the City Solicitor is of the opinion fall within the legal powers of the Council and which will enable the current arrangements to be retained.

3.3 Rationale

- 3.3.1 Section 37 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires a council to make standing orders for the 'regulation of the proceedings and business' of the council. The provision also permits the variation of standing orders.
- 3.3.2 Section 17(3) of the Interpretation Act (NI) 1954 provides that, if legislation empowers or requires something be done, then all such powers as are reasonably necessary to enabling this or are reasonably incidental to that are also given. Section 31 of the same Act provides that legislation is to be applied to circumstances as they occur in the sense that the legislation is 'always speaking'.
- 3.3.3 The above legislation in combination provides the basis on which the council can, in the City Solicitor's opinion, vary standing orders to achieve essentially the same impact as the 2020 Regulations.

3.4 Proposed Changes

Remote Attendance

- 3.4.1 Meetings of the council are not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and any reference to a 'place' where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

3.4.2 A member of a council ('a member in remote attendance') attends the meeting at any time if all of the following conditions are satisfied. Those conditions are that the member in remote attendance is able at that time—

(a) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard, and where practicable be seen by, the other members in attendance;

(b) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public in attendance in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and

(c) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public in attendance.

3.4.3 A Member, or a member of the public, attending a meeting or being in attendance includes that person attending by remote access.

3.4.4 Schedule 5 to the 2014 Act (meetings and proceedings) applies to meetings of the Council as follows—

(a) any reference to being 'present' at a meeting includes being present through remote attendance;

(b) any reference to a 'place' where a meeting is held, or is to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers; and

(c) in addition to the publication of notice of the time and place at the offices of the council such notice of remote meetings will be published within the required time on the Council website.

3.5 Public Access

3.5.1 A meeting being 'open to the public' includes access to the meeting through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming and where a meeting is accessible to the public through such remote means the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend in person; and being 'present' at a meeting includes access through remote means.

3.6 Access to Information

3.6.1 Any information to which the public is entitled to access (agenda and unrestricted reports) will be made available on the Council's website in addition to any duty for publication arising under the 2014 Act.

3.7 Decision-Making

3.7.1 Any references in the 2014 Act to ‘members present and voting on the decision’ includes a member being present through remote attendance.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

No additional.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Any equality, good relations or rural needs assessments would be subject to the Council’s usual screening process.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Standards and Business Committee –
Draft Terms of Reference**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the development of draft Terms of Reference for a new Standards and Business Committee.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is recommended to note the report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

3.1.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 18th September 2020, agreed to introduce additional arrangements to ensure that the Council, its officers and Elected Members maintain the highest standards of conduct in all that they do. It was agreed that the Council establish a Standards Committee whose main functions would be to promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council and the probity of all the Council’s proceedings.

3.1.2 The role of the Committee will include the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by Members and officers, a commitment to joint working across political groups and between officer and Members, oversight of any training

required on all matters relating to standards and conduct, advising the Council on the Code of Conduct for Councillors and oversight of the Members' Register and Declaration of Interests and associated procedures.

3.1.3 The Committee will seek to enhance Member/Officer relations and promote a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities when working collectively in a political environment.

3.1.4 In response to discussions at subsequent Committee meetings and with Party Groups it has been proposed that the new committee may also incorporate responsibility for specific roles in relation to managing some of the business of the Council, including reviewing Standing Orders and a delegated power to receive Notices of Motion. The Committee will operate on the basis of all Party membership but Members will note that this will require a facilitative arrangement with mutual agreement from all parties.

3.2 Standards and Business Committee – Proposed Terms of Reference

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

3.2.2 The Committee will have oversight of a Local Resolution Protocol which will deal with 'low level disputes' between Members alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and will aim to restore positive working relationships through mediation.

3.2.3 The Committee will have delegated authority to consider any recommendation by the Monitoring Officer to refer any Councillor to the Local Government Commissioner for Standards in respect of any potential breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, particularly where the alleged breach relates to a matter which would potentially have a reputational consequence for the Council. In such cases the Monitoring Officer will retain a residual right to refer any matter to the Commissioner for Standards regardless of whether the Standards Committee has endorsed a recommendation from the Monitoring Officer to do so.

3.3.4 A protocol will be developed on how information will be minuted, so that personal information cannot be raised or discussed at Committee or Council meetings.

- 3.3.5 The Committee will also consider any update reports into investigations carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman / Commissioner for Standards.
- 3.3.6 The Standards and Business Committee will also seek to improve processes in relation to bringing business before the council, including referring Notices of Motion and making amendments to Standing Orders. However, it is not proposed that the Committee will have any role in relation to the agenda setting of any other Standing Committee but it will keep under review the overall business brought before the Council.
- 3.3.7 A copy of the draft terms of reference are attached. These are draft Terms of Reference which will be updated based on the detail of the processes to be developed. Any updates will be brought back to the Committee for approval.

3.3 **New Process for Notices of Motion**

It is proposed that:

- In the case of urgent Notices of Motion, the proposer will have the option to take the Notice of Motion either to the Standards and Business Committee or to full Council.
- The Standards and Business Committee will have delegated authority to adopt or reject Notices of Motion. In either case, the Lord Mayor will indicate at Council those Notices of Motion that have been considered by the Standards and Business Committee and whether such Notices of Motion were rejected or adopted. In either case, the proposer only may speak on the issue at Council.
- The Standards and Business Committee will refer all Notices of Motion directly to a standing committee when the matter to which the Notice of Motion refers falls within the remit of that committee. At Council, the Lord Mayor will indicate that the Notice of Motion was received and referred. There will be no speakers on such Notices of Motion at Council.
- The Standards and Business Committee will refer Notices of Motion for consideration by full Council when the Notice of Motion relates to a strategic or constitutional matter.
- The Standards and Business Committee will not have the power to amend the wording of any Notice of Motion that is being referred to full Council for debate.

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- Any amendments to Notice of Motions to be proposed at Council are to be furnished at least one day in advance of going to full Council and will be circulated to Party Group Leaders in advance of the Council meeting.
- In referring any matter to full Council, the Standards and Business Committee may determine to restrict contributions to the debate in relation to any Notice of Motion to one per political party. At Council, the Lord Mayor will clearly indicate if the restriction applies.

The proposed changes required to the Standing Orders would be brought to next months' meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee if this report is approved.

3.4 Next Steps

- 3.4.1** It is proposed that the new Committee, consisting of 20 Members, be constituted at the next AGM in June 2021. A review of the operation of the Committee and its associated processes will be undertaken in six months.
- 3.4.2** The Members have indicated a wish to have all party representation on the Committee. In order to ensure that this will happen, it will need to be mutually agreed, in advance of each new term of office, during the annual selection of remaining places on Committees, that the requisite spaces are reserved for those Parties which do not have a seat automatically allocated on the Committee.
- 3.4.3** It is proposed that amendments to the Standing Orders will be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to provide delegated authority for the new Committee to refer Notices of Motion to Council and to amend the defined timescales for submission and processing of such motions to fit within the monthly meeting cycle.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5** There will be minor financial implications associated with introducing a new Standing Committee. If the Standards and Business Committee is to meet monthly then it will require an associated Special Responsibility Allowance be allocated to the Chair and Deputy Chair positions of responsibility and funded from the reallocation of the existing Special Responsibility Allowance fund.
- 3.6** The Committee will be serviced by existing resources within Governance and Compliance Services, including Democratic

Services. A budget will be required to cover any associated training and external mediation services.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7 Any equality, good relations and rural needs assessments implications will be subject to the usual screening processes.

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The draft Terms of Reference for the Standards and Business Committee may include some or all of the following functions:

Standards

- promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by elected Members and in their working relationship with officers
- a commitment to encourage positive joint working across political groups and between officers and Members and to uphold the high standards of values and behaviours in a relationship of mutual trust
- supporting and facilitating collaborative working between Members and senior officers, particularly to support the consideration of strategic priorities by relevant Committees
- advising the Council on the Code of Conduct for Councillors including any revisions to the Code
- oversight of any training required to train Members and relevant officers on all matters relating to standards and the promotion of the 12 Principles of Conduct in public life, including the Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors and any associated training identified by the Committee
- oversight of the Members' Register and Declaration of Interests
- to develop, monitor and review any local protocols required to support the standards regime within the Council
- to ensure adherence to the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol
- to consider any minutes of a formal meeting held under Section 5.9 of the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol [tbc re GDPR]
- oversight of the Local Resolution Protocol which will deal with "low level disputes" alleging breaches of the Code of Conduct for

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Councillors and is designed to restore positive working relationships through mediation¹

- **consideration of any recommendation by the Monitoring Officer to refer any Councillor to the Local Government Commissioner for Standards in respect of any potential breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, particularly where the alleged breach relates to a matter which would potentially have a reputational consequence for the Council**
- **the Monitoring Officer will retain a residual right to refer any matter to the Commissioner for Standards regardless of whether the Standards Committee has endorsed a recommendation from the Monitoring Officer to do so**
- **oversight of the procedural requirements of any mediation process put in place to restore internal relationships between Political Parties, Members and/or officers**
- **consideration of update reports into investigations carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman / Commissioner for Standards**
- **oversight of the implementation of recommendations made by the Public Services Ombudsman / Commissioner for Standards**
- **providing recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in respect of any amendments which need to be made to the Council Constitution in relation to the standards regime within the Council**
- **In respect of any other matter which may require some consideration in the context of standards, acting in an advisory capacity, with reports referred to it either directly by the reporting officer or by another Standing Committee**
- **consideration of agenda items for other Standing Committees which identify standards implications**

Business

- **receiving and reviewing all Notices of Motion and using the Committee's delegated power to recommend either adoption or debate at the next Council meeting**
- **Reviewing Council Standing Orders with a view to making recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

¹ The Local Resolution Protocol will only deal with minor complaints about councillors made by other councillors. The Protocol will not consider complaints made by officers, members of the public or other third parties. The Protocol will not consider complaints made about officers.

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- **initial consideration and review of Council matters that are under internal or external investigation**
- **keeping under review and monitoring the Council's Scheme of Delegation**
- **keeping under review and monitoring the Council's administrative and procedural arrangements in relation to governance"**

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Heading,

That the Committee agrees, in principle, to establish a Committee, and in advance of that, to set up a time bound working group to enable all Political Parties to work out recommendations on how to proceed. The working group should be facilitated by an external facilitator such as NILGA, if agreeable, and be tasked with producing a report on what Members currently view as the issues needing resolved and putting forward a set of independent recommendations for improvement and/or the remit/role/functions of the Standards and Business Committee.

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

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor McAllister,
Seconded by the High Sheriff (Councillor Long),

That the Committee agrees to remove the Business element from the new Committee.

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

Proposal 3

Moved by Councillor Walsh,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the proposed draft Terms of Reference for the new Standards and Business Committee.

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

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<u>For 13</u>	<u>Against 6</u>
Councillor Black (Chairperson); Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Carson, Garrett, McLaughlin, Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.	The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and Councillors Groogan, Heading, McAllister, McDonough-Brown and McReynolds.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Review of the Belfast Agenda

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is update the Committee on the suggested approach and indicative timeline for a range of consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda, where Members will have an opportunity to shape the refreshed Community Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **provide feedback on the stages and proposed consultation and engagement milestones to review the Belfast Agenda; and**
- **note the role that Elected Members will play in refreshing the community plan detailed in section 3.14.**

3.0 Main Report

Duty to Review Community Plan

3.1 Sections 69 and 70 of the Local Government Act 2014 set out the statutory requirements for the review of community plans which must be completed before the fourth anniversary of the date on which the Plan was published. This means that the first review of the Belfast Agenda is required by November 2021.

3.2 Current events and the disruption to normal working arrangements have understandably created a difficulty for community planning partnerships to meet these requirements in the manner initially envisaged. The Department for Communities have therefore written to the Chairs of community planning partnerships, recognising that as part of the ongoing response to

COVID-19, actions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic, will inform a very large element of any review. The Department considers that this will be sufficient to meet the legislative requirements for Partnerships to formally confirm that a review of the community plan has been conducted.

- 3.3 While not statutory, the link between community plans and the Programme for Government creates practical difficulties as community plans will naturally wish to reflect any substantial change to the PfG Outcomes which may be decided by the Executive. The attached letter also includes a recommendation that Partnerships should therefore consider committing to carrying out a further review before April 2022, to facilitate the timetabling around the PfG.

Additional Drivers for Change

- 3.4 In addition to the legislative requirement to review the community plan, there is an imperative need to revise the areas the city will focus on in the short term to drive recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. As the true effects emerge, we need to ensure our city economy and communities are able to rebuild in the coming months and years.
- 3.5 The Belfast Agenda was influenced by a set of shared values that have shaped its design. As part of its first formal review, we wish to reflect on lessons learned to date. We are driven by values of innovation and a focus on outcomes for people and we will identify what we need to do differently to make the next 4 years a success.
- 3.6 There is a growing literature providing recommendations for community planning including Dr Johann Gallagher's SIB report, 'Towards a Programme of Support for Community Planning in Northern Ireland' and Carnegie UK Trust's recommendation (endorsed by committee in March 2021) following the 'Embedding a Wellbeing Framework in Northern Ireland' project. The review presents an excellent opportunity to embed many of these recommendation into our community planning processes and practices to deliver the required change we want for Belfast.

Defining the scope of the Review

- 3.7 It is important to distinguish between the Belfast Agenda, the overarching city strategy document and the subsequent delivery action plans which identify a range of interventions the Partnership will take to contribute to the overall vision and outcomes. An updated city strategy document will contain the long-term vision and outcomes, population indicators and a new 4-year priority framework the Partnership should focus on.

The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) will undertake a wide range of consultation and engagement activities to ensure the refreshed Plan will include the issues our communities want addressed within this recovery period.

3.8 It is important that new Delivery Action Plans are designed with the public and VCSE sectors (including elements of a bottom-up approach) to ensure communities have greater involvement in the process and together, we can make a meaningful difference to people's lives. The actions will be based on a range of criteria such as:

- Delivery reflects partnership activity providing collaborative gain/not business as usual activity;
- Designed to contribute to the Belfast Agenda outcomes; and
- Include 'area specific' elements making the 'Belfast Agenda' more meaningful to local communities.

Key Principles agreed by the Belfast Community Planning Partnership

3.9 At its meeting on 24th March 2021, the CPP considered initial plans for the review and agreed the following principles:

- The core purpose of the refreshed Belfast Agenda is to improve outcomes for local people.
- The Belfast Agenda should reflect all that is positive about the city and its people, whilst identifying the key challenges that need to be addressed through the work of the Partnership.
- Our approach will be based on the principle of co-design. Statutory partners, Elected Members, Support Partners and the VCSE panel will all have a critical role to play to make this possible.
- The refreshed Belfast Agenda will build on recent work across the city, including the work of Healthy North Belfast, the East Belfast Agenda the STEP project in South Belfast. (Seamless Transition through Education Project).
- Where possible, we will use the data and evidence that partners hold to support and inform our partnership working.
- The work of the CPP will focus on additionality and the collaborative gains that are made possible from our partnership working.

- The review process will involve the participation of all partners, who will need to commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

Consultation and Engagement Milestones

- 3.10 The CPP agreed to establish a dedicated sub-group from the Statutory Partners and VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel to support the co-design and delivery of the new Belfast Agenda (and corresponding delivery plans) by March 2022. In doing so, it has also proposed to hold a series of consultation and engagement activities organised into stages for which there is a need to reach consensus on various aspects of the Plan. In keeping with the commitment set out within the council's Belfast: Our Recovery framework, the review of the Belfast Agenda will follow a co-design process. Specifically, we are suggesting the Partnership proactively engages communities to identify local challenges, priorities and opportunities. We want co-design to be the central principle for the review process to deliver improved outcomes for people living in Belfast. In summary, the co-design approach we adopt needs to be flexible to reflect the outcome of prior engagement ensuring we listen to and reflect the specific needs of each area of the city.



- 3.11 A Review Launch will aim to raise awareness of the Belfast Agenda and reinvigorate the community planning process with communities. It is assumed that lockdown measures will be in place for the foreseeable future and therefore, the majority of engagement activities will at least initially take place virtually/online. The 'Your Say Belfast' engagement platform will be heavily utilised to make it easier for citizens to engage and have their say. The web-based system will provide a grouped space where all engagement activities will be located and critically where feedback on each stage will also be provided. However, if the situation improves, we will allow for face to face engagement later in the process.
- 3.12 Very similar to the recent Programme for Government (PfG) consultation, we wish to move quickly to agree or reaffirm the long-term vision and outcomes, which were set in 2017, following

extensive engagement. At this stage, we also wish to reach consensus on a four-year priority framework which will identify the specific areas to be progressed by the Partnership. Again, similar to the PFG, this will identify priorities to address Health Inequalities, which may include for example a focus on mental health, emotional wellbeing or Alcohol and Drugs. From recent feedback and political priorities, it is also proposed that zero-carbon should become a 5th pillar of the agenda.

- 3.13 It is vital that we recognise that the Partnership cannot focus on everything and therefore we need to gain consensus on the priority framework before we continue our engagement with an action planning and problem-solving phase. While we expect this stage will be informed by the co-design process, we expect it may take a local-area and/or citywide approach or some combination thereof. This stage will also present an opportunity for both partner organisations, BAPs and the VCSE Panel to present/host sector views or inputs for further in-depth Board consideration and analysis. This stage represents the greatest challenge as we seek to develop draft Delivery Action Plans which can be endorsed by the city and owned by Boards/ partner organisations. Note, it is intended that these plans will remain live documents moving forward being informed by continual engagement.

Role of Elected Members

- 3.14 It is proposed that Elected Members will be engaged at each stage highlighted in section 3.9, through the All Party Working Group on Community Planning. In addition, it is recommended that all elected members will have the opportunity to shape the priority framework and plans for the new 4 year period through Party Group briefings. In addition, Elected Members will also be supported by our Marketing and Communications team who will provide ongoing support via a communications toolkit to enable them to engage their constituents to make their voices heard.
- 3.15 While the specifics regarding engagement events will be finalised with partners, it is expected that there will be a series of thematic and/or local-area virtual workshops. This will provide a further role for elected members to provide a leading role within their communities to shaping the city's future plans.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.16 Any financial implications arising from this report will be covered from existing budgets. The review process will involve the participation of all community planning partners, who will need to

commit their resources to the review process and the agreed action plans.

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

- 3.17 It is recommended that the consultation and engagement activities to review the Belfast Agenda will take account of the draft Audit of Inequalities and include specific sessions with targeted harder to reach groups to ensure that equality implications are considered as part of the review process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Smart Belfast

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The development of a world class ‘Smart District’ is about harnessing place-based digital innovation to support the city centre’s recovery and the transformation of the wider city.

In particular, the importance of advanced wireless connectivity has been identified to support Belfast’s economic ambition and will form the backbone of the ‘Belfast Smart District’.

- 1.2 The Council has been working with city partners and industry experts to consider how best to prepare a significant proposal to the Belfast Region City Deal’s Infrastructure Enabling Fund that will stimulate investment and the rapid deployment of advanced wireless connectivity.

- 1.3 Following positive responses from key partners, it is proposed that the Council now proceeds to a detailed feasibility study to determine the optimal model for investment.

- 1.4 The paper also provides short updates on two Smart Belfast initiatives:

A request by the Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment (NITRE) for the Council to participate in a proposed Northern Ireland pilot project to establish a citizen’s panel which will consider issues associated with unlocking health data for innovation; and

Belfast’s success in being selected by the Intelligent Communities Forum as one of 21 ‘Smart Communities of 2021’.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- 1. note the work to date on advanced wireless infrastructure and its importance to the Belfast's economic and transformation/recovery ambitions;**
- 2. approve a feasibility study to determine the optimal model for investment in support of advanced wireless connectivity;**
- 3. approve the Council's role, working with government partners, in the design of a proposed NI citizen's panel to consider issues associated with unlocking health data for innovation; and**
- 4. note Belfast's award of 'Smart 21 Communities' by the Intelligent Communities Forum and its progress to the final of 'Intelligent Community of the Year'.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 The Smart Belfast programme was established by the Council to foster collaborative innovation between the public sector, universities, business and the wider community. Over the past three years it has worked with partners to exploit the opportunities of emerging digital technologies such as AI and 5G for positive economic and societal impact. The approach has proven successful and has subsequently informed the content of the Digital pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal and its proposals for a world class Smart District and testbeds programme and Infrastructure Enabling Fund.**
- 3.2 The underlying premise for the Smart District is that the powerful combination of digital technologies, collaborative innovation and place-based development can have a transformative impact on a city's wider economy and future services. A Smart District will not only attract businesses and investment, it can also act as a testbed for innovative solutions to major urban challenges such as mobility, energy, and sustainable neighbourhoods. A well-curated district provides a rich testing ground from planners, policymakers, researchers and innovators. Once proven, successful solutions can then be adopted at scale across a city.**
- 3.3 The proposals for the 'Belfast Smart District' are currently in development and further details will be presented to Members in the coming months.**

- 3.4 Advanced wireless networks (such as 5G) are a foundational technology for our smart district ambition. More broadly, such networks are expected the backbone for urban economies and modern city services. The ideal for any city seeking to stake a claim to digital innovation is to provide an environment in which these wireless technologies are not only deployed quickly – but are done in a fashion that is open and which supports rapid innovation in services.
- 3.5 In June 2020, independent industry expert consultants were commissioned to work with the Council to determine its role in supporting advanced wireless investment. In outline, the study recommended that there is a unique opportunity for city partners to bring physical assets together and to potentially utilise City Deal investment via the Infrastructure Enabling Fund to accelerate the deployment of advanced wireless connectivity. This would offer mobile operators, large or small, easier access to urban assets, and connectivity equipment to greatly reduce barriers to rapid deployment.
- 3.6 The approach would seek to attract co-investment from the private sector. And more broadly support a programme to reduce digital exclusion and grow the conditions for SME innovation, university research, and the deployment of the latest urban services.
- 3.7 A feasibility study and industry engagement programme is now required to build upon the recommendations to validate the finding and to develop a shared value proposition that would form the basis of a substantial business case to the BRCD Infrastructure Enabling Fund.
- 3.8 Members are asked to approve the commissioning of the feasibility study by suppliers with the relevant technical expertise.

Supporting the innovative use of health data in Northern Ireland

- 3.9 Health and Social Care Services were recently tasked by the NI Department for Health to prepare a response for the Health Minister regarding the innovative use of health data. The current legislation in Northern Ireland is quite restrictive in relation to the ‘secondary use’ of health data. The Department is considering changes to the legislation to unlock the more innovative use of data by researchers, clinicians and industry. There are opportunities to enhance diagnostics, therapeutic, medical research and SME growth. Data challenges in relation to the local response to the Covid crisis have helped accelerate this agenda.

- 3.10 As part of this work, the Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment (NITRE) has approached the Council's City Innovation Office to help gather evidence on the way forward. NITRE is working with health partners on a limited Northern Ireland pilot project which will commence in Spring 2021. The project will establish (in the first instance) a Belfast-focused Public Data Panel. The panel would bring together members of the public to consider the ethical, legal, technical, and economic issues and opportunities surrounding the innovative use of health data. Many of the issues associated with the project are similar to those associated with proposals for a Smart District. The panel will help co-design approaches and want to draw upon the work of the BCC team in relation to the ethical and trusted use of data in the city.
- 3.11 The proposal is still in draft stage, and NITRE are seeking the Council's in principle agreement to contribute to the project. Members are asked to approve the Council's involvement. There is no financial request from the Council.

Intelligent Communities Forum: Smart21 Communities award 2021

- 3.12 Belfast has been selected by the Intelligent Communities Forum² (ICF) as one of 21 cities worldwide to receive the 'Smart 21 Communities' award (alongside cities such as Adelaide, Philadelphia and Moscow). ICF is a global network of cities and regions with a mission to help communities in the digital age find a new path to economic development and community growth.
- 3.13 Following this announcement, ICF will work with us to gather more information about our city. Seven cities will be selected to advance to the 'Top 7 Intelligent Communities' in June with one city being named the 'Intelligent Community of the Year' later in October.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 The estimated cost for a full wireless feasibility study and market engagement exercise is approximately £180,000. This has been identified within the Council's City Deal development budget for 2020/2021.

The Council is being asked to contribute staff team time to the NITRE Data project, particularly from the City Innovation Team's Data Specialist.

² https://www.intelligentcommunity.org/icf_names_the_smart21_communities_of_2021

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.15 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Heritage Trail Sign Policy – City Hall

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th March considered a request to permit the installation of an interpretative interactive sign on a bollard facing the North West lawn at the City Hall.

1.2 There is currently no policy to cover this type of request. Given that there are a number of cultural heritage type projects in development and a focus on community tourism, it was considered that there are likely to be further requests of this nature in the future. Members expressed some concern given the sensitivity of the City Hall as a listed building and were anxious to ensure that its setting and appearance would not be detrimentally impacted, notwithstanding the fact that no listed building consent is required for the installation of such signs. Some concern was expressed in relation to the installation of these signs against the front façade of City Hall, even though they are not attached to the building.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to establish a potential policy regulating the installation of these signs at City Hall and within the curtilage of the grounds.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the proposed policy and/or make recommendations as it sees fit.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Against the context of the City Hall being a listed building, it is clearly important to ensure that appropriate restrictions are put in place. Multiple signs placed on the bollards would be unlikely to enhance the appearance of the building. If Members were minded to permit the installation of these signs in City Hall grounds, it is recommended that no more than four could be placed on the bollards within the ground to the front of City Hall. It is recommended that they would be all uniform in size and

shape, in the case of the current application 300mm and round. Under no circumstances would such a sign be permitted to be attached to the building. In respect of the east and west sides of the City Hall, it is recommended that no signs would be permitted. However, exceptionally, if an application were to be received related to the content of either of those sides of City Hall, that is the Cenotaph or the Titanic Memorial Gardens, then such an application could be considered but only one at each location.

- 3.2 All other applications for interactive signage, subject to approval, would be accommodated by the provision of an interactive screen at the entrance to the exhibition. In keeping with the EQIA carried out independently for the City Hall grounds, the ambition would be to ensure balanced content and inclusivity. Subject to the content promoted by interactive signage it is a potential means by which some element of rebalancing can be achieved in which a more contemporary image of the City can be portrayed. The content promoted by the interactive signage should have some relationship with the material and themes promoted by the City Hall Visitor Exhibition.
- 3.3 With any permission given to install such signage, the Council would require it to be maintained and would reserve the right to remove it if it became unsightly. It would also reserve the right to remove it in any other exceptional circumstances.
- 3.4 At the Strategic Policy and Resources meeting on 19th March, Members requested information regarding potential interest from others who might wish to have a heritage trail sign at or in City Hall. The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, has indicated that initial engagement with a number of organisations has demonstrated two separate categories:
- Existing tours that are guided therefore can incorporate City Hall without having needing physical or digital infrastructure such as Best of Belfast by DC Tours. There is also an audio self-guided walking tour. There is the potential for these to be further enhanced.
 - The second category is largely heritage organisations that have an interest in building on an existing tour or developing a new trail.
- 3.5 While there is a good level of interest, plans are not progressed yet in terms of development and delivery of specific products. This includes:
- Potential for a heritage trail including City Hall as part of the wider Belfast Jewish Heritage Project. Pre-Covid guided tours had demonstrated a level of interest in such

a tour with clear connections between Sir Otto Jaffe and City Hall.

- Ulster Scots Agency are also considering a number of potential heritage trails including Sir Edward Carson.
- City Connections with Eastside Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar are working on a visitor passport concept to tell the story of Belfast including the *Journey to Peace*. However, this is in earliest stages of development.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 There are no financial or resource implications associated with this request save for the installation of an interactive screen.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7 Any proposals will be subject to equality screening.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst,

That the Committee agrees that the Council provide a combined sign for Heritage Trails wishing to associate with the City Hall, and their QR codes, on the external railings of the City Hall. This will be an inclusive approach, accommodating between four and eight trails, and will ensure that the codes are always accessible, including when the City Hall grounds are closed, and avoid cluttering the view of the façade of the City Hall, which is a Grade A listed building.

Amendment

Moved by the High Sheriff (Councillor Long),
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the Heritage Trail Sign Policy, as outlined within the report, subject to the number of signs permissible, which was being suggested as four, being reviewed. The Committee agrees also to initiate a four-week expression of interest exercise to provide any organisation wishing to develop a heritage trail involving the City Hall with an opportunity to apply to have their sign erected.

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

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<u>For 11</u>	<u>Against 6</u>
Councillor Black (Chairperson); The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Groogan, Heading, McAllister, McLaughlin, McReynolds and Murphy.	Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Bunting and Pankhurst.

The amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion when, on a recorded vote, eleven Members voted for and six against and it was declared carried.

<u>For 11</u>	<u>Against 6</u>
Councillor Black (Chairperson); The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Groogan, Heading, McAllister, McLaughlin, McReynolds and Murphy.	Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Bunting and Pankhurst.

James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign

The Committee was reminded that it had, earlier in the meeting, in approving a Heritage Trail Sign Policy, agreed to initiate a four-week expression of interest exercise to provide any organisation wishing to develop a heritage trail involving the City Hall with an opportunity to apply to have their sign erected.

On that basis, the Committee agreed to defer a request from Redhead Exhibition to install an interpretative interactive sign on a bollard facing the North West lawn in the grounds of the City Hall until such time as the expression of interest exercise had concluded.

**Peace Plus 2021-2027 Consultation
(Content/Administration)**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 Members will be aware of the development of Peace Plus, which is a new cross-border programme that will contribute to a more prosperous and stable society in Northern Ireland and the border region of Ireland. It will succeed of both the current 2014 -2020 PEACEIV and INTERREG VA Programmes.**
- 1.2 The Council provided a formal response in February 2020 to the consultation on the Peace Plus policy objectives and the Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) is currently**

consulting further on the content and administrative arrangements for the future Peace Plus programme.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to submit for the Committee's consideration the draft Council response to the current consultation being undertaken by SEUPB on the Peace Plus Programme 2021 – 2027.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider/approve:

- The draft consultation response; and
- The draft cover letter providing further information to SEUPB on the opportunities for closer alignment of the Peace Plus Programme with Council and Belfast Agenda strategic ambitions.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 SEUPB has recently opened the public consultation phase of the PEACE PLUS Programme (value €1 billion) to seek views on the content and administrative arrangements of the overall PEACE PLUS Programme. The public consultation document published by SEUPB can be accessed [here](#)

3.2 The public consultation opened on 10th March 2021 and the deadline for responses is 12th May 2021. The consultation document has been prepared on the basis of extensive cross Council engagement to ensure the collective strategic ambitions of the Council and the Belfast Agenda have been reflected.

3.3 The PEACE PLUS Programme policy objectives were developed through extensive stakeholder engagement, which took place between December 2019 and February 2020. A total of 16 public events were held across the programme area, with over 1,000 people in attendance. Over 300 survey responses were submitted.

3.4 The overall Peace Plus Programme strategic policy objectives are summarised below (indicative regional budgets have been provided against each theme for information:

Theme 1 – Building Peaceful and Thriving Communities (€210m)
Theme 2 – Delivering Economic Regeneration and Transformation (€143m)

Theme 3 – Empowering and Investing in Our Young People (€110m)

Theme 4 – Healthy and Inclusive Communities (€155m)

Theme 5 – Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Futures (€265m)

Theme 6 – Building and Embedding Partnership and Collaboration (€47m)

- 3.5 Belfast City Council's history of excellence in delivery of peace and reconciliation programmes, as well as economic and regional development programmes means that the council is uniquely placed to continue to successfully deliver both capital and revenue projects for citizens of Belfast and the region under this forthcoming Peace Plus Programme.
- 3.6 This is further amplified with the opportunities provided by Community Planning to bring statutory partners and communities together as we collectively work towards those ambitions, and in particular, the next stage of developing funding proposals.
- 3.7 The draft consultation response has been circulated for Members' consideration.
- 3.8 Given the restrictive nature of the consultation document prepared by SEUPB (500 character limit at each section), a draft cover letter is also provided for Members consideration. This is to ensure Council is able to ensure all the strategic opportunities for alignment of the Peace Plus Programme with the Council and Belfast Agenda ambitions are clearly articulated to SEUPB, to influence their future direction.
- 3.9 For Members information, PEACE PLUS is a cross-border programme. However, single jurisdiction partnerships (i.e. project partnerships involving organisations from a single country) will continue to be eligible for funding provided they meet the recognised objectives. Projects addressing wider economic and territorial development challenges (as previously funded under INTERREG VA) will need to involve cross-border partnerships and beneficiaries.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 As detailed in the report.

This funding programme will be administered and managed by the Special EU Programmes Body and a competitive application process will operate to access funding.

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

- 3.11 Equality, Good Relations implications and rural needs have been considered at a programme level by SEUPB as the responsible body. Detail is provided in Part 5, Appendix 1, of the Public Consultation document”

After discussion, the Committee approved the draft cover letter and Council response accompanying the report and noted that Political Parties would in due course be briefed on potential Peace Plus projects.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Update on Physical Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme covers 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.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the following movements under the Capital Programme:

- Boodles Dam project (Stage 3 – Committed) proceed to contract award, with a maximum £560,000 budget allocated; and
- Waterfront Hall Escalators project moves to Stage 3 – Committed under the Capital Programme, with a maximum £1.1m budget allocated, subject to contract.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 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 which 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
Boodles Dam Abandonment and Redevelopment	To safely decommission Boodles Dam and develop the site for amenity use (located at Ligoniel Park – off the Ligoniel Road)	Stage 3 – Committed: Proceed to contractor appointment with a maximum budget of £560,000
Waterfront Hall Escalators	Upgrade of the Waterfront Escalators due to operational requirements	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £1.1m

Boodles Dam Abandonment and Redevelopment

- 3.3 Members will be aware that in September 2019 the Committee agreed to move Boodles Dam to Stage 3 – Committed. It was held at pre-tender stage pending tender return and Planning approval. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has now been achieved and it is recommended that a maximum of £560,000 is now allocated to this project, subject contract. The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are also asked to note that Council officers are working closely with the Living With Water Team on project including discussions on a wider project on the Mill Race within the Park.

Waterfront Hall Escalators

- 3.4 Members will be aware that the Waterfront Hall Escalators project was approved at the S P and R Committee meeting in August 2019 as a Stage 1- Emerging project. Members are asked to agree that the Waterfront Hall Escalators is moved through Stage 2 up to Stage 3 – Committed. Any project which is being moved 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. As required by the stage approvals process at Stage 2, a tender exercise has also been carried out and a satisfactory tender has been returned. It is recommended that a maximum of £1.1m is now allocated to this project on this basis. The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5 Financial – the Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed these projects are within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resources – officer time to deliver as required.

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Assets Management

The Committee approved the following:

- i. **Land at Village Green**
 - the granting of a licence to the Greater Village Regeneration Trust for the installation of planters and benches at Village Green and their ongoing maintenance for a period of two years;
- ii. **Sally Gardens**
 - the acquisition of c.0.053 acres of land from the Department for Communities; and

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iii. Old Golf Course Road

- the acquisition of c.0.0064 acres of land from the Department for Infrastructure.

Update on Area Working Groups

Subject to the declaration which had been made by Councillor T. Kelly being amended to reflect that her husband was on the Board of Belfast South Community Resources, rather than an employee, the Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group of 25th March, including the following recommendations:

- i. **Lagan Gateway Project** – to approve the recommendation on operation and management of the lock and associated areas by the Lagan Navigation Trust and note that recommendations which were made to the People and Communities Committee in April regarding a naming competition for the new bridge and an art piece in partnership with UK Youth for Nature;
- ii. **Sandy Row Tourism Signage Project** – to approve the recommendation that the Council acts as the delivery agent for the Belfast South Community Resources – Sandy Row Tourism signage SOF04 project;
- iii. **Community Capacity Building and Community Infrastructure Needs in Balmoral DEA** – that a mapping exercise on the current provision of community capacity and infrastructure in the Balmoral District Electoral Area, its core functions and gaps in provision, be incorporated into the mapping exercise which had already commenced around community and physical infrastructure provision in South Belfast overall; and
- iv. that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for Justice requesting that the Council be given additional enforcement powers around the seizure of alcohol and noise control, in the context of the opening of the night time economy once the Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Update on Contracts

The Committee approved the public advertisement of tenders, in line with Standing Order 37a, as detailed in table the below:

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Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Management and coordination/referrals of service provision for the Traveller Communities. (fully funded)	Up to 1 year and 5 months	£66,000	S Toland / R Black	To develop and enhance infrastructure that enables a coordinated approach in accessing services and service delivery for the Travelling Community in Belfast.
Design and programme management support for each of the key stages of the Belfast Agenda refresh as agreed by the Belfast Community Planning Partnership	Up to 2 years	£75,000	J Tully	Sections 69 and 70 of the Local Government Act 2014 set out the statutory requirements for the review of community plans which must be completed before the fourth anniversary of the date on which the Plan was published.
2023 Creative Development	Up to 2.5 years	£175,000	A Reid	Seeking external expertise and leadership in the hosting of a large-scale cultural programme in Belfast in 2023.
Telephony software assurance and support	Up to 1 year	£42,474	R Cregan	The corporate telephony solution requires that all devices and users have licensing support in the form of software assurance. This not only provides ongoing support, but also functionality.

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T2085 (b) Provision of a Shared Spaces and Services Volunteer Training PEACE IV Programme Services	Up to 24 months	£124,000	S Toland / R Black	Delivery of volunteer training as part of the Peace IV programme of work - Seeking re approved as duration has increased.
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The Committee agreed that a request to approve the public advertisement of tenders for the hire of minibuses/coaches for Council events and for the provision of taxi services be deferred until its next meeting to enable further information to be provided.

Equality and Good Relations

Revised Dual Language Street Signs Policy

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the revised Dual Language Street Signs Policy to reflect the approach agreed by Members which was ratified by the Council in January 2021 for the purposes of issuing for public consultation.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the draft policy, as attached.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Legislative basis

Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, provides for street naming, street numbering and the provision of street signs. It also gives Councils the discretionary power to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in a language other than English. Article 11(4) requires the Council in deciding whether to exercise its discretion in relation to the erection of a second nameplate, to have regard to any views on the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in a street.

3.2 Background to the Dual Language Street Signs Policy

The Council first agreed a Dual Language Street Sign Policy in 1995 but deferred implementation of it to enable resource implications to be agreed. In [1998](#), the Council agreed to implement the policy which provides that only applications supported by a petition of one third of residents of the street will trigger a formal consultation of residents on the street. If two-thirds of the residents of the street respond positively to the consultation, the threshold is deemed to be met for the erection of a second language street sign.

3.3 In [2007](#), the Council agreed a one-year pilot whereby any application submitted through local Elected Representatives be progressed directly to survey stage. In [2008](#) Council agreed to revert to the original policy.

3.4 The policy was incorporated into a new wider Policy on Naming of Streets and Numbering of Buildings which had been drafted to provide clear guidance on the naming of street and numbering of buildings in [2009](#). In [2012](#), the Council reaffirmed the existing policy after considering a number of proposed amendments.

3.5 The policy was subject to a judicial review in 2014 which was successfully defended by the Council (the results of which were reported to committee in [2015](#)). In summary, Mr Justice Horner found that the Council's decision making process was lawful; as a general proposition, international treaties or agreements which have not been incorporated into national laws are not enforceable; and that the Council had a residual discretion within the policy to allow due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of each application.

3.6 Key Issues

New agreed approach

On 7th January 2021, the Council ratified a decision taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd October to adopt a new policy position, following a Notice of Motion which was raised in February 2020. Different approaches were proposed. Legal advice was given setting out the need to include certain parameters otherwise some of the proposed approaches would be vulnerable to judicial review such as the need for setting a minimum response threshold and the need to have regard to the consultation response in full, including non-responses even if they are no longer deemed as not being in favour of an application.. The decision made in October was called in and

counsel opinion was sought which found that the decision did not satisfy the following grounds for call-in:

- the procedural grounds on the basis that there was no failure to take into account relevant considerations including resources;
- the disproportionate adverse impact grounds on the basis that the policy when drafted will be subject to equality screening and consultation; and that the operation of residual discretion will allow for appropriate consideration of any potentially sensitive decisions.

3.7 Language Strategy Context

This policy applies to all languages although the majority of applications to date have been for signs in Irish. The revised policy aims to reflect historical international frameworks aimed at protecting and promoting regional and minority languages³ which, while not legally binding until enshrined into domestic law, the UK is a signatory state. These recognise the value of bilingual or trilingual signage as affirmation that the presence of linguistic diversity is appreciated⁴ and as a demonstration of the diverse character of the region⁵.

3.8 The proposed lower thresholds proposed in the policy is based on the level of population thresholds recommended by the guidebook of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues⁶ (emphasis added):

‘Street and locality names and topographical indicators intended for the public are important as markers of social identity, culture and history. A good, practical approach adopted in most countries is for the authorities to provide transparent legislation or procedures to allow bilingual or even trilingual signs, usually following the proportionality principle where there is a sufficient concentration or demand for such signs in minority languages. While national legislation varies, the low threshold where it is considered practicable and reasonable to provide such signs tends to vary between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of the local population, with the lowest threshold usually associated with the use of a minority language that also has some kind of official

³ UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966; UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966; Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), 1992; Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), 1994

⁴ [Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on the Netherlands](#), 2019, para 116

⁵ [Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Croatia](#), 2015, para 66

⁶ [Language Rights of Linguistic Minorities: A Practical Guide for Implementation](#), 2017

status or for traditional, historical reasons. The criteria for the display of signs in minority languages must be given a clear and unambiguous legislative basis for it to be effectively implemented. Bilingual or multilingual signs used by public authorities demonstrate inclusiveness, and that various population groups share a locality in harmony and mutual respect.’

- 3.9 In addition, the Committee of Experts who annually audit signatory states on their implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages have made references to the need for lower thresholds in their reports:

‘The Committee of Experts urges the Czech authorities to adopt a flexible approach ensuring the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Charter to all regional or minority languages and to encourage local authorities to apply the Charter where there is a demand, irrespective of any thresholds.’⁷

‘The Committee of Experts notes that limiting the possibility for users of regional or minority languages to submit oral or written applications in these languages to municipalities where 20% of the population belong to a minority amounts to a territorial reservation which is incompatible with the Charter. Besides, the 20% threshold appears in any case too high, as the number of people justifying protection measures under the Charter is commonly well below this percentage.’⁸

3.10 The Key Changes

The updated policy is attached. The key changes are as follows:

- the trigger for a consultation of the occupiers of a street will be an application to the Council by a resident / residents of the street or an Elected Member representing that District Electoral Area, as opposed to an application from anyone, supported by a petition of 1/3 of occupiers. In order for further consideration as to the erection of a second language street sign to take place, the threshold for the percentage of residents responding positively is 15% instead of 2/3;
- People not returning a reply are no longer deemed not to be in favour of the application;
- Each application will be equality, good relations and rural needs screened;

⁷ [Application of the Charter in Czech Republic ECRML \(2015\) 6](#)

⁸ [Application of the Charter in Poland ECRML \(2011\) 5](#)

- **Members may want to consider whether they will exercise their residual discretion at the point when an application is received and decide as to whether to progress that application to the stage of surveying the street in question or not.**

3.11 Checks and Balances

In the previously agreed report, some key principles were suggested which have been incorporated into the policy:

- 1. That the policy will be used for the promotion of language rights and for the benefit of linguistic communities.**
- 2. That the principles of equality, promoting good relations and respect will underpin the application of the policy in addition to the rights promoted by the policy itself:**
 - **Based on legal advice, each application will be subject to an equality, good relations and rural needs screening.**
 - **The Council retains an overriding residual discretion to take the particular circumstances of each application into account in deciding whether or not a second language street name plate should be erected. In summary, there may be circumstances when notwithstanding the consultation response it may be appropriate to depart from the policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. Guidance will be provided to Members on the factors which should be considered when using this discretion.**
 - **And, as is the case at present, the Council will consider the best approach for any applications relating to long streets.**
- 3. That, as with any statutory consultation which the council is required to undertake, the City Solicitor may intervene if any complaint is made and a basis for that complaint established.**
- 4. That any decision relating to the erection of a second nameplate in the city centre(business core) will, in addition to the current policy considerations, be subject to a wider public consultation to reflect the community of users.**
- 5. That the policy will cover the corporately designated Gaeltacht Quarter until such time as a policy which may contain specific proposals in respect of a bilingual strategy have been adopted.**

3.12 Equality, good relations and rural needs screening of each application

The Council is bound by its duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under its own Equality Scheme to have due regard to the need to the promote equality of opportunity and to have regard to promoting good relations.

The Council's Good Relations Strategy, adopted in 2019, is committed to creating shared spaces. It states (p. 17): 'This Strategy aims to promote sharing over separation and the economic, social and environmental benefits of such. We need to continue to create spaces for communities to interact and make connections with each other, moving from parallel living to meaningful relationships and casual interactions'. Based on legal advice, each application will be subject to an equality, good relations and rural needs screening.

Information gathered during the screening process will be considered by the Committee as part of its residual discretion. The exercise of the Committee's residual discretion will ensure that second language street signs will not be erected in a manner which could undermine Good Relations at a neighbourhood level.

3.13 Public Consultation

A public consultation document is being prepared and will be published on the Engagement HQ platform. The consultation will run for a period of [12/14] weeks and will include a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods of assessing public opinion in order to ensure widespread and meaningful engagement including two remote public meetings. Informal pre-consultation engagement has taken place with the indigenous language community groups namely Foras na Gaeilge, Conradh na Gaeilge and the Ulster Scots Agency. This consultation document will be sent to the other relevant language community groups in Belfast for their feedback. Advice will be sought from Marketing and Communications for communications support due to the high level of interest when this decision was made at Committee.

3.14 Next Steps

The following timetable is proposed:

- April: commission EQIA
- May – Sept: carry out 12/14 week public consultation
- Sept/Oct: update documents based on consideration of consultation responses and prepare consultation report
- Oct: submit final policy to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

3.15 Financial and Resource Implications

- As agreed previously, given the potential for increased numbers of applications the council will deal with no more than 5 in any given month. If numbers are excessive they will be held in a queue and dealt with in the order in which they have been received. This will also be managed in the context of the existing staffing resource and the established annual budget for street signage. A report will be submitted to a future meeting outlining the potential for increasing the number of applications which could be processed on a monthly basis, taking into account the new procedure emanating from the revised policy.
- Screening each application will have resource implications for Building Control, the Place & Economy Policy team, the Good Relations Unit and also the Equality and Diversity Unit.
- The budget for commissioning an EQIA will be covered within existing budgets in Place and Economy. The proposed budget for an EQIA is £6,000 - £8,000. This takes into account a number of supporting workshops and engagement events and the option of including additional equality expertise in the EQIA contract.

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

It is anticipated that the updated policy will be screened in for an EQIA which will be commissioned externally and issued for feedback as part of the public consultation. It is also anticipated that each application for a dual language street name will be screened for equality / good relations / rural needs implications.”

Draft Dual Language Street Signs Policy

1.0 Legislation

The statutory basis for this function is contained within Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 which commenced on 15 March 1995. It provides for street naming, street numbering and the provision of street signs. It also gives Councils the discretionary power to erect dual language street signs or secondary nameplates in a language other than English.

2.0 Introduction

The legislation requires the Council, in deciding whether and how to exercise its discretion to erect a street name in a language other than English, to have regard to any views on the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to which the U.K. is a signatory, was taken into account when developing this policy, as was guidance published by the UN Special Rapporteur on the practical implementation of language rights of linguistic minorities. The Council's Language Strategy adopted by the Council in May 2018 sets out the Council's commitment to establish a transparent set of principles for promoting, protecting and enhancing the linguistic diversity of the city.

The European Charter establishes an obligation on state signatories not to create barriers in respect of the use of a minority language. The UN Special Rapporteur guidance notes that the threshold where it is reasonable and practical to provide such signs varies between 5 percent and 20 percent of the local population. While this policy applies to all languages, the Council recognises that Irish and Ulster Scots are recognised as minority languages in the European Charter.

For the purposes of this policy "Occupiers" shall be taken to be any person whose name appears in the current Electoral Register plus the owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, but not employees in such premises.

These policy proposals were developed in close consultation with the City Solicitor and are designed to promote consistent and reasonable responses. However, the policy should not be applied in such a way as to prevent due consideration being given to the particular circumstances of each application. See in particular Section 3(xi) below.

Having regard to the significant resource consequences of administering the implications of the policy, the policy will be reactive in nature. The policy will be managed and implemented based on the resources available and the established annual budget for street signage. The Council reserves the right to pause the processing of applications in the event that resources are not sufficient.

3.0 Procedure

The procedures for seeking and assessing the views of Occupiers and the criteria to be applied in deciding whether to erect a street sign in a language other than English are as follows:

- (i) Applications for the erection of a street sign in a language other than English must be made by an Applicant submitting an application form either by post or electronically to Belfast City Council.
- (ii) An application for the erection of a street sign in a language other than English may be made by an 'Applicant' which for purposes of this policy means: (a) an Occupier or Occupiers of the street for which the application is made, (b) an Elected Member of Belfast City Council who represents the District Electoral Area in which the street is located or (c) a developer of a new street. Any application submitted by a developer with regard to a new street will be considered by the Council in accordance with Section 3(xi) of this policy. With regard to streets without any Occupiers, applications for the erection of a street sign in a language other than English may only be made by an Elected Member who represents the District Electoral Area in which the street is located. The Council will have regard to Section 3(xi) of this policy when considering any such application.
- (iii) When an application is received, the Council will canvass by post all Occupiers of that street and seek their views on the request to erect a street sign in a second specified language. Options for a response will be 'Yes', 'No' and 'No Preference'. The Council will note for its records those Occupiers who do not reply. Reply will be by way of a pre-paid envelope and should be returned within one month of receipt.
- (iv) Each survey that is sent out by the Council to the Occupiers of a street for which an application is made will have a unique identifier number. Survey responses received by the Council for that application will be cross-referenced against that unique identifier and will be recorded. The Council may choose to audit certain responses to surveys. These measures are to provide assurance that each Occupier's view is taken into account.

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- (v) Applications will be dealt with in the order that they are received.**
- (vi) Each application will be subject to a screening on equality, good relations and rural needs. This screening will commence when the application is received and will incorporate the results of the survey completed by the Occupiers.**
- (vii) Where fifteen percent or more of the Occupiers of that street have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign may be erected, subject to the residual discretion of the Council as specified in subsection (xi) below.**
- (viii) If the minimum threshold of fifteen percent is not met, the Applicant will be given two weeks to advise the Council of any special circumstances in relation to the application. If such special circumstances relate to the processing of a survey, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, in conjunction with the City Solicitor will determine whether such exceptional circumstances exist to refer the matter to Committee. Where exceptional circumstances relate to matters other than the processing of a survey, the matter will be referred to Committee. If there are no special circumstances, the application will end.**
- (ix) A report on all applications (other than those ended in the circumstances specified in subsection (viii) above) will be brought to Committee for a decision.**
- (x) Consideration will to be given to “long streets” where opinion on whether to have a second language street sign may differ between readily identifiable, substantial lengths of the street. In these circumstances, the decision as to the erection of dual language nameplates in certain portions of the street will be made by Committee, exercising its residual discretion and taking into account advice from officers.**
- (xi) The Council will retain a residual discretion to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case by case basis. It may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account:**

- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street;
 - (b) the results of the equality screening for the application, which will include the results of any adverse impact on good relations and rural needs;
 - (c) consideration of the local context of the application;
 - (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application and
 - (e) all material considerations relating to the application.
- (xii) When a decision has been taken to erect a street sign in a second language, appropriate arrangements for the translation from English to that second language will be made. The translation will be carried out by an independent, competent body such as the appropriate Language Department at Queen's University or other appropriate, independent and competent institution.
- (xiii) With regard to the design and placing of the street signs the second language sign shall be located immediately below the English sign and the size of lettering shall be smaller than the English version to avoid any risk of confusion to the emergency services.

4.0 Adoption by Council

This policy was adopted by the Council on..... (*date to be left blank until the policy receives Council approval*)”

On a vote, thirteen Members voted in favour of the recommendation to adopt the draft Dual Language Street Signs Policy and six against and it was declared carried.

Language Strategy – Proposed Strategic Approach

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request approval for a proposed strategic approach for the implementation of the Language Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the establishment of:

- i. a cross-party, bi-annual / quarterly Member Language Strategy Working Group;**
- ii. a new external Irish Language Forum and a new external Ulster-Scots Forum to add to the existing Council stakeholder fora for the other language communities; and**
- iii. an internal Language Strategy officer working group.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The Council launched its Language Strategy in April 2018, which has two key purposes:

- 1. Indigenous languages: to protect and promote awareness of our indigenous languages: Irish and Ulster-Scots; and**
- 2. Other languages: to promote access to, inclusion of and awareness of other languages: sign languages, the languages of new communities who live in Belfast, and languages and communication for disabled people.**

3.2 The Language Strategy was introduced to reflect:

- 1. To protect and promote awareness of our two indigenous languages:**
 - historical international frameworks aimed at protecting and promoting regional and minority languages⁹ which, while not legally binding until enshrined into domestic law, the UK is a signatory state;**

⁹ UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966; UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966; Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), 1992; Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), 1994

- commitments under the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement 1998 and the St Andrews Agreement 2006;
 - regional strategies and frameworks such as DCAL's Irish Language and Ulster-Scots Strategies in 2015;
 - developments in approach to language issues in Belfast City Council and other councils in NI
2. To promote access to, inclusion of and awareness of other languages
- changing demographics in the city population and the need to promote access to Council services in languages other than English
 - national laws promoting diversity and inclusion.

3.3 Background to the Development of the Language Strategy

The Council first considered the issue of language and the implications of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 2002. In 2006, the Council agreed a Language Policy to address legislative obligations based on the needs and priorities of linguistic groups and to act as a guide for Council officers. This policy was subsequently extended in 2007 to cover signage in all Council facilities that "the signs inside Council properties be either pictorial, tactile or in English or a combination of these, but that a multi-lingual Welcome sign be provided where there is appropriate demand".

- 3.4 The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was critical of this decision in its 2010 Briefing Paper on Minority Language Rights, noting that because it stipulates that the name of the facility can be in English only that it "in effect, prohibits the use of Irish in signage on all of the Council facilities". Their view was that the policy generally conflicts with the spirit of and is also incompatible with several articles of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) in particular Article 10 which applies to Administrative authorities and public services.
- 3.5 The Council agreed to review the Language Policy in 2012. In November 2013, a revised Language Policy which incorporated legal advice from a QC to ensure the Council's compliance with all relevant legal obligations was brought through the Party Group Leaders' Forum and Historical Centenaries Working Group however no agreement was reached.

The group recommended at their meeting in October 2012 that the current guidelines should be extended to incorporate Irish versions of the official logo and branding since this would regularise the current position. The Irish version would then be available for use by individual Members and organisations.

3.6 At that time, the demands of Local Government Reform prioritised work streams in that area and consequently the 2006 Language Policy remained in place. In late 2016 a decision was made to revisit the 2006 Language Policy and following refreshed engagement with key stakeholders a draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity was issued for consultation in 2017. This included three draft policies aimed at Irish, Ulster-Scots and other languages which are set out in the Language Strategy document. Following the outcome of the public consultation, in September 2017 Members a set of recommendations including:

- The draft Linguistic Diversity Policy should be re-branded as a Language Strategy, outlining a strategic approach to the development of accessible and inclusive communications;
- Separate strands of work should be established under the strategy, for example – Irish Language, Ulster-Scots Language, Sign Language, New Communities' Communications and Language, and Communications and Language Strand for those with a Disability;
- Each strand should be assessed fully to inform appropriate resourcing, for example with dedicated human and material resources that are tailored to the particular needs and priorities of that language community;
- To take forward these recommendations, an action plan should be put in place with immediate effect, setting out a staged approach to full implementation, with resources made available for each strand in order to provide continued momentum to the emerging strategy.

The three draft policies were redefined into specific community needs (see section 3.5 of the Language Strategy) and it was stated “that the development of different policies under the strategy will accommodate the different aspirations and priorities of each language community, balanced through needs and constraints”. Draft aims for each language work strands

were set out. The draft language policies are included in an appendix to the Language Strategy for reference.

- 3.7 The Council has also made some individual decisions in relation to signage such as a welcome sign in Falls Park in 1999; that banners and hoarding in the Gaeltacht Quarter as part of the City Dressing Plan 2012/13 and the Investment Programme in 2012 would be in both Irish and English; and in 2012, it was agreed that the Nollaig Shona (Happy Christmas) sign donated by An Cultúrlann would continue to be erected at the East entrance to the City Hall. More recently, as Members will be aware, the Council has carried out public consultations in relation to leisure centre signage. Members have also agreed an approach to revise the Dual Language Street Signs Policy which is subject to a separate report to this Committee.
- 3.8 The launch of the current Language Strategy was followed by the recruitment of two language officers in September 2018 with the approval of an Action Plan in December 2018 to cover the period up to March 2020. Highlights from this programme of work across all five of the language strands have been circulated. This has included hosting events for Seachtain na Gaeilge/Irish Language Week for schools and schoolchildren; launching a Pocket Guide to Ulster-Scots Place Names in Belfast; signing the British Deaf Association British Sign Language & Irish Sign Language Charter and becoming the first public sector organisation in Northern Ireland to offer SignVideo which allows Sign Language users to contact the council using a live video Sign Language interpreter; developing a 'Valuing Languages' film with Queen's University Belfast showcasing 15 languages used in Belfast today; and developing a dedicated webpage to support people with disabilities to access the Council's services. It should be noted that resourcing issues in the Equality and Diversity Unit, which are now being resolved, has delayed progress in this area.

3.9 **Key Issues**

In order to take forward the further development of the Language Strategy, it is now proposed:

- To establish a political governance structure to enable Members to contribute to and inform the further development and implementation of the Language Strategy;
- To establish two additional external stakeholder fora to enable discussion with and feedback from the language sectors in the city to add to the existing consultation fora for the other language sectors;

- To establish an internal officer working group to ensure a joined up corporate approach on areas related to language such as physical signage, documents translation, website/communications, promotion of heritage and culture;
- To develop an updated action plan for each strand of the Language Strategy including the development of language-related policies and protocols to be considered within the Council's existing budgetary constraints.

It should be noted by Members, that the Council may be facing unprecedented budgetary challenges in the coming years and these actions plans will have to be developed in light of these circumstances.

3.10 Governance

It is proposed that a cross-party Members' Language Strategy Working Group is established to look at language issues and how these are addressed. This group would meet quarterly in the first instance and as required and would comprise one representative from each party. Representatives from different language sectors would be invited to address the group in order to promote understanding of the issues in this area. Direct engagement with the Council's external language stakeholder fora would also be arranged. The Working Group would also receive updates and consider proposals from the Language Officers on their areas of work and would make recommendations on proposed actions plans and policy development. These recommendations would then be referred to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for agreement, as required.

3.11 External Stakeholder Engagement

It is also proposed to establish groups to ensure that the Council can meaningful engage with relevant stakeholders on each strand of the Language Strategy. The Council already has groups relating to Sign Language (Sign Language Users' Forum), New Communities (Migrant Forum) and Disability Communications (Disability Advisory Panel). It is suggested that two new external fora are established for Irish and Ulster Scots. This would ensure there is a mechanism for communities in each language strand to identify and prioritise issues and influence the development of the Council's approach. It would also be an opportunity for the Council to communicate progress on current actions to these

groups. It is envisaged that the two new groups would meet three times a year.

3.12 Internal Corporate Co-ordination

To ensure a corporate joined-up approach the existing Equality and Diversity Network – Operational (or if needed a sub-group established) will be used to share information and co-ordinate work in relation to the Language Strategy. It is suggested this should comprise council officers from across the council including Marketing and Corporate Communications; the Good Relations Unit; Physical Programmes; Heritage, Culture and Arts and the Customer Focus Programme as it relates to matters such as physical signage, translation of documents, use of website/communications, and the promotion of heritage and culture (in particular place names).

**3.13 Public consultation on leisure centre signage
And other language-related queries**

It is suggested that the results of the public consultation on leisure centre signage is considered through this Working Group giving due consideration to the views expressed in the responses to the consultation. This decision was deferred to a later date by Strategic Policy and Resources at the outset of the pandemic. In addition, some physical projects are approaching completion with queries already arising related to requests for English / Irish signage, for example in the new Collin Park, which is funded by Urban Villages and will transfer to the Council following completion; and work on the City Cemetery Refurbishment project which is due to be completed in the autumn. The Council has recently received identical email requests for Irish / English signage in 11 parks reflecting the need to promote a wider understanding of the Council's current agreed policy position in relation to signage in other languages.

3.14 Action Plans 2021-23

Draft action plans for each of the five strands of the Language Strategy will be developed in consultation with members of the external stakeholder groups. It is proposed that these action plans would be considered and agreed by the new Language Strategy Working Group. Any outstanding actions from the previous action plan have been included in the draft new action plans and progress would be reported through the Language Strategy Working Group.

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3.15 Financial and Resource Implications

This work will be covered by existing budgets.

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

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

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**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 12th April, including the following recommendations:

- i. to approve the proposed recruitment process for a Community and Voluntary Representative for East Belfast and agree that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Shared City Partnership, together with the Good Relations Manager, conduct the shortlisting process and subsequent interviews;
- ii. to note that the Committee would be required to endorse the successful applicant, prior to them being appointed;
- iii. noted the indicative timetable for the recruitment process and that interviews might have to be conducted virtually, depending upon the public health regulations in place at that time; and
- iv. noted that the meeting of the Shared City Partnership in May would take the form of a facilitated discussion on addressing sectarianism in the City, with an external facilitator being invited to facilitate the meeting, and that other agenda items would be kept to a minimum.

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 15th April.

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**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Social Value Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Value Working Group of 30th March.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations made in respect of applications received up to 9th April, 2021, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Belfast Law Society	September 2021 <i>Dependent on City Hall recovery and COVID guidelines</i>	Centenary Year Celebration Dinner to celebrate achievements and successes and to thank those who have contributed (very largely on a voluntary basis) to the Society's work. Numbers attending – 200 <i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>	C & D	Yes - £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality
Ulster University Business School	April 2022 <i>Dependent on City Hall recovery and COVID guidelines</i>	Gastronomy Summit 2022 Dinner as part of a 3-day conference in Ulster University	B	No – charity	No hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality

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		Belfast Campus. Numbers attending – 130 <i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>				
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Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 13th April, 2021

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Baker (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, Cobain, Corr,
de Faoite, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, McAteer,
McCusker, McReynolds, Mulholland,
Pankhurst, Smyth and Verner.

Also attended: Councillor O'Hara.

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

Apologies for inability to attend were recorded on behalf of Councillors Michael Collins and Michelle Kelly.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th March 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 April.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Black declared an interest in respect of item 2 (c) in relation to the Update on the Community Provision Grant Funding Approach 2021/22, on the basis that she managed the Grosvenor Community Centre. Councillor Verner also declared an interest in that she was an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership. Both Members left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Councillor McAteer declared an interest in item 5 (b) Lagan Gateway Update in that she was the Belfast City Council representative on the Lagan Navigation Trust.

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

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following 3 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Promoter Hire Requests - Boucher Road Playing Fields and Botanic Gardens

The Committee considered a number of requests from promoters seeking permission to use the Boucher Road Playing Fields and the Botanic Gardens to hold various events during specific dates throughout 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) granted authority for UP Productions to use the Boucher Road Playing Fields for the AVA Music Festival during September 2022, 2023 and 2024;
- (ii) granted authority for Aiken Promotions to use the Boucher Road Playing Fields for a number of agreed events during July 2022 and 2023 and for events during May, June and July 2024 and 2025;
- (iii) granted authority for Aiken to use the Botanic Gardens for a number of agreed events during May and June 2023 and 2024, 2025;
- (iv) delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to negotiate:
 - an appropriate fee which would take into consideration the costs to Council, aim to minimise any negative impact on the immediate area and take account of the potential wider benefit to the City economy, in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Manager;
 - satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to;
 - the promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
 - the promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service, including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence; and
 - a review clause, which would allow for consideration of any issues during the previous events, prior to any authorisation for future years.
- (v) noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position, in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which was currently being progressed in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Team.

Request to film using a drone at Mary Peters Track

The Committee considered a request seeking permission to film using a SUA (Small Unmanned Aircraft/Drone) at the Mary Peters Track.

The Committee was advised that, in the absence of the Council having an agreed Drone Policy, this request required Committee approval.

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The Committee approved the request from Greg Campbell, Civil Engineering Ltd Skytask Aerial Imaging to film the Belfast Milers Meet (Athletics Event) using a SUA at the Mary Peters Track on 29th May, 2021 from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm, subject to the completion of the appropriate Event Management Plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the event organisers:

- resolve all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- meet all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and
- adhere to Government Covid19 Regulations in place at the time of the event.

Community Provision Grant Funding Approach 2021/22

The Committee considered a detailed report which provided an update in regard to the proposed Community Grant Funding Approach for 2021/22. The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided a comprehensive update in respect of each of the following areas of funding, along with proposed funding approach and key objectives of each of the specific community funds:

- Community Capacity and Community Buildings Revenue Grants;
- Advice Grants;
- Project/Activity Grants - COVID-19 Community Support Funding Stream (Micro and Medium Grants);
- Independently Managed Community Centres and Service Level Agreements;
- Strategic Area Based and Strategic Thematic Grant Funding; and
- Department for Communities Food and Essential Supplies Transition Fund.

Several Members expressed concern at the lack of capacity within certain communities which were deemed to have a weak community infrastructure and sought an assurance that assistance would be provided to these communities. The Director advised that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting which would give consideration in regard to future capacity building within communities.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- (i) agreed that six month Letters of Offer for 2021/22 be issued to all existing recipients of the Council's Community Capacity and Community Buildings Revenue Grants at an approximate value of 50% of their 2020/21 grant allocation;
- (ii) agreed that six month Letters of Offer for 2021/22 be issued to each of the five Advice Consortia at an approximate value of 50% of their 2020/21 grant allocation;
- (iii) approved the Micro and Medium Grant Scheme 2021/22 grant approach, initially at the budgets specified;
- (iv) agreed that six month Letters of Offer for 2021/22 be issued to each of the Independently Managed Centres and SLA's at an approximate value of 50% of their 2020/21 grant allocation; and
- (v) delegated authority to the Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood Services to:

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- accept additional funding and, subject to demand and criteria of external funders, extend the indicative budgets/list of grant priorities;
- pause and re-open the micro grant programme as needed, based on demand and available budget; and
- issue Letters of Offer for all micro/medium grants under the existing scheme of delegation.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

Response from the Minister for Communities

Re: draft Departmental Budget for 2021-22 in relation to the future funding for advice services

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th February, it had been agreed that the Council would write to the Communities Minister to highlight the Committee's concern in relation to the future funding for advice services. She drew the Members' attention to the response that had been received on behalf of Minister Hargey.

The response advised that the Department allocated more than £6.4m annually to support Advice Services, including debt advice and help with benefit appeals. Most of this funding was allocated to Councils through the Community Support Fund. It went on to state that the draft 2021/22 budget presented very significant challenges for the Executive and across all departments. That said the Minister had a very clear public commitment to the work of the independent advice sector and the need to continue these services, particularly for those who were going through welfare changes.

It concluded by stating that the Minister had advised the Assembly that she would find the required funding in the budget in the new financial year.

The Committee noted the response and agreed to write a further letter to the Department for Communities to seek an update on the Council's allocation under the Community Support Programme for the current financial year.

Responses Re: Motion- Application fees in the private rented sectors

The Democratic Services Officer reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 9th March, it had agreed that it would write to the Department for Communities and Department of Finance regarding the motion passed by the Council to outline concerns in regard to application fees in the private rented sector and to pledge the Council's support for regulation of the sector which had been proposed by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Kyle. She drew the Members' attention to the responses that had been received.

The Department for Communities (DfC) had advised that the court ruling referred to was based on Department of Finance legislation - The Commission on Disposals of Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. This legislation prohibited letting agents from charging a tenant any fee for a service that should be paid by the landlord. It stated that the Department welcomes the protection this provides to private tenants, and advises that steps had been taken to advise those living in the sector of their rights under the Department of Finance legislation.

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The correspondence also referred to the 2017 Review of the Role and Regulation of the Private Rented Sector which had examined the broader issue of introducing a regulatory framework for all letting agents. It stated that the Minister had recently recommitted to this work and that the Department would pursue this objective in the longer term.

The Finance Minister had advised that his Department had responsibility for substantive land law matters and in the absence of specific legislation relating to letting agent fees, tenants had been able to rely on the provisions of the Commission on Disposals of Land (NI) Order 1986. He detailed that those provisions highlighted a general rule of land law that the buyer (or tenant) was not liable to fees that should be paid for by the seller (or landlord). With this in my mind, he advised that he, along with the Communities Minister, had issued correspondence to remind such agents of the law in relation to such fees. He stated that he was disappointed that there was evidence of continuing practice by agents in charging fees that have been ruled unlawful by the courts.

He noted that further targeted action might be required, including steps to regulate letting agents, and advised that Department of Finance officials would liaise further with officials in the Communities Department in the context of that Department's remit over the private rented sector.

Councillor Flynn asked for his disappointment in the responses to be noted.

Noted.

**Response from Department for Communities –
Affordable Warmth Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th March, it had agreed that the Council write to the Communities Minister to request that any underspend in funding for the Affordable Warmth Scheme (AWS) in 2020-2021 be ring-fenced for the use of the scheme and carried over into the next financial year.

The Democratic Services Officer drew the Members' attention to a response that had been received on behalf of Minister Hargey.

The correspondence advised that, under current budgeting rules, the Department did not have year-end flexibility and therefore any funding not used before the end of March 2020 would be lost to the Department. It went on to state that the Department would, however, aim to minimise any reduced requirements and seek to use these elsewhere within the Department, where budget rules permitted.

The Committee was also advised that Mr. David Polley, Director Housing Supply Policy, had agreed to attend a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee to further discuss the AWS, following an invitation extended to him after the February meeting of the Committee.

Noted.

Governance

Notices of Motion - Quarterly Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Committee on the agreement at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that all Standing Committees will receive a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion they are responsible for and to provide the first quarterly update for People and Communities Committee.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the People and Communities Committee:

- Notes the process for reporting Notices of Motion through Standing Committees agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and outlined in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3;
- Notes the updates to all Notices of Motion that P&C Committee is responsible for as referenced in the Appendix 1 which is attached to the report; and
- Agree to the closure of 24 Notices of Motion, noted in paragraph 3.7 below.

3.0 Main report

3.0 Background

3.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 25th October 2019, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

‘That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:

- 1. Date received**
- 2. Notice of 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 Notices of Motion 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 November Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to close 69 Notices of Motion.
- 3.3 The remaining Notices of motion were added to a new database alongside all subsequent Notices of Motion to enable quarterly reporting to the relevant Standing Committee. This is the first of the quarterly updates for People and Communities Committee showing 52 currently active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which this Committee is responsible for.

Notice of Motion Updates

- 3.4 People and Communities 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 Notices of Motion. Nevertheless, there has been progress on a number of Notices of Motion.
- 3.5 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 Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance

- 3.6 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 20th November, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:
- Category 1 - Notices of Motion which contained an action that has been completed. All Notices of Motion within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a Notice of Motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the Notice of Motion. As these are not technically part of the Notice of Motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The Notice of 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 - Notices of Motion have become Council policy or absorbed in to a strategic programme of work. 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.

3.7 The Committee are asked to agree that the following 24 Notices of Motion are now closed:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- **Unadopted Alleyways (Ref number 8).** Update report presented to People and Communities December 20 addressing motion. Further relevant report on Alleygating Phase 5 programme approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee March 21.
- **Domestic Violence (Ref number 21).** Safe City Status accreditation in place which we must work to retain every year. The Notice of Motion is closed as the specific tasks have been completed.
- **Alley-gating Programme (Ref number 31).** Alleygating Phase 5 report presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March 21 with agreement to take forward recommendations.
- **Purple Air (Ref number 37).** Members have been updated on relevant air quality issues including the Air Quality workshop and the Air Quality Action Plan over several reports since this issue was raised. We are undertaking a detailed assessment for the city area that will employ a combination of additional ambient air quality monitoring alongside detailed atmospheric dispersion monitoring. This is therefore closed as the specific tasks have been completed.
- **Girdwood (Ref number 41).** Update provided to North AWG in January 2020 as requested.
- **Compass Counselling (Ref number 64).** Funding of £20k provided.
- **Dunmurry Manor Care Home (Ref number 65).** NoM noted with no specific actions required.
- **DNA Testing of Dog Fouling (Ref number 66).** Update report presented to People and Communities March 21.
- **Breathe Life WHO Campaign (Ref number 69).** Recommend to close as development of our new Action Plan must follow strict UK government guidance and templates and the Breathe Life Campaign would not naturally form part of that technical development process. We have limited resources and it is important that they are directed to the development and management of the city's AQ Action Plan and the PM2.5

assessment. A lot of the work associated with the Breathe Life Campaign is already addressed through the UK legislative framework for local air quality management and there would be limited additional value in substantially replicating this work via the Breathe Life framework.

- Potential Opening of an entrance into Cherryvale Park from Knockbreda Road (Ref number 70). Consultation process complete - pending Council ratification in April, officers will progress actions agreed by People and Communities March Committee relevant to this issue.
- Cemeteries (Ref number 85). As there are no revenue budgets available for rolling maintenance of the boundary fencing, railings, gates, etc. to the Council's cemeteries, it is recommended that this matter is referred to Physical Programmes for consideration in future planning, and therefore considered closed in terms of issues for People and Communities.
- Cherryvale Playing Fields (Ref number 86). This motion referred to extending the consultation, which was agreed and incorporated into the consultation process.
- Alleyway Transformation (Ref number 87). Action undertaken to write to DfC, DoJ and DfI regarding support and assistance for transforming alleyways. Update report presented to December 2020 People and Communities Committee. Pilot project delayed due to Covid but will be picked up when possible. Engagement with DfI re funding for greening alleyways ongoing. Report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee/AWGs regarding Phase 5 of the Alleygating Programme in March 21. Recommend close as action specific to this issue has been addressed.
- Pest Control Issues (Ref number 88). Updated provided by Director of City Services in regard to provision of pest control operations in the context of Covid at August People and Communities. A further update on Environmental Health Services was presented to People and Communities in October 2020, with ongoing updates provided to Members at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee within Organisational Recovery reports.
- Odour Colin Area (Ref number 90). People and Communities February 21 - the Committee agreed to write to the DAERA Minister seeking the Department take immediate action to eradicate the invasive smell coming from the Mullaghglass site. Director of City Services issued letter on 3rd March to Minister. Recommendation to close as specific action taken and issue currently being addressed by Legal Services.
- Alleygating Programme (Ref number 95). The Member's comments were noted and included in the December People and Communities update report. Report on Phase 5 of Alleygating Programme presented to March 21 Strategic

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Policy and Resources Committee with agreement to take forward.

- **Residents Parking Schemes (Ref number 96). CNS confirmed on 18/02/21 this is closed.**
- **Recycling Centre (Ref number 106). Members were updated on response from LCCC on the use of the Cutts, and advised that any further review of a new facility in this area would need to be considered as part of a capital project.**
- **Gates at Cherryvale (Ref number 107). Consultation extended as agreed - responses presented to People and Communities at March 21 meeting.**
- **Review of Permission to Belfast City Airport to enter Victoria Park for the Management of Un-hatched Eggs under Licence from the NIEA (Ref number 110). Resolved at February 21 People and Communities when the Committee granted the requested permissions to enter Victoria Park to facilitate the continuation of pricking of un-hatched greylag goose eggs under licence issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and noted that the intervention to control birds in the flight path to the airport was a requirement of the airport's Civil Aviation Authority licence; and granted officers authority to liaise with legal services to issue a relevant licence for a period of 3 years which would be subject to annual review in advance of renewal.**
- **Roselawn Crematorium (Ref number 116). Maintenance of the gates at Roselawn Cemetery is underway, with temporary wooden gates in place.**
- **Urgent action to address invasive odour in Collin (Ref number 154). People and Communities February 21 - the Committee agreed write to the DAERA Minister seeking the Department take immediate action to eradicate the invasive smell coming from the Mullaghglass site. Director of City Services issued letter on 3rd March to Minister. Currently being addressed by Legal Services - recommendation to close.**

3.8 Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- **Action on Avoidable Winter Deaths (Ref number 121). Motion adopted at November 20 People and Communities - officers continue to work with the Council's statutory, community and voluntary partners, via Community Planning and the Living Here Board, to implement a multi-sectoral targeted Avoidable Winter Deaths Programme for the winter of 2020/21 with the aim of delivering the Belfast Warm and Well Project.**
- **Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign (Ref number 122). Following discussion at November People and Communities, officers have followed up with**

the Chair of the Belfast Protect Life Implementation Group regarding the issues raised in the NOM - PHA are due to attend People and Communities in Spring 2021 to update on available Mental Health, Drugs & Alcohol and Crisis Intervention services. Officers also continue to take forward mental health and drug and alcohol focussed actions referred to in this motion via Community Planning and the Living Here Board.

- 3.9 Additional information in relation to these Notices of motion and Issues Raised in Advance are available in Appendix 1 which is attached to the main report.

Financial and Resource Implications

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

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Committee/Strategic Issues

**Consultation response for Provision of access
for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland to DAERA**

The Committee was advised that Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) was currently undertaking a consultation exercise on the ‘Provision of access for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland’. The closing date for responses was 29th March, but the Council had obtained an extension from DAERA to enable the draft response to be considered by the Committee.

He advised that the consultation provided an opportunity for the Council to highlight its position on the following three pieces of legislation:

- The Access to the Countryside Order (Northern Ireland) 1983;
- The Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985; and
- The Recreation and Youth Services (Northern Ireland) Order 1986

The Director advised that the input on the draft response had been sought from relevant officers who had considered current provision, current legislation along with future potential opportunities and he drew the Members’ attention to the final document which was available [here](#)

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Following a query from a Member, the Director confirmed that the consultation was not considering the overall 'Right to Roam'.

The Committee endorsed the draft consultation response in relation to the Provision of access for outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland to DAERA.

Lagan Gateway Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Members about the Lagan Gateway project and particularly about future management arrangements of the navigation lock and artwork on the bridge piers combined with UK Youth for Nature campaign.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **agree to explore the option of entering a Service Level Agreement or similar with the Lagan Navigation Trust to operate and manage the navigation lock and associated areas after completion of the project**
- **agree to develop an art piece on the bridge piers as part of the UK Youth for Nature high-profile national campaign (involving more than 10 UK cities)**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The Lagan Gateway project proposes a number of structural improvements and development works at Stranmillis including the development of a navigation lock, an iconic foot and cycle bridge, the refurbishment of the existing weir and high quality landscaping with associated path connections. The project will create a connection both on the water and on land by building a navigation lock and a pedestrian/cycle bridge.

The key objectives identified for the Lagan Gateway are:

- **improve the navigation of the Lagan and create a gateway to Lagan Valley Regional Park and beyond**
- **improve the access, safety and quality of green and open space around the Lagan**
- **increase the pedestrian and cycle facilities and links into Belvoir Forest Park**

- improve health and well-being through providing a better living environment and enhanced exercise and recreation opportunities, accessible by all
- realise the potential of the Lagan and its surroundings as an asset for current and future generations

The project will result in improving connectivity and linkages in the area and improve biodiversity and natural habitats (removal of contaminated soil and invasive species etc). The area is partly a heritage site and the project will aim to educate and inform visitors of its significant economic and environmental history. The proposed Greenway connection will ease the pressure on the existing towpath on the Stranmillis side; the new Greenway connection will take a high number of users from the towpath and bring them onto the other side of the Lagan and into Belvoir Forest Park, which is underused.

The total investment in the project is £5.2m, with £2.15m coming from the Council's Belfast Investment Fund. Other partners are Ulster Garden Villages, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure Rivers, the Department for Infrastructure and the Lagan Navigation Trust. Other partners are Ulster Garden Villages, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure Rivers, the Department for Infrastructure and the Lagan Navigation Trust.

Phase 1 of the project is nearing its completion; the first section of the bridge has been lifted into place in February and the installation of the last bridge sections are planned for April 2021. The navigation lock will be completed in summer this year.

3.2 Operation/maintenance of the navigation lock

Once the navigation lock is completed it will become a Council asset and need to be operated and maintained. It is part of a wider programme that the Lagan Navigation Trust is pursuing – to open the whole navigation from Belfast to Lough Neagh and create a working waterway, which serves collaborations and local businesses playing a role in the economic and social regeneration of this heritage asset along 27 miles of the Navigation. It is the first lock re-opened in the Belfast area and will set a precedence for the further development of navigation locks. The Lagan Navigation Trust, as the custodians of the Lagan navigation expressed an interest to operate and maintain the lock and surrounding area as they aim at opening all 27 locks along 27 miles in three local government areas (Belfast City Council, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council and Armagh City, Banbridge, Craigavon Borough Council). The Trust's remit is geographically specific - the Lagan Navigation and its stated purpose is to reopen the Navigation. They have civil engineers and waterways users on their Board with

expertise in education, major charitable investment and Local Government expertise at both Director and elected member levels. To support their work, the Trust established a new charity, The Waterways Community, specifically to work with waterways in terms of animation, health and wellbeing, educational and cultural services related to those waterways. This is the driver for delivery of a working waterway on the Lagan. Council officers are currently working with the Chief Officer and Board (BCC has representatives on the Board) of the Lagan Navigation Trust on an appropriate agreement (Service Level Agreement or similar) to ensure that the navigation lock of the Lagan Gateway project is being operated and maintained expertly. Specifically the management will be looking at the following:

- how to address security concerns
- how to prevent inundations during surges
- potential role of a lockkeeper in operating and maintaining the lock and carrying out works such as opening and closing the gates, providing assistance with launching /tying up boats at the site, ensuring that there is free-flow of water and removal of debris such as branches, cleaning of the gates and management of stop logs

Currently the Council contributes to the core funding of the LNT – one potential mechanism being considered is ‘divert’ this into project funding i.e. the operation of the navigation lock on behalf of the Council.

3.3 Art piece on bridge piers as part of UK Youth for Nature campaign

The piers of the bridge at Stranmillis have been covered in graffiti a number of times. Though anti-graffiti paint has been applied to the piers, it is a laborious (and costly) task to remove the graffiti by the contractor. A number of longer term solutions have been explored and options have been assessed. A number of options have been ruled out including planting and the installation of panels as the bridge will require regular inspection. It is therefore recommended that artwork/murals are progressed and a number of ideas were proposed including nature murals reflecting the natural surroundings or maritime theme reflecting the river or a combination.

At the same time, UK Youth for Nature, the UK’s leading youth-led network calling on the politicians and governments of the UK to take urgent action and tackle the loss of nature, approached the Council. To draw a link between COP15 and COP26, they are aiming to create a connected pathway of wildlife murals from London to Glasgow (2+ per city) that highlight biodiversity decline and the impacts of climate change on nature. Priority locations (at this time) are: London, Exeter, Bristol/Bath, Cardiff,

Birmingham, Norwich, Nottingham, Liverpool, Belfast, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. The UK Youth for Nature team will work with local partners to identify appropriate walls and contact and secure local artists. The topic of the design will be on biodiversity - any key habitats or species that are iconic that are disappearing from the area, to evoke people's imaginations.

They have approached the Council about the potential of using the bridge piers for the Belfast part of the campaign. The work will be carried out by a local Belfast artist/collective of young artists. Members are asked to agree that the Council works with UK Youth for Nature Team on taking forward this proposal. In agreeing this Members are asked to note that the Council will have the opportunity to agree the artists involved and so quality assure this aspect of the work. Officers from the PP Department have recently taken forward the delivery of the Entries projects in the city centre which have included a number of high quality murals and a similar approach to choosing the artist(s) will be undertaken for this project.

In addition if the proposal is agreed then Members are asked to note that the Council will need to make a financial contribution towards the costs of the project to cover the costs of paint/materials and artists costs. These costs would be taken from the existing project budget.

Benefits for the project and city as a whole:

- Reputation as supporting a green youth movement
- Environmental credentials
- Community involvement
- Low-cost quality art piece
- Positive media attention
- Potential to cooperate with other biodiversity groups/organisations
- Be part of a wider UK network
- International recognition (UN climate conference in Glasgow in 2021)

Members are asked to agree the proposal of developing an art piece on the bridge piers as part of the UK Youth for Nature high-profile national campaign (involving more than 10 UK cities).

3.5 Other

Members are asked to note that other issues have been raised in relation to ASB in the area. Members are asked to note that the Council's community safety team are aware of this and additional patrols are being carried out on the area. In addition we have installed mobile CCTV to monitor the bridge which will alert the

contractor if there are any issues. Officers are also looking at longer term mitigation measures including the installation of permanent CCTV and are working with DFI on this. We have also had a request in terms of looking at the installation of night time gates on the Bridge. Members are asked to note that gates on the bridge were not part of the original design/scope and would not be in keeping with the ethos of the Bridge which was to open up access to the area. Given this at this stage we are not looking at the installation of these as there is no evidence that these are required as the Bridge has not yet opened. This will be kept under review.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.6 Additional financial or resource allocations for the operation/management of the navigation lock are being explored at the moment; once these are being established a report will be brought back to committee.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7 None.”

The Committee:

- agreed to explore the option of entering a Service Level Agreement, or similar, with the Lagan Navigation Trust to operate and manage the navigation lock and associated areas after completion of the project; and
- agreed to develop an art piece on the bridge piers as part of the UK Youth for Nature high-profile national campaign (involving more than ten UK cities).

Naming of Parks and Bridges

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider the naming process for the new park in Colin, being developed under the Urban Villages Programme and a naming process for the new bridge installed at Springfield Dam as part of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, developed under the Peace IV Shared Spaces theme and the new bridge currently being installed as part of the Lagan Gateway Project.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the naming process, in line with current Council policy, for

- a. New Park in Colin
- b. New bridge - Springfield Dam
- c. New bridge - Lagan Gateway Project

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members are advised that the former Parks & Leisure Committee, at its meeting in August 2008 agreed a policy framework for managing requests to name parks.

3.2 The policy has also previously been used to (re)name a bridge on the Connswater Community Greenway, and follows a 4 stage process;

- 1. Engagement with key stakeholders to develop a long list of new park names, which reflect;**
 - ❖ a sense of place, reflecting the geographic location, community, neighbourhood or street where the park, facility or amenity is located.
 - ❖ the historical significance of the area or reflects unique characteristics of the site (unique flora / fauna).
- 2. Shortlisted names based on stakeholder feedback and assessed against the policy criteria as outlined above;**
- 3. Community consultation on the agreed shortlisted names;**
- 4. Recommendation to People & Communities Committee to reflect preferred name identified via the community consultation.**

3.3 Names will not be considered which:

- Cause confusion due to duplication or names sounding similar to existing named facilities/locations within the City.
- Unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of the provisions of
- Section 75, the Good Relations Plan (2007) and the Shared Future agenda.
- Are party-political in intention or use.

3.4 Members will be aware that a number of new facilities / structures are due to be operationalised over the next number of months, which required to be named or were we have received representation that naming should be considered, these sites / structures are;

- New Park in Colin
- New Bridge at Springfield Dam
- New Bridge – Lagan Gateway Project

3.5 As each project is at different stages in their development and operate under different governance arrangements, mainly as a result of how the projects are funded, the consideration of naming are at different stages.

3.6 Below for Members consideration is the proposed approach, in line with the agreed policy, for the 3 sites / structures detailed above;

New Park in Colin

Background

3.7 The Council are currently working in partnership with the Urban Villages Initiative to develop a large scale 'destination' park in the Colin area of the city. The new park, which represents an investment of over £4m in the area, will include a new play park, pump track, education zone and extensive new pathways.

3.8 Work on the park is currently well underway and completion is planned for June/July this year. As this is a new facility it is now appropriate to name the park.

Naming Process

3.9 An initial engagement exercise was carried out with key local stakeholders to develop several options for a name for the new park. The initial, agreed options were:

1. Páirc Nua Colin
2. Leap of Faith Park
3. Sherwood Park
4. Colin New Park

3.10 Following some additional discussion with the Council's Irish Language Officer, it was agreed to look at adding a further option to this list:

5. Páirc Nua Chollan

3.11 This option represents the 'full' Irish translation of the name 'Colin New Park', rather than the English/Irish hybrid version represented by option 1 above. It was agreed that offering the

3.12 English version of the name alongside an English/Irish hybrid option, whilst not offering a full Irish option, would not represent best practice and could leave the Council open to challenge. The spelling of the name Colin as 'Chollan' is also in line with the spelling used in many place names in the Colin area.

- 3.13 The addition of this fifth option has received supported from all the key stakeholders initially engaged to develop the original four options.
- 3.14 In line with the Council's naming policy, Committee approval is now being sought to carry out a full public consultation around these five naming options. The results of this consultation will then be brought back to Committee seeking approval to select the final name for the park prior to opening

Springfield Dam Bridge

Background

- 3.15 Springfield Dam Park opened to the public in December 2020 following the completion of a major refurbishment which included the installation of a new pedestrian and cycle bridge across the dam, new walking and cycling pathways, and the creation of a new event space.

An outdoor classroom for schools and community groups was also created, as well as viewing platforms, additional lighting and planting.

- 3.16 Belfast City Council delivered the £1.2 million project with funding from the EU's PEACE IV Programme, as well as Department for Communities who also provided 10 acres of land, including a former cooling dam, for the scheme.
- 3.17 Springfield Dam forms a key milestone in the cross-community Forth Meadow Community Greenway project, a 12 km long greenway which will link communities from North Belfast through the West, into the city centre.

Naming Process

- 3.18 The park itself is known as Springfield Dam Park. However, interest has been expressed in naming the new bridge which has been built across the dam. There are number of workstrands under the Forth Meadow Community Greenway Project which would offer opportunities for local engagement taking forward stage 1 of the (re)naming process. Following on from this the proposed long list will be brought back to Committee for consideration before going out to public consultation to enable the final name to be agreed.

Lagan Gateway Bridge

- 3.19 The Lagan Gateway project proposes a number of structural improvements and development works at Stranmillis including the

development of a navigation lock, an iconic foot and cycle bridge, the refurbishment of the existing weir and high quality landscaping with associated path connections. The project will create a connection both on the water and on land by building a navigation lock and a pedestrian/cycle bridge.

Members will have already noted in the previous update report that the new pedestrian and cycle bridge will be fully installed later in Spring. The first section of the bridge has been lifted into place with huge interest of media and general public in February. The Council already received a number of queries regarding the potential naming of the bridge and we would like to give stakeholders an opportunity to suggest a name for this new asset in the area.

The naming process will follow the four stage process as outlined above and include

- 2 week consultation period during which stakeholders will have the opportunity to submit ideas for the name of the bridge
- Following this, a panel of judges will meet to consider the submissions and shortlist a number of potential names against the criteria in the naming policy. It is proposed that the Panel is made up of Council officers again with Project Board members which will include funding partners
- Public will then have an opportunity to vote on the shortlisted options. The final bridge name will be determined by the majority vote and will be brought back to Committee to be considered for agreement within context of BCC's naming policy.

- 3.20 As with previous naming processes, communication and advertising will be used to engage and inform the public about the naming process and to ensure that people are aware of the opportunity to submit naming ideas etc.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.21 All costs associated with the naming / signage requirements will be picked as part of the overall capital costs associated with each site.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.2.1 The naming process followed will be in line with the Council's naming policy and the chosen name will be screened in line with the Council's equality process."

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The Committee approved the naming process, in line with current Council policy, for the new park in Colin and new bridges at the Springfield Dam and the Lagan Gateway Project.

**Update on Progress with Development of a new
Air Quality Action Plan and concerning the
Detailed Assessment for Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5})
and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) for Belfast City**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware that Council Air Quality staff have been working with Competent Authorities and other partner organisations within the city to develop a new 5-year Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast covering the period 2021-2026.
- 1.2 A paper was presented to the remote Committee meeting of 9th February 2021 detailing a list of proposed actions that the Council and our partner organisations are proposing to implement throughout the duration of the new Action Plan in order to address the few remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) hotspots within our Air Quality Management Areas and to improve ambient air quality generally for the city.
- 1.3 Since that remote Committee meeting, Air Quality staff and our partners have continued development of the new Air Quality Action Plan, including arrangements for consultation and engagement on the requirements of the new plan.
- 1.4 Members may recall that following a previous air quality update report, presented to the Committee meeting on Tuesday 8th September 2020 (agenda item 7a), the Committee agreed consultation and engagement in respect of the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan and noted the comments to include engagement with communities and business interests and specifically the West Belfast Taxi Consortium.
- 1.5 This report serves therefore to present final proposals for consultation and engagement on the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 for Members consideration and approval.
- 1.6 This report additionally serves to provide, from paragraph 3.1 onwards, a brief update to Committee on progress with the Detailed Assessment for Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) and concerning the ambient monitoring component of this project.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee are invited to;

- Consider and approve the proposals for consultation and engagement on the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026.
- Identify any additional specific groups to be included within the proposed consultation and engagement process.
- Agree that a report will be provided to the 11th May 2021 remote meeting of the Committee concerning ambient monitoring aspects of the Detailed Assessment project and that Council Air Quality staff and representatives from AECOM, the appointed consultant, will attend that meeting in order to answer Member questions or queries concerning the ambient monitoring proposals.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues.

3.1 Proposals for consultation and engagement on the new Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026.

Part III of the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002 establishes statutory requirements for Northern Ireland district councils to periodically review and assess ambient air quality within their districts, for the designation of Air Quality Management Areas when health based air quality objectives are not being achieved, and for the development and consultation on Air Quality Action Plans.

- 3.2 ‘Schedule 2 Air Quality: Supplemental Provisions’ of the Order advises in relation to consultation requirements that a district council, in carrying out its functions in relation to the preparation of an Action Plan shall consult the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA); each district council whose district is contiguous to the council’s district; such competent authorities exercising functions in, or in the vicinity of, the council’s district as the council may consider appropriate; such bodies or persons appearing to the council to be representative of persons with business interests in the district to which the action plan relates as the council may consider appropriate and; such other bodies or persons as the council may consider appropriate.**

- 3.3 Moreover, the Defra template being employed for development of the new Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 contains a section for reporting on the outworkings of any consultation process and stakeholder engagement. As part of the template, councils are required to provide a summary of their engagement activities, including for example, websites used, articles in local newspapers and examples of any questionnaires distributed to households. In addition, the final Action Plan must include a section summarising responses to any consultation or stakeholder engagement, together with an explanation of the reasons for not pursuing action plan measures, taking account of stakeholder views or comments.
- 3.4 Considering the above-mentioned statutory consultation requirements, it is proposed that Belfast City Council will schedule a 12-week consultation and engagement exercise on the Air Quality Acton Plan 2021-2026, to include completion of an associated Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment. It is anticipated that the consultation and engagement exercise will run from 10th May 2021 until 30th July 2021.
- 3.5 As part of the consultation and engagement exercise, the Council will consult directly with DAERA and relevant Competent Authorities concerning the new Air Quality Action Plan. It should be noted however that the Competent Authorities are represented on the Air Quality Action Planning Steering Group that developed the new Action Plan and that they have contributed the majority of the Action Plan measures. It should also be noted that some Competent Authorities will themselves be required to undertake separate consultation exercises on the measures that they have proposed. Consultation and engagement on the Air Quality Action Plan will therefore be undertaken in a manner so as not to replicate any consultation exercises being undertaken by partner organisations. We will however encourage our partner organisations to publicise the Council's consultation and engagement exercise through their various fora.
- 3.6 In addition, Belfast City Council will provide copies of the Air Quality Action Plan to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Ards and North Down Borough Council in order to obtain their views.
- 3.7 In respect of bodies or persons appearing to the Council to be representative of persons with business interests in the district to which Action Plan relates, the Committee has already identified the West Belfast Taxi Consortium. The Committee is invited however to identify any further business interests that should be specifically consulted and engaged concerning the new Air Quality Action Plan.

- 3.8 Whilst not identified as a specific consultee within Schedule 2 of the Environment Order (Northern Ireland) 2002, the Council intends to seek the views of the general public in Belfast on the new Air Quality Action Plan in order to address the Committee requirement for community engagement. It is proposed that public consultation and engagement will be facilitated via an article in the June 2021 edition of City Matters, via a tailored social media campaign and through an online consultation and engagement exercise delivered via the Council's 'Your Say Belfast' engagement hub.
- 3.9 Air Quality staff have already received requests from some Councillors for engagement with specific Community Groups as part of the Action Plan consultation and engagement process. In view of likely continuing Covid-19 restrictions, it is anticipated that engagement of this nature could be achieved through the use of online meeting tools such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom or equivalent. Accordingly, the Committee is invited to identify any additional Community or other groups to be included within this aspect of the proposed public consultation and engagement exercise.
- 3.10 At the conclusion of the consultation and engagement exercise, Air Quality staff will analyse the findings of the various surveys and submissions, provide feedback to our partners and agree any necessary final revisions to the Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026. The completed Action Plan will then be submitted to Defra for technical appraisal, ahead of formal adoption and implementation. A further progress report will be provided to Committee at this time.
- 3.11 Update on Progress with the Detailed Assessment for Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) and Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂).
- By way of a brief update on progress concerning the detailed assessment for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), Members may recall from the, 'Update on Local Air Quality Management Matters' paper (agenda item 8b) presented to the 12th January 2021 remote Committee meeting, that a tender exercise was underway with a view to appointing a contractor to deliver the detailed assessment project from early 2021. The Committee is advised that as a result of the competitive tender exercise, AECOM has since been appointed to deliver the detailed assessment project.
- 3.12 Members may additionally recall that the detailed assessment project comprises three principal technical components; additional ambient monitoring across the city for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), development of an emissions inventory to characterise significant emission sources

of these pollutants within the city area and atmospheric dispersion modelling for the city area in order to generate spatial and temporal predictions for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations that can be compared with national and European air quality standards and World Health Organisation air quality guideline values.

- 3.13 Having now concluded initial contractual arrangements with AECOM, Council Air Quality staff have recently commenced preliminary discussions with AECOM representatives in order to determine suitable locations for installation of the additional ambient monitoring equipment. The monitors are to be installed, having regard to the relevant public exposure requirements outlined within the government's local air quality management technical guidance document (LAQM.TG(16)). However, in order to afford Committee with an opportunity to consider the monitoring locations currently proposed by AECOM and to provide input into final locations, it is proposed that a report concerning ambient monitoring proposals will be presented to the 11th May 2021 remote Committee meeting. It is additionally proposed that AECOM and Council Air Quality staff will attend the remote meeting in order to respond to any questions or queries that Members may have.

Financial and Resource Implications.

- 3.14 Development and delivery of the proposed consultation and engagement exercise is to be undertaken by Air Quality and Business Research and Development staff from within existing resources.

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

- 3.15 An Equality Screening and a Rural Needs Assessment are to be undertaken as components of the consultation and engagement exercise on the Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026.”

The Committee:

- approved the proposals for consultation and engagement in respect of the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026;
- agreed that the following additional specific groups would be included within the proposed consultation and engagement process: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Belfast Metropolitan College, Belfast Chamber of Commerce. In addition, locality organisations in areas where breaches had been identified, Friends of the Earth, British Heart Foundation, British Lung Foundation, Trade Unions and the Public Health Agency; and

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- agreed that a report would be submitted to the May meeting of the Committee in regard to ambient monitoring aspects of the detailed assessment project and that Council Air Quality staff and representatives from AECOM, the appointed consultant, would attend the meeting to answer Members questions concerning the ambient monitoring proposals.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 14th April, 2021

REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd March 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 April, subject to the amendment under the heading "Update on Tourism" to provide that the item be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Matters Referred Back from Council

Update on Tourism

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

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To further consider the report and appendices presented on the Update on Tourism that was considered by the Committee at its meeting held on 3rd March.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and recommendations.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The Committee will recall that, at the Council meeting on 1st April, it was agreed that the minute of the meeting of 3rd March, under the heading 'Tourism Update', be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

3.2 Accordingly, the report from last month and associated appendices, along with an extract of the minutes from the March Committee (below) has been re-circulated for further consideration.

Minutes of 3rd March City Growth and Regeneration Committee' 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:

3.3

- Deliver on the tourism priorities set out the Belfast Agenda, recognising the importance of tourism to Growing the Economy and City Development.

3.4

- 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, Arhus (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
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.’

Financial and Resource Implications

As per original report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

None associated with this report.”

The Director of Economic Development explained the thematic approach of the proposed programme which supported initial quarter one actions alongside the priorities set out in the ten year cultural strategy. He summarised the intended projects, timelines and associated budgets as outlined in Appendix 1.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development provided further detail on building links between heritage and local tourism, together with capacity building. He advised that, once work had been undertaken, further information would be provided to the area working groups regarding local tourism assets and capacity building. He also advised that the Sustainable Event Toolkit, outlined in the report, would be shared with the Committee.

In response to a Members question in relation to further details of funding allocation, the Director of Economic Development explained that this would be provided in the detailed Annual Review Report which was submitted for Committee’s consideration following the completion of end of year monitoring and evaluation.

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During further discussion, one Member raised concerns with the potential delay in receiving the International Framework update, as part of the wider economic development strategy report, previously anticipated to be considered by the Committee in June. She also requested if the jargon in the reports, such as this, could be simplified. The Strategic Director of Place and Economy explained that the work of the team had been impacted by the pandemic and staff had been redeployed to work on the critical recovery work such as administering of the revitalisation fund. He clarified that Members comments on simplifying terminology would be considered for future reports.

In relation to the potential for further Cluster Grant funding, the Strategic Director advised that the matter was being considered internally.

The Director of Economic Development also confirmed that, following the update in March regarding Belfast Bikes, a further update would be provided in June.

After discussion, the Committee agreed the following recommendations, as outlined in the original report and appendices:

- 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 2021/22 departmental budget for tourism development.

The Committee also noted that:

- the Area Working Groups would be provided with future updates on local tourism assets and capacity building; and
- the Sustainable Event Toolkit, outlined in 3.11 of the original report, would be shared with the Committee.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item was 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 item 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.

Culture Update - 2021/22 Priorities

The Committee was provided with an update on the current status of the ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*, which included proposed key actions in 2021/22 aligned to the implementation of year 2 of the strategy.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in August 2019, the final ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast *A City Imagining* had been agreed. This included draft implementation plans for a three-year period to be reviewed and finalised on an annual basis.

The Director of Economic Development and Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism explained the current status of the Cultural Strategy, research that had been undertaken and the delivery of funding and awards.

The Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism advised that, despite the challenges of Covid-19, significant progress had been made in delivery against strategic targets in 2020/21. She confirmed that a detailed annual report would be submitted to the Committee in due course following the completion of end of year monitoring and evaluation. She then provided a summary of work which had been undertaken to date under the following themes:

- Investing in cultural sector;
- Events;
- Sectoral Developments;
- Cultural Participation and Engagement; and
- Strategic Initiatives.

She provided also a summary of the key commitments and priorities of the Cultural Strategy for 2021/2022 and highlighted the process of the Pathfinder Scheme which was outlined in the report.

She clarified that the activities outlined in this report would 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, in line with existing approvals, and a breakdown of specific areas of spend were included in Appendix 1.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development and Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism answered a range of questions in relation to the need for building capacity in the LGBTQ community, the options to progress the Gig Buddies scheme, social clauses and accessibility measures, and music trails.

The Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism advised that the draft application for the UNESCO City of Music status would be presented to the Committee in June 2021, and officers would investigate potential opportunities for social clauses and accessibility initiatives.

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In response to a Members query regarding further changing places facilities in cultural venues to ensure accessible tourism, the Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism suggested that this could be examined as part of the work being undertaken with partners, the Department for Communities and its Access and Inclusion Fund.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Noted the contents of the report and progress against the delivery of the cultural strategy priorities;
- II. Agreed the actions for 2021/22 as set out in the report and in appendix 1, including the budget implications at 3.42 to be met from existing departmental budgets;
- III. Agreed the recommendations for Pathfinder awards as set out at 3.14, with further detail included in appendix 3;
- IV. Noted that the draft application for the for UNESCO City of Music status would be presented to Committee in June 2021, and officers would investigate potential opportunities for social clauses and accessibility initiatives; and
- V. Noted that changing places facilities in cultural venues could be examined as part of the Department for Communities access and inclusion fund.

Request to Present

**Future Provision of Business Start-up Support
in Northern Ireland**

The Committee was reminded that the Council was committed to refreshing the range of business start-up support that was currently in place in order to help achieve the substantial shift that would be required in order to meet the targets set out in the Enterprise Framework. The actions of the framework focused on increasing the number of business start-ups in the city and making existing businesses more productive and competitive.

It was reported that, working with the 10 other councils, Invest NI and Department for the Economy, it had been agreed that the Council would take the lead in undertaking research to inform the future measure and model required to deliver business start-up support across the region. As the work was now complete, it was proposed that the findings be presented to the Members at the May meeting of the Committee by the Enterprise Research Centre, the consultancy team which had been working with officers on the development of the research.

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from the Enterprise Research Centre on their findings from the research on the Future Provision of Business Start-up Support in Northern Ireland at its monthly meeting in May.

The Committee also noted that the Enterprise Research Centre would be asked to provide Business Start-Up figures by location/quarters for the last 4 years, if possible.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

York Street Interchange

Following a request at its last meeting, the Committee was provided with an overview on decisions taken by the Committee and the Council since the inception of discussions on the York Street Interchange (YSI) that had informed the Council's position on the proposed scheme.

The Strategic Director provided a summary of the background and context of the Council's position on the York Street Interchange scheme, together with a timeline of events, key dates and reports that had been considered by the Council since 2005 to date.

He highlighted that in March 2021 the Infrastructure Minister had announced the outcome of the review of the YSI scheme and approved the six recommendations by the independent review panel and additional actions.

He pointed out that consultants had been retained by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to carry out further work particularly around place making and optimisation of scheme delivery for communities, connectivity and green recovery, the wider living places agenda, and future development of Belfast. He stated that a further update report from the consultants was anticipated in the autumn of 2021 and further details on this review process would be brought to the Committee in due course.

During discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to the lack of clarity in the Council's position and support of the scheme. The Strategic Director explained further the timeline of events and highlighted that the Department for Infrastructure's Assurance Review Report might assist to clarify the current status of the Scheme and DfI's future plans.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the background to, and context of, the Council's position on the York Street Interchange scheme;
- Noted the chronology of events in relation to the YSI, including the formal considerations by the Council; and
- Agreed that the Committee write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request a copy of the York Street Interchange Independent Assurance Review Report.

Future City Centre Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members on various matters in relation to city centre development and in particular those linked to the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme of work.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- **Note the ongoing challenges of the city centre and its criticality to the recovery of the wider city and region; and the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to the re-imagination and recovery of the city centre.**
- **Note the ongoing Future City Centre Programme aimed at addressing the issues impacting upon the city centre and its alignment with the wider Belfast: Our Recovery framework priorities. A short presentation will also be provided at Committee.**
- **Note that a Members workshop on the Future of the City is proposed to take place on 25th May, which will provide the opportunity to discuss priorities and future areas of focus.**
- **Note the completion of the tender competition process to appoint a suitable consultant to deliver the next phases of the Bolder Vision City Centre Connectivity Study and the recommendation to move this piece of work to this next stage of delivery.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 It is recognised that in the current context of the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic the landscape of the city centre is undoubtedly challenged. As highlighted in a recent 'Centre for Cities' report, Covid-19 has struck at the very heart of what cities do best. Centre for Cities do however emphasise the importance of thriving city centres, particularly given their criticality in terms of jobs and economic recovery for the wider regions, and reiterate that the reopening of city centres, supporting their recovery and further growth and longer term economic performance will be critical for the delivery of the Government's 'Building Back Better' and 'levelling up' agendas. Despite the issues impacting on city centres as a result of Covid-19, predictions from various sources do however indicate that the long term trend towards urbanisation will continue over the next decade.

3.2 Belfast remains the economic driver for the region. The Regional Development Strategy 2035 specifically recognised the need to enhance the distinctive role of Belfast City Centre as the primary retail location in Northern Ireland. However even prior to the onset of Covid-19 pandemic the city centre and the retail sector in Belfast, like many other cities, suffered challenges from changes in consumer behaviours

including trends towards more online shopping and the desire for enhanced experiences on the high street. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated these changes, with a number of city centre retail closures, many of which were the result of closures of chains of national stores across the UK.

- 3.3 It is clear that Belfast, in line with other cities need to consider the purpose of the city centre and how it can adapt to becoming a multi-purpose location, combining retail and hospitality with business, residential, cultural, community and other facilities, alongside new ways of working and embracing innovation and digital technology.
- 3.4 Members will be aware of the Future City Centre (FCC) Programme which was initially developed around the key findings and recommendations outlined in the Pragma Consulting retail analysis report (reported to CGR Committee February 2020). However, given the significant challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and taking on board the views of a number of stakeholders, as well as recommendations from elsewhere (inc. the Institute of Place Management, High Street Task Force in England etc.) the FCC Programme is being recast to help address the issues impacting on the city centre.
- 3.5 In December 2020, CGR Committee agreed that a workshop would be held for Committee Members and Party Group leaders to consider the Future of the City in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated social, economic and environmental challenges. There is a proposed workshop date of 25th May (details to be confirmed with Members). In keeping with the commitment in the Belfast: Our Recovery plan to focus on a jobs-led recovery, the FCC approach acknowledges the importance of Belfast – and the city centre in particular – in creating new jobs across a range of sectoral areas.
- 3.6 The FCC Programme is linked to the longer term ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy but is also integral to the delivery of the Council's Recovery Programme. It is charting a way forward for diversification of uses, enhanced connectivity, investment and inclusive economic and cultural growth but it is recognised that it needs to remain agile to deal with the ever changing challenges of the city centre. The FCC programme currently has six cross cutting pillars aimed at revitalising the city centre and creating a vibrant shared city centre where people will want to live, work and invest, but also enhancing connectivity with surrounding communities. The overarching

FCC Programme and key areas of focus is attached at Appendix 1, but with a recognition that further focus may be required on issues such as skills, transport, infrastructure and climate change.

- 3.7 There is a pressing need, now more than ever to plan ahead with our city partners and central government to ensure a joined up and collective approach to help facilitate the recovery of the city centre and it is also critical that we respond to opportunities for external funding with a focused vision and route-map as to priorities. Further discussion will take place on this at the Members Workshop.
- 3.8 The following provides an outline of some of the current areas of work within the overall Future City Centre Programme.

Regeneration and Connectivity

- 3.9 This priority is around creating the physical built environment from a place making perspective to help bring about vibrancy, diversification of use including increased city centre living, enhanced connectivity and sustainability, supporting innovation and jobs to sustain economic recovery and support an inclusive, accessible and connected city centre. Key areas of focus include:

City Centre Living

- 3.10 Members will be aware of the need to reimagine and inject new life into the city core – an issue that is more critical now than ever – a thriving residential population will be integral to a reimagined city centre. Reports have previously been brought into Committee on city centre living including the Council's ongoing Strategic Sites Assessment work as part of the housing the led regeneration programme incorporating Council and other public and private sector lands. As Members will be aware, there are a number of cluster sites that are being brought forward for development, some of which comprise the potential for additional public and/or private sector lands, and further reports will continue to be brought back to Committee on these. In addition, Members will be aware that work is underway in relation to a city-wide Strategic Site Assessment exercise. By way of a brief update, this has included work to map lands in the ownership of BCC, DfC, and NIHE together with a review of housing lands identified as part of the LDP Urban Capacity Study and Housing Monitor. There is ongoing liaison with other public sector bodies to coalesce on this work in a partnership approach which has also been identified as a key priority for

the Community Planning Partnership City Development Board. LPS is also leading on compiling a register of government land and property and to date, DfC land is available on the LPS website with certain other government land data to be published in April 2021. A further report will be brought back on the detail of this city wide work in the very near future and following the next meeting of the Community Planning Partnership City Development Board.

- 3.11 As an update in relation to the Inner North West cluster sites (comprising Little Donegall St, Library St, Kent St) which is in joint BCC/DfC ownership. Members will recall that this was being progressed by way of a two stage process with an Expression of Interest (EOI) issued to all Housing Associations on the basis of a mixed-tenure mixed-use scheme. This EOI sought confirmation from those Housing Associations who wished to go forward to the Development Brief stage and five Housing Associations responded confirming interest. The Development Brief, which has been progressed in partnership with DfC, is due to be issued to the five Housing Associations by mid-April with an expected return date by July 2021.**
- 3.12 In addition there are a number of private sector led residential developments currently proposed for the city centre, either as part of major mixed use regeneration schemes (outlined below) or as stand-alone developments. Officers are working with the private and public sectors, alongside other stakeholders with a view to maximising the potential of such developments.**
- 3.13 Members will also be aware of work underway on a City Centre Living Vision, which is aimed at providing an overview of a number of interrelated stands for successful city centre living. This includes:**
- Quantifying the existing and latent demand of the Belfast city centre residential market including: demand across all housing tenures; existing communities and engagement; urban design & creating a quality environment.**
 - Opportunities and challenges including: existing policy and plans; barriers to development; supporting social and physical infrastructure; repurposing existing buildings; existing planning consents**
 - Deliverability including: investor and delivery models; funding; overcoming obstacles to delivery; cluster sites viability**

City Centre Connectivity Study: Bolder Vision

- 3.14 Members are reminded of the previously agreed Council, DfC and DfI City Centre Connectivity Phase 1 Study - a 'Bolder Vision for Belfast' which was ratified by Council (March 2020) and endorsed by respective DfC and DfI Ministers. The Bolder Vision for Belfast involved a significant re-think of how the City's streets and places are used to make them attractive, heathy, vibrant and accessible places.
- 3.15 It was subsequently agreed to progress with the next phases of this City Centre Connectivity Study (CCCS) and commission a co-cliented BCC/DfI/DfC consultancy to bring it forward. The procurement process has just been completed, and it is now intended to proceed with the appointment of the preferred bidder.
- 3.16 These next phases will provide options and projects/scenarios to inform the future landscape and priority connectivity infrastructure required to support a resilient and sustainable city and ultimately completion of a final Bolder Vision Strategy and Delivery Plan. The work will involve the assessment of planned and proposed physical large scale infrastructure developments and gain an understanding of the changing land use within the city centre including emerging developments; support the increasing requirement for city centre living, sustainable transportation, re-imagined public realm and open spaces, enhanced connectivity and accessibility.
- 3.17 The CCCS is premised on the criticality of the city centre to drive forward economic growth, provide a social focus, foster vibrant city centre living and provide enhanced connectivity to communities. The recent pandemic has caused a re-evaluation of open spaces, streets, mobility and connections to services and each other.
- 3.18 It is intended that this work will help the prioritisation and acceleration of projects, aligned with the Bolder Vision principles and emerging infrastructure projects, including consideration of current pilot projects as well as short, medium and longer term projects. It is to include the approach to the development of preferred delivery options including packages of potential projects in the short term that will support longer-term changes. Stakeholder engagement and a public awareness communication plan will be an integral element.

Indicative timelines

- 3.19 Phase 2: April – September 21 – baseline and vision review; scenario development/options with potential interventions. Note - opportunity for pilot projects being brought forward in tandem with progression of final strategy and delivery plan. Thematic workshops and targeted stakeholder engagement and analysis, and draft strategy report for consultation in Phase 3.

Phase 3: September 21 – April 22 – 12 week public consultation on Draft Strategy report and Delivery Plan, Strategic Outline Business Case, and Monitoring Strategy.

Reimagining Public Realm / Connected Spaces and Places

- 3.20 Covid-19 has brought about an accelerated need to rethink how we use our city's spaces and places with a renewed focus on addressing the place-making potential and providing space for culture, leisure and people centric activities, as well as enhanced active travel options. This aligns with the themes for change within the previously agreed Bolder Vision approach which recognised a transformation of the city centre premised on active public realm and green spaces, vibrant and safe streets, prioritisation of walking, cycling and public transport and overcoming severance with surrounding communities.

- 3.21 As Members are aware, a number of projects have recently been brought forward or are in train, involving the reimagining of public space and providing a connected and people focused approach. These include:

- ***Entries and Lanes Programme*** – Transformation of a number of pedestrianisation links. Phase One is progressing towards completion, with a small number of remaining artworks due to commence shortly, alongside the installation of the schemes largest feature lighting installation in Winecellar Entry and Castle Arcade. A number of additional entries are now being taken forward as part of a Phase 2 programme, and design work has commenced on these. These include Sugarhouse Entry, High St Entry, Patterson's Place, and College St Mews. The Entries and Lanes initiative has been very much supported by adjoining businesses, particularly in a post-Covid environment where the enhanced utilisation of outdoor space is often critical for the resilience of many businesses,

particularly in the hospitality sector. The physical enhancement of these entries forms part of an overall approach linked to a tourism and city animation programme, aligned with the Cultural Strategy. The Entries and Lanes programme will form part of a wider tourism offering to explore the Belfast experiences as part of the culture, heritage and history of Belfast.

- ***Cathedral Gardens:*** Temporary Play Park in place, with proposals for a permanent park, taking into account the changing nature of the city centre and other pending developments in the area, with a focus on the use of public spaces via the Bolder Vision lens. Proposal also for a meanwhile Active Travel Hub to support increased levels of active travel and physical activity by encouraging modal shift, particularly given the pending opening of the UU campus in September. Discussions ongoing with stakeholders, with further detail to be brought back to Committee.
- ***Public Realm Catalyst Projects:*** 5 Cs Public Realm Scheme in core city centre, being progressed in conjunction with DfC and utilising developer contributions. Following an initial period of public consultation from September – December 2020, design development is continuing, and further targeted stakeholder engagement is ongoing with final designs to be agreed and brought forward for delivery. Further public realm catalyst projects utilising historic developer contributions are also being scoped out and reports will be brought back to Committee on the detail of these.
- ***Reimagining Public Realm /DfC Revitalisation Fund –*** Programme of streetscape / public realm projects underway to help to rebalance the use of public space, safely promote economic recovery and provide a people focused approach. Includes the delivery of parklet and street improvements/enhanced pedestrianisation schemes in Castle Place, Adelaide Street, Cathedral Quarter and Linen Quarter BID areas; as well as the delivery of city centre Business Cluster and Community grant projects. Indicative timeframes for the delivery of the city centre interventions were provided to CG&R Committee in March, with anticipated completion timelines of Spring/early Summer although some of the works remain contingent upon statutory processes and DfI undertaking certain civils works.
- ***Lighting Strategy –*** a coherent place making approach to lighting as agreed by Members in December 2020.

- ***Tactical Regeneration*** – creative, relatively quick and low cost place making interventions to address dereliction and animate and brighten areas, often acting as a catalyst to further regeneration.
- ***Active Travel***: DfI have brought forward pop up cycle lanes in response to the Covid pandemic and officers are working closely with DfI to consider a range of future active travel interventions. Ongoing BCC led interventions are also incorporating active travel measures, including the Castle Place scheme and the 5 C's Public Realm. A report will also be brought back to Committee in the near future in relation to the active travel related element of the DfC Revitalisation Fund, as previously agreed by Members. Members will also recall the emerging proposals to bring forward a Belfast Urban Greenway concept, as reported to Committee in October 2020. This initiative is seen as an outworking of the Bolder Vision, and seeks to improve connectivity from neighbourhoods into and through the city centre. The development of this proposal is underway and will also be brought back to Members as it is further worked up – although the future delivery of this will depend on funding and partnership working with various stakeholders, including DfI.

Major Developments

- 3.22 The city centre has a number of major regeneration schemes at different stages of development which could significantly change the landscape of the city. There is an opportunity to maximise the collective potential of these large scale development and infrastructure projects as catalysts for city regeneration and inclusive economic growth and social well-being. During the last five years Belfast has seen over 2.5 million square feet of floor space of office accommodation completed or under construction, almost 5,000 purpose built student accommodation beds have been completed or under construction and to support the growing tourism market 1,500 hotel beds have been completed. There has however been limited residential development in the city centre, albeit that there are currently a large number of residential planning applications at various stages in the planning process, many of which also form part of the major regeneration schemes as below.
- 3.23 Currently there are a number of major mixed use regeneration schemes at differing stages in the development process. Examples include:

- **Belfast Transport Hub & Weavers Cross**: 1.3 million ft2 mixed use regeneration scheme adjacent the new Belfast Transport Hub. Phase 1 enabling works underway.
- **Tribeca**: £500m+ 12 acre mixed use regeneration scheme in the city centre. Outline planning approved at Planning Committee Sept 20. There are various regeneration challenges, and in order to collectively work together to bring the scheme forward and unlock some of these challenges, there have been recent meetings with BCC, DfC and Dfl. There are also discussions on potential meanwhile uses in the area. Currently economic activity in the area is low and is unlikely to improve until development comes forward. This is having a detrimental impact on key streets including Donegall Street, North Street and Royal Avenue.
- **Waterside (former Sirocco)**: £450m mixed used scheme on a 16 acre brownfield site with outline planning consent; including social and private housing.
- **Titanic Quarter**: one of Europe's largest urban waterfront regeneration projects with a significant focus on mixed tenure residential as part of future development phases.
- **City Quays**: £275m mixed use scheme with the fifth building (City Quays 3) currently under construction and extensive new areas of waterfront public realm completed.
- **Smithfield Yard**: £75m office/workspace/retail scheme adjacent Smithfield Market within the Inner North West masterplan area.
- **BCC Housing Led Regeneration** inc. the Strategic Site Assessments Programme involving BCC and wider public /private lands.
- **Belfast Destination Hub**: proposed new £100m visitor attraction under Belfast Region City Deal.

Addressing Vacancies

- 3.24 Given the increasing number of vacancies within the city centre, officers have been working up proposals to look at potential short and medium term interventions to help address the issue of vacant premises. There are a complex range of factors leading to vacancy, particularly in the context of COVID and the changing nature of the city centre, hence the need to ensure that any proposed interventions are deliverable and impactful in terms of outcomes. Further details will be brought back to Committee on proposed interventions.

Building Foundations & Supporting Longer Term Recovery

3.25 As highlighted in Belfast: Our Recovery Framework, there are a number of opportunities which will be key to supporting longer term recovery.

- **Delivering the £850m Belfast Region City Deal:** Investing in new physical and digital infrastructure, enhancing the city's tourism offer, providing significant skills, training and employment opportunities
- **Creating Innovation Districts, Smart Districts and Smart Ports** to act as catalysts for economic growth on a transformation scale
- **Improving our Connectivity:** working with partners to secure investment to enhance our sustainable transport infrastructure, including our green and blue infrastructure and strengthening links with other key economic locations including Dublin and London
- **Digital innovation:** advancing next generation digital infrastructure and skills
- **Levelling up investment in R&D:** driving innovation, business growth and creating more and better jobs
- **Addressing climate change:** maximising the potential availability of climate finance as a stimulus to invest in climate resilient infrastructure, supporting our green recovery, skills development and employment
- **Further regeneration:** in the city and neighbourhoods (including a re-imagined city centre) and investment in sustainable infrastructure, including community assets.

Business and Investments

3.26 This priority workstream is around supporting and sustaining existing and new businesses, and attracting new investment. While the economy as a whole has experienced a significant shock over the last twelve months, there are a number of sectors that have remained more resilient than others. This is particularly the case for tech-based sectors where recruitment is still ongoing at a pace. Other sectors such as logistics and warehousing and health and social care have also continued to recruit while sectors such as hospitality and tourism have been decimated. With around 8% of Belfast workers currently on furlough, it is essential that the council works closely both with private businesses and with government departments to ensure that residents are supported to move back into work at the appropriate time.

- 3.27** Prior to Covid, there was a positive real estate market, particularly for commercial property and office space. While the long-term effects of flexible working are yet to be determined, evidence suggests that, although the workplace will change, businesses will still largely want to establish and retain offices in vibrant locations that are attractive to their workforce. The holistic approach of the FCC work – not only looking at the city centre as a business location but also a tourism destination, a leisure space and a place where people live – will be critical for its long-term economic success. The Belfast Agenda’s commitment to creating 46,000 new jobs and attracting 66,000 new residents means that we need to think differently about where people work and what will attract them to this place so it is essential that our business and investment programme takes a place-based approach.
- 3.28** The unemployment rate in Belfast has doubled over the last year and the economic inactivity rate remains stubbornly high. While the tech and digital sectors are likely to drive the city’s economic growth in the coming years, it is essential that we retain a focus on inclusive economic growth in order to ensure that our residents can benefit from the developments in the city. Taking account of planned investments such as the Innovation District, we will work with employers to develop targeted interventions to support those furthest from the labour market or with specific challenges to access employment and skills development support and find a job.
- 3.29** Given the particular challenges impacting upon the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors, a key focus of our work will be to support the revival of tourism and hospitality in the city centre, as well as a restructured retail offer focused on the uniqueness of Belfast and building on the wider work to reimagine and reshape the city core. Alongside this, we will be working with businesses outside the city centre to support business recovery in a drive to enhance their future resilience and sustainability.

City Centre Vibrancy

- 3.30** This priority workstream is around encouraging vitality, vibrancy and increasing city centre footfall; and maximising our cultural and tourism offering. A number of strands of work are currently under development. These include examining the opportunities for culture and creativity to play an important role across the overall Future City Centre

Programme and to fully integrate into recovery plans. This includes areas such as:

- Innovative approaches to addressing current short-term vacancies and the role of culture and leisure in the longer-term future uses within the city centre.**
- Animation and city dressing projects to improve the look and feel of the city centre to support a more welcoming and vibrant place.**
- Importance of shared cultural events to attract additional footfall and enhance the year-round offer. This will include programming in public and outdoor spaces.**
- Seasonal programmes of activity to enhance the offer within the city centre to create more experience driven opportunities aligned to future marketing and communications campaigns.**

3.31 The ten year cultural strategy, A City Imagining, also sets out a number of strategic projects that will help shape the future of the city centre. This includes:

- 2023 as a designated international year of culture. These plans are critical to city recovery with a number of large scale projects such as Urban Forest designed to capture the imagination of local audiences as well as attracting out of state visitors. These projects are will also examine the role of cultural programming in improving connectivity between the city centre and neighbourhoods through extensive engagement programmes.**
- UNESCO City of Music designation will enhance the night-time economy through a new and enhanced approach to music programming in venues and public spaces.**
- A new 10 year tourism plan will also include the Belfast Visitor Experience Framework that will increase the coherence of the city’s tourism offer through clustering or products and improvements to visitor servicing. This will give specific consideration to how visitors experience the city including the relationship between the city centre and other key attractions. This work will also support the development of the Belfast Destination Hub and how it will be a catalyst for local tourism.**

Digital Innovation

- 3.32 This priority workstream is around maximising and deploying digital technology and innovation solutions to position the city as a key location for innovation and support indigenous and new businesses to thrive and grow. With the new UU campus as an ‘anchor’ for the Innovation District, there will be a focus on investment in technology infrastructure such as the development and deployment of smart technologies, and the development / roll out of 5G and wireless opportunities. This is intended to act as a beacon for talent and inward investment, provide the critical ‘density’ to sustain a world-class ecosystem for start-ups, SMEs, academia and multinationals and act as a driver to enhance the existing quality of life in the area - a ‘go to’ location for residents, workers and visitors.

Clean, Green & Safe (Multi-Agency)

- 3.33 This priority work stream is around enhancing the city centre experience through a clean, accessible, safe and pleasant environment. City and Neighbourhood Services Department are currently undertaking a Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Study and Action Plan for a Belfast City Centre Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe Initiative. The consultant appointed has been tasked to review the strategic and policy context, and examine research / statistics in terms of how Belfast is performing against key Clean, Green Inclusive and Safe indicators, and to benchmark best practice from elsewhere. The next steps include conducting an online survey that will offer the opportunity to feedback on their ideas and priorities to help enhance the city centre, with a framework developed to engage with a range of key stakeholders. It is intended that this work will inform the development of an action plan that will be embedded within an overall approach to the re-opening and future of the city centre and the longer-term priorities within the overall FCC programme.

4.0 **Financial & Resource Implications**

None directly associated with this report.

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

None associated with this report.”

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The Director of City Regeneration and Development and the Director of Economic Development provided a presentation to explain further the six key pillars of the Programme, as follows:

- Regeneration and Connectivity;
- Business and Investment;
- City Centre Vibrancy;
- Position of the City to Compete;
- Digital Innovation; and
- Clean, Green and Safe (Multi-agency).

This included further information on Housing Led Regeneration and inclusive city centre living work streams; the City Centre Connectivity/Bolder Vision work and the indicative timelines for the next phases of Bolder Vision and a programme of interventions and projects involving reimagining public space. The Director of City Regeneration and Development summarised the internal City Centre Development Tracker which provided an overview of developments across office space, purpose built managed student accommodation, residential, leisure related and hotel units which had been completed or were under construction.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided a summary of Major Development Schemes across the city either in progress or planned and the opportunity to maximise the regeneration potential of these developments. She highlighted that vacancy levels remained an ongoing issue for the city centre, with further discussion proposed for the forthcoming Future City Workshop on 25th May.

The Director of Economic Development summarised the key priorities for business and investment to support and sustain existing and new businesses, and attracting new investment. He highlighted that, while the technology and digital sectors were likely to drive the city's economic growth in the coming years, it was essential that the Council retain a focus on inclusive economic growth in order to ensure that its residents could benefit from the developments in the city.

During discussion, the Directors answered a range of questions in relation to innovation and best practice, public realm schemes, support for leisure and retail, the future needs of office space, timelines for the proposed housing development in the inner north west area, children and play in the city; the city centre living vision including engagement with communities, and the impact of the purpose built managed student accommodation on existing student areas in the city.

In response to a Members query to expand the aforementioned internal Development Tracker, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that details of the use of Public Space and Built Heritage could be incorporated in the tracker.

Regarding a further question from a Member, she also advised that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on blue and green infrastructure / active travel related initiatives across the city and highlighted that Council Departments were working together in relation to ongoing initiatives and potential future proposals, subject to any future funding that might become available in this regard.

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In response to Members concerns in relation to competing interests of being members of the Committee and also the Planning Committee, in relation to regeneration and development projects, the Strategic Director explained the alignment between the two Committee's and clarified that there was a clear set of checks and balances within the process and training for Members' to ensure the Planning Committee functioned appropriately.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. Noted the ongoing challenges of the city centre and it's criticality to the recovery of the wider city and region; and the need to adopt a multi-faceted approach to the re-imagination and recovery of the city centre;
- ii. Noted the ongoing Future City Centre Programme aimed at addressing the issues impacting upon the city centre and its alignment with the wider Belfast: Our Recovery framework priorities;
- iii. Noted that a Members workshop on the Future of the City was proposed to take place on 25th May, which would provide the opportunity to discuss priorities and future areas of focus;
- iv. Noted the completion of the tender competition process to appoint a suitable consultant to deliver the next phases of the Bolder Vision City Centre Connectivity Study and the recommendation to move this piece of work to this next stage of delivery;
- v. Following requests from Members, noted further information would be provided to the Committee on vacant office space; children and play in the city; an update on the city centre living vision including engagement with communities; and the impact of the purpose built managed student accommodation on existing student areas;
- vi. Noted that the Development Tracker could incorporate details of the use of Public Space and Built Heritage; and
- vii. Noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on blue and green infrastructure / active travel related initiatives across the city.

Union Connectivity Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 **The Union Connectivity Review aims to understand whether and how connectivity across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life, particularly in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- 1.2 Following Council ratification, the Council's response to the Call for Evidence, as reported to the CG&R Committee on 13th January 2021, was submitted to the review team in February 2021. This report updates the Committee on the publication of the Interim Report for the Union Connectivity Review.
- 2.0 **Recommendations**
- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Note the receipt of the letter confirming the publication of the Interim Report, the next steps and that the Union Connectivity Review is due to complete in summer 2021.
- 3.0 **Main report**
- 3.1 As reported to CG&R Committee on 13th January 2021, an independent review for the UK Government (Department for Transport) led by Sir Peter Hendy was being undertaken to assess how the quality and availability of transport infrastructure connections across the UK can support economic growth and quality of life, with a specific focus on NI connections.
- 3.2 The Committee agreed to the response to the call for evidence, noting that the deadline for receipt of submissions was 14 January 2021. This was subsequently ratified by Council on 1 February 2021.
- 3.3 Subsequent to this, an Interim Report (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/union-connectivity-review-interim-report>) was published on 10 March 2021 and provides high level information on the preliminary transport and economic assessment across England, Scotland, Wales and NI along with a summary of the stakeholder views. It makes reference to the interdependencies that need to be factored in, including the New Decade New Approach commitments for NI. The report also outlines the proposed assessment methodology to be used by the review team to determine transport and economic baselines and how it will support the identification of future recommendations and highlights that the potential development of a pan-UK strategic transport network will be a key focus of the Review going forward.
- 3.4 The next stage of the review will take a future-focused view of transport in the next 20-30 years and how transportation can

contribute to the UK's target of becoming net zero carbon by 2050, with a particular reference to the extent, essential domestic air travel can be made carbon neutral. The Interim Report also highlights that a discrete piece of work will be carried out to assess the feasibility of a fixed link between NI and the British mainland, including an outline cost and timescale for the link and associated works needed.

- 3.5** While the focus is on connectivity links between England, Scotland, Wales and NI, it acknowledges the role of integrated transport at a local level in contributing to overall connectivity. The integration of land use and transport planning at key nodes is also noted as contributing to environmental benefits and improved quality of life by supporting healthier transport options such as walking and cycling.
- 3.6** Some of the key issues that will be subject to further review are highlighted in the Interim report on page 4. The following are of specific note for Belfast and the region:
- Higher capacity and faster connection on the A75 from the ferry port at Cairnryan to the M6 corridor for freight and passengers to and from NI
 - Faster and higher capacity connections from Belfast to North West, and to the Republic of Ireland (ROI), for passengers and freight, and to link with ROI plans for rail development
 - Improved port capacity, road and rail capacity and journey times East/West across the Midlands and the North, for passengers, and to enhance freight capacity and connections from Ireland, and onwards to the East Coast ports for exports, post Brexit.
 - Better air links to England to and from NI and Northern Scotland, including but not exclusively to and from London Heathrow, for worldwide connections for passengers and freight; including the appropriate rate of Air Passenger Duty for journeys not realistic by rail
 - Connections to freeports when those are announced by the government and the devolved administrations.
- 3.7** These issues, along with other connectivity issues that may be identified in the next stages of the work will be reviewed in the final report.
- 3.8** The next steps for the review, which is due to complete in summer 2021, are outlined as follows:
- Develop proposals for a UK Strategic Transport Network covering road, rail, air and maritime

- Further analysis and review of the evidence collected to date and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders to better understand their views
- Transport connectivity appraisal, to include the links between transport connectivity and economic performance
- Commission social research to understand the perceived ease of travelling across the UK and associated barriers to travel. It will also assess the perceived impact of connectivity within England, Scotland, Wales and NI, and across the union on opportunities, access to services and quality of life,
- Further research and engagement with subject matter experts to better understand how better connectivity can support an improved quality of life, increased social cohesion and a reduction in inequality across the UK.

3.9 Financial & Resource Implications

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

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.”

The Committee noted the receipt of the letter confirming the publication of the Interim Report, the next steps, and that the Union Connectivity Review was due to be completed in Summer 2021.

Growing Business and the Economy

Sunday Opening Hours for Large Retailers

The Strategic Director provided an update on feedback which had been received from the engagement which had taken place with Trades Unions, retail representatives and relevant stakeholders following the Committee’s decision, at its meeting in March, to support extended Sunday opening hours.

He reminded the Committee that its decision was subject to relevant Northern Ireland Executive guidance and would operate on a temporary basis, to be reviewed on 5th July, 2021, as part of the efforts to manage shopper volume and support social distancing.

He advised that each of the BID representatives welcomed the temporary extension of additional opening hours on a Sunday. He stated that the large retailers and

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shopping centres, including CastleCourt, Victoria Square and the Kennedy Centre were also supportive of the decision, noting that the extension supported demand management and avoids any queuing at 1pm. They also offered customer feedback, suggesting that shoppers felt safe and comfortable to visit the retail outlets at a quieter time and that the extended trading hours on a Sunday made this possible.

He highlighted that the Northern Ireland Retail Consortium's view was that the extension was needed, while the lockdown and the effects of the pandemic continued, in order to enable social distancing and to keep shoppers and staff safe.

He pointed out that the response from Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers confirmed that, while they had been understanding and pragmatic around the decisions that local authorities had taken with regard to the enforcement of Sunday trading restrictions in their areas, their opposition to extended Sunday trading hours had not changed. They felt that it did not offer businesses any real benefits and that it had a detrimental impact on retail workers, their families and their local communities.

The Committee noted the feedback following the consultation which had taken place with Trades Unions, retail representatives and relevant stakeholders on the Council's decision to extend Sunday opening hours (in line with Northern Ireland Executive guidance) on a temporary basis, to the 5th July 2021.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notice of Motions - Quarterly Update

The Committee was reminded that all Standing Committees would receive a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion that they were responsible for.

The Strategic Director advised that the first quarterly update for the Committee indicated that there were 21 active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which it was responsible for (Appendix 1).

It was reported that, given the current pressures in responding to the pandemic, it had been difficult to afford the usual time towards progressing Notices of Motion. Nevertheless, there had been progress in a number of Motions and estimated completion dates and next steps, which required further updates, would be progressed and reported back at the next quarterly update.

The Committee was reminded that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 20th November, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons, as follows:

- **Category 1** - Notices of Motion which contained an action that had been completed. All Notices of Motion within this category contained a specific task that had since been completed. It was worth noting that, when Committee agreed to action a Notice of Motion, there were sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the Notice of Motion. As these were not technically part of the

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Notice of Motion, they were taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The Notice of Motion can therefore be closed, but additional actions related to it would continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions were not contained in this report, but would be noted in the live database moving forward.

- **Category 2** - Notices of Motion had become Council policy or absorbed in to a strategic programme of work. 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 had all been agreed by Committee and were now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that was managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.

It was reported that the following ten motions had been highlighted for closure under category 1 and two motions for closure under category 2. It was suggested that the Committee agreed that the following 12 Notices of Motion were now closed:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- Citizens' Basic Income Scheme (Ref number 4);
- Funding of PLACE NI (Ref number 19);
- York Street Interchange Project (Ref number 39);
- Dogs on Public Transport - Response from Translink (Ref number 40);
- Sustainable Transport (Ref number 43);
- High Speed Rail Connection (Ref number 44);
- Update on Motion - EuroPride (Ref number 91);
- Installation of additional Parklets on arterial routes and in neighbourhood areas (Ref number 119);
- Alternatives to York Street Interchange (Ref number 150); and
- Fra McCann's (MLA) Proposals for Free Car Parking at Hospitals (Ref number 151).

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- Supporting the Writers of Belfast (Ref number 20); and
- Supporting Artists of Belfast (Ref number 59).

During discussion, one member requested that the Motion on Sustainable Transport (Ref. number 43) remained open so that a further update could be submitted to Committee.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. Noted the process for reporting Notices of Motion through Standing Committees agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and outlined in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3;

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- ii. Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion that the Committee was responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1; and
- iii. Agreed to the closure of a number of Notices of Motion, as referenced in Appendix 1 and noted in paragraph 3.7 with the exception of number 43. Motion on Sustainable Transport, the Committee noted that the status of this motion would be examined further.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 21st April, 2021

MEETING OF LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

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

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors M. Kelly and McCullough.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th March 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 April, 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)

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

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

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

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

Upon a request by a Member, it was agreed that future reports of HMO Licenses issued under delegated authority would be presented by HMO policy area and also by electoral ward.

Non-Delegated Matters

Update on Department for Communities
response to Licensing Committee

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee Members on the response from the Department for Communities (DfC) to the invitation to attend a meeting to discuss the Licensing Committee’s ongoing frustrations at the ineffectiveness of the current HMO Act 2016 and around the proposed upcoming review of the legislation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee is asked to note the response from DfC proposing to attend the May Committee meeting to provide feedback from their Review of HMOs.

2.2 In light of DfC’s proposal to attend the May Licensing Committee, Members are asked to consider that the workshop that was proposed with DfC and other statutory agencies to discuss HMOs be deferred until after DfC have presented a HMO Review briefing to the Committee.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 The Council wrote to DfC requesting if the Minister could attend a meeting to discuss the Committees’ ongoing frustrations at the ineffectiveness of the current HMO Act 2016 and around the proposed upcoming review of the legislation.

3.2 Members will recall that the Minister's office responded in February and declined the Council's invitation to attend a meeting with Members, however, it was indicated that a representative from DfC would facilitate a meeting. A subsequent invitation was sent to DfC requesting the attendance of a DfC representative at this evening's Committee, however, DfC have advised that they have received 227 responses to the HMO Review and they will not be in a position to attend a meeting until they have analysed the responses received. DfC have further proposed that they could attend a meeting in May to provide a briefing on the findings of the HMO Review.

3.3 Given that DfC have declined to engage with the Committee until after they have conducted their review, the proposed workshop that was agreed to take place with DfC and other statutory partners may be best convened after DfC have had an opportunity to attend Committee. The outcome of the briefing by DfC on the HMO Review may provide a useful basis for informing a workshop with DfC and other statutory partners. Members are invited to consider this approach in light of the current position adopted of DfC to meet with the Committee.

3.4 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial and resource issues associated with this report.

3.5 **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

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

The Committee agreed to receive an update on the review of HMO legislation from representatives of the Department for Communities (DfC) at its meeting in May, and to defer the proposed workshop until after DfC had presented its review to the Committee.

Restricted Items

Update on Legal Proceedings in respect of Standard Licence Condition

The Divisional Solicitor provided the Members with an update on Judicial Review proceedings which had been issued in respect of the Committee's decision taken on 16th December 2020, to amend the standard terms and conditions attached to a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence, to include a requirement of an emergency out of hours contact number for all HMOs within the Council area.

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The Committee noted the update.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

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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. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and
Economy;
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager
(Development Management);
Mr. K. Sutherland, Planning Manager
(Policy);
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 Pre Determination Hearing of 23rd February and the Committee meeting of 16th March 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 April, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor O'Hara also declared an interest in Item 6a – LA04/2019/1540/F - the CAD plant at Dargan Road, in that he was on the Board of Belfast Harbour Commissioners as a political appointment and that it had objected to the application. He advised that, as it was a Council appointment and as he did not have a pecuniary interest, he could fully participate in the discussion on the item.

Councillor Hussey declared an interest in Item 6e, namely LA04/2021/0024/F - Retrospective single storey extension to the front of existing single storey garage at 10 Broomhill Park, in that he had taken part in enforcement action. He advised the Committee that he wished to reserve the right to speak in objection to the application, but would not take part in the discussion or the vote.

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Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted that site visits had been undertaken, on 8th April, to the following applications:

- 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; 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.

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 March and 9th April.

Abandonment

The Committee noted that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) proposed to abandon the following areas under Article 68 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993:

- 55.2 square metres of land at Areema Drive, Dunmurry;
- marked lands at 197-201 Crumlin Road;
- 85 square metres of land at Seymour Lane; and
- a section of footpath at 29 University Road.

Miscellaneous Item

Confirmation of Street Sign Listings

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Correspondence has been received from the Historic Environment Division (HED) of the Department for Communities (DFC), notifying the Council that 9 no. historic street signs**

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within the Belfast Council area have been formally listed under section 80 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee is requested to:

- Note the correspondence (available on mod.gov) notifying the Council of the listing of the 9 no. street signs.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will recall that a Notice of Motion (NOM) was considered at the Planning Committee meeting of 18 August 2020 in respect of the restoration and listing of 12 no. historic street signs within the city.

3.2 The Council then contacted HED to begin a formal process regarding their potential for listing. Members will recall that the council was then consulted by HED, under an Advance Notice of Listing (ANL) which was brought before the planning committee on 19th January 2021. Members endorsed the proposed listings with no further comments at that time.

3.3 The information in Appendix 1 (available on mod.gov) provides full details of the signs which have now been listed. Members may wish to note that of the 12 no. signs included in the NOM, a total of 8 no. have now been formally listed by HED. 1 no. additional sign has also been listed, which was not included in the initial NOM.

3.4 The notification from HED confirms that the following street signs have now been listed:

- Beersbridge Road and Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast (back edge of footpath)
- Belmont Church Road and Sydenham Avenue, Belfast (back edge of footpath)
- Carolhill Gardens and Holywood Road (back edge of footpath)
- Cherryvalley Park and Kensington Road, Belfast (back edge of footpath / garden)
- Clonlee Drive and Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast (garden)
- Eastleigh Drive and Kincora Avenue, Belfast (garden)
- Kensington Road and Knock Road (back edge of footpath / garden)

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- Knockland Park and Barnett's Road, Belfast (relocated to back edge of footpath)
- Summerhill Parade and Barnett's Road, Belfast (back edge of footpath / garden)

3.5 The information in Appendix 2 (available on mod.gov) sets out:

- which street signs were specifically raised through the NOM;
- which street signs were subsequently reviewed through the ANL; and
- which street signs have now been formally listed.

3.6 Clarification has been sought from HED whether they intend to pursue with a review/survey of the remaining 4 no. signs from the initial NOM, and a timescale for such, in addition to their intentions regarding the future review/survey of historic signs both within Belfast and other council areas. Members will be informed of any response.

Financial & Resource Implications

None.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

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)

(Reconsidered item) LA04/2019/1540/F – Centralised Anaerobic Digestion (CAD) plant to include a bunded tank farm, (6no. digester tanks, 2no. buffer tanks, 1no. storage tank and associated pump rooms), biogas holder, biogas conditioning system, temperature control system, waste-water treatment plant (WWTP), motor circuit control room building, hot/cold water recovery system, feedstock reception and digestate treatment building, product storage building, odour control system and associated tanks, emergency gas flare, back-up boiler, administration/ office building, car parking, 3no. weighbridges, fire water tank and pump house, pipelines to existing combined heat

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**and power (CHP) plant engines, switchgear, earth bunding,
3no. Accesses to existing Giant's Park Service road
infrastructure and ancillary plant/site works on lands to the
northwest of existing Belfast City Council Waste Transfer
Station (2a Dargan Road)**

The Planning Manager presented the details of the application to the Committee. He reminded the Members that it had been due to be considered by the Committee on 18th August 2020, but that it had been deferred due to correspondence received from a legal representative, representing Giant's Park Belfast Limited (GPBL). The Committee was reminded that GPBL was seeking to bring forward a mixed-use, leisure-led proposal on the adjacent land to the north and west. In responding to the objection, the applicant had produced a second addendum to the Environmental Statement, which had been duly submitted and consulted on.

The Planning Manager explained that the Committee had undertaken a site visit in respect of the application in September 2020 and, at its meeting on 19th January, 2021, it had agreed to defer the application for further information on the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), which had been carried out by Shared Environmental Services (SES). The Committee had also agreed to hold a non-mandatory Pre Determination Hearing which had taken place on 23rd February, 2021.

The Members were advised that a range of issues had been discussed at the Pre Determination Hearing, including:

- the scope of the adopted Masterplan for the wider lands and potential deviation from it;
- the need for the proposed CAD facility in real terms as well as policy context;
- the status of current waste contacts and long-term viability of the proposal.
- where the waste would be coming from and issues around transport sustainability;
- where the by-product waste would be taken;
- the scope of the Transport Assessment;
- traffic management;
- whether account had been taken of the economic impact of the proposal on the GPBL proposals and the adjacent Film Studios;
- noise impacts on the Film Studios;
- the impact of the proposal on air quality including nitrogen and ammonia levels;
- details of the Habitats Regulations Assessment which had been carried out by SES;
- whether the proposal was of regional significance; and
- foul drainage.

Following the PDH, the applicant had provided further information and clarification in relation to a number of the substantive points which had been raised at the Hearing. The Committee was advised that the information had been shared with objectors and was

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available for viewing on the Planning Portal. The correspondence contained information relating to the source of household waste, the processing of the landfill by-product, the need for the facility, emerging and future waste policy and how the proposal would contribute to realising future waste policy targets, current land-fill of household waste in NI and the extent to which it could be diverted to the application site, the length of waste contracts in the Belfast City Council area, transport sustainability, clarification around the source of the meteorological data for air quality, foul drainage and sanitation and the amount of renewable energy which would be generated through the facility.

In response to the further information from the applicant, the Committee was advised that a further objection had been received from GPBL. The response had been uploaded onto the Portal and included queries regarding the need for the proposal, that planning decisions should not be driven by outdated plans and strategies which did not take account of the current situation, that the proposal would blight one of the most important opportunity sites for the city, the source of the waste, environmental concerns regarding the by-products, land-fill destination and transport sustainability, the length of waste contracts, that the Granville Eco Park in Dungannon had been subject to 97 noise and odour complaints

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that the planning process was concerned with land-use and the suitability of the proposed CAD facility in land-use planning terms. He outlined that the issues raised around the commercial viability of the proposal were not planning policy considerations.

The Committee was advised that the applicant had demonstrated a need for the proposal in accordance with the Waste Management Strategy and the Waste Management Plan and requirements of PPS 11: Planning and Waste Management.

In relation to the technical environmental concerns that the objector had raised, he highlighted that the application and Environmental Statement had been assessed by statutory consultees, including DAERA Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and the Environmental Health team, a non-statutory consultee. He reminded the Members that no technical objections had been raised.

He drew the Committee's attention to the Late Items pack, where an objection had been received from John Finucane MP, Gerry Kelly MLA and Carál Ní Chuilín MLA. The Members were advised that a copy had been uploaded to the Planning Portal. The Committee was advised of the key concerns which were raised and the officers' response to them.

The Committee was advised that a further letter had also been received from the applicant, in response to the matters raised by GPBL in its objection letter of 12 April 2021. The Planning Manager outlined the key points which were raised and the officers' response to them.

(Councillor Brooks left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Whyte to address the Committee. He stated that he had concerns with the meteorological data which had been submitted and objected to it on the basis that:

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- the wind analysis used for odour and air pollution in respect of the site were taken at the Belfast International Airport at Aldergrove, not at Belfast City Airport, where there was also a meteorological station;
- there was no mention of Aldergrove airport in the Local Air Quality Management Technical Guidance;
- there was no legal requirement that Aldergrove airport should be used for gathering meteorological data;
- the NIE standing advice it stated that historical data from Aldergrove airport was used, not that it should be used; and
- he urged the Committee to reject the proposal and that measures of air pollution and odour should be taken from a site within the city.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mrs. C. Ní Chuilín MLA to the meeting. She stated that she had strong objections to the proposal, including that:

- the viability and sustainability of such a facility were questionable, given that current waste contracts remained in place for a further 10 years;
- she remained unconvinced that the proposal would not have an effect on the expansion of the nearby Film Studios;
- she believed that the large, multi-million pound leisure-led proposal should not be ignored;
- she struggled to see how such a facility was compatible with the redevelopment in the area; and
- the North Belfast community deserved better investment and she urged Committee to reject the proposal.

In response to a Member's question regarding the potential impact of the facility on the film studios, she stated that the impact on the film studios should not be dismissed given the importance that it had in terms of job creation and investment in North Belfast.

(Councillor Brooks re-joined the meeting at this point. As he had not been present for the whole discussion, he did not participate in the vote.)

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. K. Carlin, Project Manager for the Giant's Park Leisure proposal and Mr. J. Maneely, spokesman for the Local Residents' Group who lived near the Granville Eco Park in Dungannon, which was a similar facility.

Mr. Carlin stated that:

- he felt that his concerns, submitted to the Council on 13th April, had not been given due consideration by planning officers, as the Addendum report had been published the next day;
- CAD facilities often caused nuisance to the surrounding areas, despite Environmental Impact Assessments having been carried out;

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- a Freedom of Information request had shown that 97 noise and odour complaints had been lodged with the NIEA in the past 14 months in respect of the Granville Eco Park in Dungannon, even though it was located in the middle of an industrial park;
- the proposal for the AD plant carried a significant risk, not only for thousands of people in North Belfast, but also to the delivery of the planned 200 acre leisure park;
- once built, the regulation of the plant would fall to the NIEA;
- the radius considered as part of the odour assessment for the Dargan Road application was 350metres, whereas residents as far as 1km from the Granville site had been impacted by noise and odour issues. This therefore removed all residents of North Belfast;
- the applicants letter of 12th March confirmed their intention to bid for the Arc21 waste contract in 2029, which, if successful, could put current operators out of business;
- the MSW organic fines, mostly food waste, was currently ending up in black bins, and that another unknown operator would be involved in that process;
- the other 50% of the by-product had been ignored by the applicant;
- no evidence to support the applicant's claim that 75% of the liquid digestate would be recycled in the AD process;
- the site was zoned for a mixed-use employment generating uses and the proposed facilitated only sustained 22 jobs and the acceptance of waste management as a land use, as set out within one of site requirements, the second requirement stated that the development of the site would only be permitted in accordance with the overall comprehensive masterplan, why was there such an emphasis placed on one of the key site requirements and complete disregard for the other; and
- GPBL would never have invested such a significant amount of money in the site, had it known about the potential AD plant.

In response to a Member's question, Mr. Maneely advised the Members that he lived 700metres away from the Granville plant and that it had taken over his and his neighbours' lives. He advised the Committee that they regularly monitored, complained and reported issues relating to the noise and odour emanating from the plant to the NIEA, and paid for their own noise and air quality consultants. He stated that the low frequency noise caused interrupted sleep for residents and that the odour prevented them from enjoying their gardens and outdoor areas. He cautioned the Committee that, if there was an on-shore wind and the AD plant was in place at Dargan Road, between 3,000 and 11,000 houses would be affected in North Belfast.

The Committee then welcomed Mr. S. Beattie QC and Ms C. McParland, Agent, to the meeting. They were given seven minutes to address the Committee. Mr. Beattie outlined that:

- it was the third time that officers had presented a detailed report having considered a comprehensive environmental statement, a series of consultees' responses and an investigation and enquiry

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arising from the objections and that the recommendation had remained an approval;

- paragraph 3.8 of Strategic Planning Policy stated that there should be a presumption in favour of development;
- the application was consistent with the BUAP, draft BMAP 2015, and that the overall Masterplan had been in place for over 10 years and the departures the Council had already permitted had been consistent with the overarching policy;
- this was a departure from the masterplan, as was the leisure-led project;
- substantial weight should be given to the responses from statutory consultees and that they had no objections subject to conditions;
- viability was not a material consideration;
- he clarified an error within the objection letter from the Sinn Fein representatives, in that the contracts would be entered into after planning permission was granted, not after the facility was built/operational;
- the submission from Mr Maneely was not evidence, the Granville plant was not the subject of any enforcement proceedings, and that the Planning Committee could only deal with evidence, not assertions;
- the proposition that the Council did not have any power once the facility was built was incorrect - the Council had powers under the Public Health Act 1978 in respect of noise and odour abatement;
- the Council owned the CHP engines and they did not understand there to be any complaints in relation to them;
- the area had been zoned for mixed-use and had been whiteland for over 20 years; and
- their client had spent over £3million on the project so far, and that it would send an unfortunate message to those in the renewable energy field, that planning policy would be set aside or ignored.

In response to a Member's question regarding the odour issues described by Mr. Maneely, Mr. S. Wise, Energia, outlined that the sites were designed differently and that more exotic materials would go to the Granville site. He explained that the level of treatment was different for issues like odour. He stated that they had a site in Dublin and were committed to being a good neighbour. The Committee was advised that the building would be under negative air pressure to ensure that it was not causing air leakage. He explained that the emissions were treated comprehensively through an ammonia scrubber, a biofilter and a carbon scrubber.

In response to a further Member's question, Ms. S. Allen, Principal Environmental Planning Officer at Shared Environmental Service (SES), provided information in relation to the application's impact on the nitrogen critical thresholds in the European Designated Sites.

She explained that there was not an indicative nitrogen level for marine systems and that the most comparable would probably be the advisory nitrogen levels for salt marshes, where the threshold was between 20-30kg/ per hectare per annum.

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She outlined that the background levels of nitrogen were slightly higher than that, and were now 22kg/ per hectare, per annum. However, the Committee was advised that SES' assessment had been based on the contribution from the project itself, which was 0.9% of the critical load, and, in their view, in view of the nature of the extent of the site, the dilution factor and the nature of the habitat, they were satisfied that 0.9% could not have an adverse effect on the site and that view had been endorsed by the NIEA.

The Divisional Solicitor advised the Committee that, in respect of Mr Maneely's submission, as it was a different site with different considerations, the issues which were mentioned could not be translated into concerns which would necessarily arise in respect of the application which was in front of the Committee. She echoed the comments made by Mr. Beattie QC, in that the Committee should therefore give very limited weight to the comments made by Mr. Maneely.

A number of Members stated that they felt Mr. Maneely's contribution was important in that it was his lived experience of living close to a similar facility. Members raised concerns regarding the facility being incompatible with the surrounding uses, including the impact that low frequency noise could have on the nearby film studios.

A Member raised a concern regarding the viability of the project, which, while he acknowledged it was not a material consideration, he felt that Case officers would regularly highlight if a proposal would create a large number of jobs and that, therefore, the viability of a project was in fact a consideration for officers.

A further Member stated that the Council had been clear in its investment in clean tech jobs in the North Foreshore site for a number of years. He stated that the Film Studios were a world class facility and had been built to the highest standard in respect of soundproofing.

A Member stated that the Council was ever evolving and that decisions could and would change over time. He ask whether officers, as part of the Local Development Plan process, had engaged with other stakeholders around the future of waste management facilities within Belfast. In response, the Planning Manager (Policy) confirmed to the Committee that they had engaged with the Department for Infrastructure and the surrounding Councils, and that policies had been created as part of the Draft Plan Strategy which was undergoing examination at present. He stated that the content of the policies were similar to PPS11 but that they would not be adopted as formal policy until the LDP had been formally agreed.

In response to a further question regarding the zoning at the overall site, the Planning Manager (Development Management) reminded the Committee that it had to base its decision on current policy context and that the appropriate adjacent land uses had been taken into consideration by officers during the assessment. He stated that the more sensitive "residential standards" in respect of noise and disturbance had been applied when assessing the impact of the application in relation to the nearby Film Studios and that Environmental Health had confirmed that it was content that there would be no undue conflict.

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In response to a further question regarding the Giant's Park leisure element, he advised the Committee that there was no proposed use for leisure in the zoning of the site. Moreover, irrespective of the fact that there was no technical evidence to state that there would be a conflict of uses on the site, he added that the GPBL proposal was only at PAD stage, that a planning application had not yet been submitted and that it would therefore be unreasonable for the Committee to refuse an application because of a conflict with a proposed use which was not zoned and where planning permission had not yet been applied for.

A further Member raised concerns of the site's impact on the ammonia and nitrogen levels and the policy context in which the Committee was having to make its decision. She stated that it was concerning that there was no scientific basis for the use of the 1% threshold, and that it was currently under review in order to bring it more into line with the evidence of damage and case law. She stated that it was disappointing that a representative from DAERA had not been in attendance to answer questions on the issue.

The Divisional Solicitor advised the Committee that, while she understood Members' frustrations at some shortcomings in certain policies, current planning policies must be applied and that significant weight should be attributed to the responses from statutory consultees.

A further Member stated that they had issues with DFI Roads' response in relation to transport sustainability, whereby it had stated that "at this time there is no policy under which DfI Roads can assess and comment on the sustainability of a proposal at the regional level". He advised that he felt there was a lot of uncertainty around the proposal.

In response to further Members' questions, the Divisional Solicitor added that the Clean Neighbourhoods Act (NI) 2011 provided the Council with powers in relation to noise and odour in the form of abatement notices. She added that, if a noise or odour issue was not adequately dealt with by way of an abatement notice, the Council had the power to apply to the High Court for an injunction, restraining the use of the premises until it was satisfied that the issue had been dealt with.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that, if Members were minded to go against the officers' recommendation to approve the application, a Member could propose a deferral of the application and ask that officers would submit formal refusal reasons based on the issues which had been raised during the discussion to the next meeting. He explained that it would allow the Committee to see the full refusal reasons and that it could then amend them if necessary.

Moved by Councillor Maskey and
Seconded by Councillor McCullough,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the application and asks that officers submit formal reasons for refusal at the next meeting, based on the fact that the application:

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- is incompatible with adjacent land uses and is contrary to PPS11 WM1, in that it is incompatible with the character of the surrounding area and adjacent land uses, namely with the adjacent film studios and its expansion and also with the GPBL proposals; and
- that the film studio extension has been built in the zone which was zoned for Waste Management in the Masterplan, and that the waste management element therefore no longer existed.

On a vote, ten Members voted for the proposal, none against and three no votes, and it was accordingly declared carried.

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

The Principal Planning officer outlined the key aspects of the application for full planning permission to reconstruct a fire damaged petrol station and associated shop. She advised the Committee that it had been due to consider the application on 19th January, 2021, but that an objection had been received at a late stage and the application was subsequently removed from the agenda to allow time for further consideration. Since January, she explained that the description of the proposal had been altered and the revised description had been advertised in the local press and neighbour notified.

The Committee was advised that the site was located within the development limits as designated in the Belfast Urban Area Plan and draft BMAP. The application had been assessed against relevant planning policy, dBMAP, SPPS and PPS3.

The Committee was advised that two further objections had been received from the nearby Beckett's Bar. The objector raised anomalies with the floor space figures presented by the agent, and stated that additional retail floor space would be created and therefore parking provision should be increased. Further consideration of the floorspace figures revealed that the plans were accurate. However, figures relating to uses at question 24 of the P1 application form were incorrect. There was a total increase in floor space of 108sqm at the proposed petrol filling station shop, 88sqm of which was retail use. There was no change in the footprint of either the chip shop or nail bar to the front of the site. The updated floor-space figures were published to the planning portal on 3rd February.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the late Items pack. An email had been received from an objector, Carlin Planning, raising issues which had previously been raised, including a shortfall in parking spaces and concerns regarding road safety. The Case officer's response to the comments were provided to the Committee, including that DFI Roads had been consulted on the late objection and that their position remained unchanged. The Members were also advised that adjacent local businesses had been considered, that the site was well served by public transport and there had been no significant issues with parking or road safety at the site prior to the fire.

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The Chairperson welcomed Mr. R. McCausland BL to the meeting. He was speaking on behalf of an objector, Fernmount Trading (NI) Ltd & Sharp (NI) Limited. He advised the Committee that:

- His client was concerned about the intensification of the site as the current parking provision at the site was inadequate and that his client's car parking facilities were used as an overspill;
- the application was contrary to Policy AMP7 of PPS3, which stated that development proposals were required to provide adequate provision for car parking and appropriate servicing arrangements;
- that none of the circumstances applied in terms of Policy AMP7 of PPS3, which would allow a reduced level of car parking provision;
- DFI Roads' position had changed over time and, in September 2020, it had considered that the application was unacceptable and that a Travel Plan and Service Management plan would be required;
- it was totally possible that cars would enter this site and then realise that no parking spaces were available, leading to tailbacks onto the public road which would be a road safety issue;
- the current under provision of parking had stemmed from piecemeal development and intensification of the site.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. D. Diamond, Kevin McShane Ltd, to the meeting. Mr Diamond advised the Committee that they had been providing transport planning and engineering support to the applicant. He explained that:

- the application fulfilled the reinstatement of an existing fire damaged Petrol Filling Station development with an associated retail unit;
- it constituted a 'like for like' replacement of an established land use on the site and the proposals aimed to restore the site layout to its pre-fire condition;
- DFI Roads had noted in its consultation response that the site had operated without significant traffic issues and, additionally, that the location and design of the site layout offered excellent visibility in both directions onto the Stewartstown Road;
- Kevin McShane Ltd had provided a robust analysis of parking demand and supply at the proposed site, demonstrating how the mixed nature of the site lent itself to shared parking between the different site uses;
- Council planners had concluded that the shared parking provision at the proposed site was acceptable to satisfy the nature of parking demand at this location.

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.

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

(Councillor Hanvey 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 19th January, 2021.)

The Principal Planning officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application, which had previously been presented at the meeting on 19th January.

She explained that the item had been deferred for a second time at that meeting, on the basis that Members had requested legal advice in relation to the planning position of the site in respect of its current status, regarding the demolition of the previous dwelling on site and whether that constituted willful abandonment, a nil use or neither.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that the Case officer remained of the view that the demolition of the original dwelling had resulted in a nil use of the land, when considered in light of previous relevant case law. She explained that DCS No 400-002-136 considered the lawful use of a site following demolition. In that case, the inspector had declined to confirm that the construction of three replacement dwellings in Leicestershire would be lawful following demolition of the original dwellings and that it created a nil use on the site. The case was clear that demolition had resulted in nil use.

The Committee was advised that it was confirmed that the previous dwelling was demolished in 2013.

The agent had stated that the established residential use for the previous 115 years had not been taken into account. The Principal Planning officer advised that it remained that no planning permission had been granted on the site for the replacement of the dwelling and the length of time the previous dwelling stood was not a relevant factor. Once the previous dwelling was demolished the site contained a nil use.

The agent made reference to case law, in regards to establishing whether an existing use had been abandoned in circumstances where the residential building was still on the land, in various states of dilapidation, or where the use of the land for certain commercial uses had discontinued for a number of years. The Principal Planning officer explained that none of the cases addressed the lawful use of a residential site following the demolition of the dwelling. The case of *Iddenden and Others V. Secretary of State for the Environment and Another* [1972] 1 WLR 1433 did, however, deal with circumstances such as these, i.e., where there had been demolition of the residence, albeit it was in the context of enforcement. In that case, the Court were of the view that the established use was lost once the demolition had occurred.

She outlined that the Planning Service was unaware of any PAC decisions in respect of the issue and the applicant's agent had not provided any. Officers were however aware that the approach had been used by some English planning appeal decisions. She added that officers remained of the view that the application site currently had a nil use and, as such, there was no lawful existing access. The Members were also

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advised that the proposed access to Ashley Park was sub-standard and would prejudice road safety.

The Committee was reminded that DFI Roads had been consulted and objected to the proposal as it was considered contrary to policy AMP 2 of PPS 3, in that the proposed access would prejudice road safety. The visibility splays were deemed to be inadequate.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the agent, Mr. T. Gourley, had spoken at the last meeting at which the application had been considered, on 19th January. However, Mr. Gourley had requested to address the Committee again to discuss the legal arguments as he believed they had been misconstrued. The Committee acceded to his request and he was welcomed to address the Committee.

Mr Gourley stated that, as a former Planning officer, he was disappointed in the Case officer's report. He stated that:

- he had concerns regarding the robustness of the legal opinion;
- the Case officer's report relied upon one single appeal of a certificate of lawful use, relating to the commencement of a permission in a rural area and that it was not comparable with the application in question;
- paragraph 4 of that appeal decision, which had been relied on by the planning office, stated that a dormant use could still be an extant lawful use;
- paragraph 5 of the same decision clearly stated that no abandonment was being argued by the Council in that particular case - it accepted that repeated applications maintained the use, which applied in the current application;
- the focus of the appeal concerned the formation of a new unit by merging 3 sites into one site for a dwelling, thereby creating a new "chapter or use", and that the case was completely different from the proposal for 11 Ashley Park;
- the Iddenden case determined that even though a building on a cement depot was demolished, but that no nil use arose and that the use of the site remained, albeit in a different way of operating. He stated, therefore, that the use of the access at 11 Ashley Park was still in existence and still be in entitlement to use;
- the photographs did not clearly demonstrate the dropped kerbs and did not accurately depict the visibility; and
- his letter of support detailed 3 court decisions and that the Case officer's report did not detail any.

In response to a Member's question, the Mr. Gourley advised the Committee that there was an existing entrance at the site which had been used for many decades. The dwelling had fallen into disrepair, having been vandalised and burned, and that, on account of it being a dangerous structure, Lisburn City Council had directed the owner to demolish the property as a result of force majeure. He stated that, had it not been for the

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anti-social behaviour, the application would be for the replacement of a structure, not a new access, and that the existing access would have been acceptable.

The Planning Manager (Development Management) advised the Committee that the issue at hand was one of highway safety. Visibility in a westerly direction was highly deficient as advised by the Department for Infrastructure. This matter required particular attention because of the potential implications of a road access which could result in injury, serious injury or even a fatality. The applicant would be able to exercise their right of appeal if the application was refused.

The Committee resolved to refuse the application in accordance with the officer recommendation and delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the refusal reasons.

**(Reconsidered item) 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**

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Collins and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the application to allow the ongoing engagement to continue between the developer and local residents.

The Committee noted, as the application had not been presented, that all Members' present at the next meeting, would be able to take part in the debate and vote on this item.

**LA04/2020/2200/F & LA04/2020/2201/DCA –
Demolition of Nos. 27 to 37 Linenhall Street
and Nos. 8-10 Clarence Street and erection of
seven storey office building at 8-10 Clarence Street
27-37 Linenhall Street and existing car park at the
corner of Linenhall Street and Clarence Street**

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Councillor McCullough and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the application to allow the developer to submit further information in respect of viability and improvements to public realm.

The Committee noted, as the application had not been presented, that all Members' present at the next meeting, would be able to take part in the debate and vote on this item.

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**LA04/2021/0024/F & LA04/2021/0025/DCA –
Retrospective single storey extension to front of
existing single storey garage/ Minor demolition
works to front garage at 10 Broomhill Park**

(The Chairperson, Councillor Hussey, having declared an interest in this item, did not participate in the vote on the item and indicated that he would leave the meeting after he had spoken on it.)

(Councillor McKeown in the Chair)

The Principal Planning officer provided the Committee with the details of the retrospective application for an extension to the front of an existing single storey garage.

She explained that the key issues which had been considered by officers included:

- scale, massing and design
- impact on the surrounding character
- impact on the Malone Conservation Area; and
- impact on amenity.

She drew the Committee's attention to the Late Items pack and clarified that no petition had been received, but that five objections had been received. The objections raised issues including inaccuracies in PHD form, that it was contrary to policy and legislation, the retrospective nature of the application and issues surrounding the building lines. She advised the Members that the issues raised in the objections had been considered in the Case officer's report.

She advised the Members that, on balance, having taken into account the relevant planning policy legislation, representations received and other material considerations, it was considered that the proposal would integrate well with the existing dwelling and would not detract or harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area in accordance with Policy EXT1 of PPS7 (Addendum): Residential Extensions and Alterations, PPS6 and the SPPS. It was considered that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Malone Conservation Area and was in line with 'A Design Guide for the Malone Conservation Area'.

The Committee was advised that the Council's Conservation and Heritage Team had been consulted and had offered no objection to the proposal

In response to a Member's question regarding a previous application for the house, which had been rejected, the Principal Planning officer drew the Committee's attention to the site history. She advised the Members that the previous application had been for a much larger extension to the first floor of the property. She emphasised to the Members that a property being within a Conservation Area did not mean that works could not take place, but rather that they had to be sensitive to the surrounding area. She explained that the application was for a 1.8 metre extension to the garage and that it would not impact on the wider Conservation Area.

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The Chairperson invited Councillor Hussey to address the Committee.

Councillor Hussey advised the Committee that he felt that the application should be refused on the basis that:

- a larger scale application had previously been submitted by the applicant, including an extension to the garage and the first floor, which had been refused by the Committee and that decision had been upheld by the PAC;
- the applicant had started the construction of the garage extension and had then been contacted by Planning enforcement in respect of the unauthorised works;
- it should be noted that the applicant had then quickly finished the garage extension before submitting the retrospective application seeking permission for it;
- Policy 5.2.32 in the Design Guide in respect of the Malone Conservation Area determined that no side extensions and no front extensions were permitted, and that the applicant was well aware of the rule; and
- the Broomhill area was one of the first developments in Belfast to have integrated garages.

(Councillor Hussey left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Deputy Chairperson then welcomed Mr. C. Bryson, who was speaking on behalf of an objector, Mr. B. Johnston. Mr Bryson stated that the Committee should refuse the retrospective application as:

- the applicant would have been well aware of the need to obtain demolition consent and planning permission for the works and it seemed that the applicant had total disregard for, and was hoping to circumvent, the planning process;
- the work progressed even when the applicant had been contacted by officers from the enforcement section;
- the site was within the Malone Conservation Area and thus planning control should be applied more rigorously;
- Planning policy BH12 of PPS6 required that work must conform with the relevant design guidance, not "should broadly conform with";
- the extension to the garage constituted a 55% increase in length, which brought the front line closer to the street and thereby increased its visibility and prominence;
- Policy 5.2.32 of the Design Guide stated that any extension should be to the rear wall of the existing building and nowhere did it state that extensions to the front were permissible;

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- the proposal changed the 3D form of the dwelling and therefore the character and interrelation of spaces in Broomhill;
- in relation to the previous application for the same house, the PAC decision stated that any extension affected a buildings 3D form;
- permitting that type of front extension would set a dangerous precedent for the Malone Conservation Area;
- the extension also breached the established building line along that section of Broomhill Park, the design guide makes clear that building lines could apply to side boundaries on corner plots and that was the case for Nos 8 and 14, and, when considered alongside Nos 10 and 12, they formed strong building line; and
- the proposal affected the residential amenity of 12 Broomhill Park, with the extension of a long gable wall which further exacerbated the feeling of enclosure, which was contrary to Policy EST1 of the Addendum to PPS7, as it resulted in undue dominance.

(Councillor McCullough left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

A Member asked the Principal Planning officer to clarify why they were recommending an approval, if Section 5 of the Design Guide for the Malone Conservation Area did not permit front extensions. In response, the officer drew the Committee's attention to Paragraph 9.7 of the Case officer's report, whereby it stated that "In terms of the original single storey attached garages at an Inter-War Residence, paragraph 5.2.47 [of the Design Guide] states that it would not be appropriate to add another storey but does not state that extending the existing ground floor garage to the front would be inappropriate. Therefore, it is important that the extension is assessed against the key legislative test which is whether the proposal preserves the character or appearance of the Conservation Area."

A number of Members stated that, while they were disappointed that it was a retrospective application, they did not feel that the extension was out of character for the area. Further Members stated that a site visit might be appropriate.

Moved by Councillor Garrett
Seconded by Councillor Collins,

That the Committee grants approval to the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions set out within the case officer's report and delegates power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the conditions.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal, two against and two no votes and it was accordingly declared carried.

(The Chairperson, Councillor Hussey, re-joined the meeting at this point)

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LA04/2021/0320/F - Variation of Condition 3 (agreement of proposed materials prior to commencement) of planning permission LA04/2015/0264/F to enable a change to the proposed materials to be agreed prior to occupation of the development (currently under construction at lands bounded by Bedford Street INI Building, McClintock Street and Franklin Street

The Principal Planning officer outlined the details of the application.

The Principal Planning officer advised the Committee that the applicant was seeking to vary Condition 3, which required details of materials to be submitted and approved prior to 'commencement' of development to agreement prior to 'occupation' and to enable a change to the proposed materials.

The Committee was advised that no representations had been received regarding the proposal. The Principal Planning officer explained that, having taken account of the planning history on the site, the proposed changes were considered compliant with the development plan and other relevant policies.

He outlined that HED had been consulted and was satisfied that the proposed finishes were acceptable in the context of the listed Ewart building.

He drew the Members' attention to the Late Items pack, where a formal response had been received from the Urban Design Officer. He explained that it confirmed the position set out in the Case officer's report, whereby the Urban Design Officer had no objections to the proposed change in materials, subject to the submission of annotated elevations clearly highlighting those sections of the building where the change of materials was proposed and CGI views showing the approved materials to enable comparison with the proposed materials. The late items report also confirmed receipt of the annotated plans and CGIs. He added that the Conservation officer had also advised that he was content and had no objection.

A number of Members stated that the application to vary the condition was frustrating, given that the construction had almost been completed and that the original condition had not been adhered to.

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 Section 76 Agreement and the conditions.

LA04/2020/1783/F - Change of use and refurbishment of the ground floor and part of the first floor of a three storey building in the Conway Mill Complex to a new training gym with elevation changes at St John Bosco ABC, Conway Mill, 5-7 Conway Street

The Members were provided with the details of the application, which was partly funded by the Council.

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It sought full planning permission for a change of use and refurbishment of the ground floor and part of the first floor of a building in the Conway Mill Complex to provide a new training gym with elevation changes.

The key issues which had been considered during the assessment included the principle of development and the acceptability of the proposed use, impact on a listed building, road issues, impact on the surrounding character, contamination and noise.

The Committee was advised that it was considered that the proposed change of use and alterations would not adversely impact the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would not impact on surrounding neighbouring properties.

No objections had been received and consultees had offered no objection to the proposal.

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 those conditions.

**LA04/2020/2093/F - Change of use from retail
furniture showroom to fitness/exercise training
centre and leisure at 71 Ballysillan Road**

The Committee was advised of the key aspects of the application which sought full planning permission for a change of use from a retail furniture showroom to a fitness/exercise training centre. The Members were advised that the Council had an estate in the land.

The Members were advised that the main issues which had been considered in the assessment of the application were the principle of development, impact on the character and appearance of the area, impact on amenity, access and parking and road safety. The proposal had been assessed against and was considered to comply with the BUAP, Draft BMAP, PPS3 and the SPPS.

The application had been neighbour notified and advertised in the local press and no letters of representation had been received.

Environmental Health had been consulted and was content with the proposal, subject to an informative being attached to the decision regarding the transmission of potential noise.

DfI Roads had also been consulted and had offered no objection, subject to a condition being attached relating to the provision for cycle parking.

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.

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LA04/2020/2469/F - Pedestrianised public space to include cafe/bar/storage container/canopy areas, performance stage, outdoor seating and associated works (temporary permission) on Brunswick Street

The Committee was provided with the details of a Belfast City Council application. The Members noted that temporary planning permission was sought for a change of use of public road for a pedestrianised public space.

The Members noted that the proposed change of use would not adversely impact the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposed temporary use of the site for entertainment and food and drink consumption would add variety to an area that was dominated by the same use type.

The Committee was advised that no objections 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.

LA04/2019/2653/F - Demolition of existing property and erection of a 9 storey building (overall height 37m) comprising a ground floor retail unit together with cycle parking and plant areas: and 8 floors of grade A office accommodation at Chancery House 88 Victoria Street

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the application as Members had not been able to access all of the relevant documents through the Planning Portal.

The Committee noted, as the application had not been presented, that all Members' present at the next meeting, would be able to take part in the debate and vote on this item.

Chairperson

Brexit Committee

Thursday, 15th April, 2021

MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and
Alderman Sandford; and
Councillors Baker, Brooks, Canavan,
Ferguson, Gormley, Hanvey, Kyle, Long, McLaughlin,
McMullan, Newton, 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;
and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillor de Faoite.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th March 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 April.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brooks declared an interest in respect of item 3 – Port Health Unit 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

PSNI - Supt. G. Pollock and Supt. A. Davidson

The Chairperson welcomed Superintendent Pollock and Superintendent Davidson from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to the meeting.

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Superintendent Davidson stated that he had been working for the PSNI EU Exit Team which had overall responsibility for preparedness and managing the operations of the organisation following the exit from the European Union.

He reported that, from a policing and law enforcement perspective, EU exit planning was complex and the focus had been to prepare the organisation for a new operating environment, which included understanding and responding to any changes the EU exit would bring, such as perforation and impact on police powers, policy and procedural impacts and operational response.

He pointed out to the Committee that, as a result of the trade and cooperation agreement, the PSNI would continue to work with other law enforcement agencies across EU member states and would maintain access to a range of law enforcement structures and databases, such as Europol.

He highlighted areas of potential criminality arising from opportunities or vulnerabilities the EU exit presented, such as smuggling, fraud, cyber related crime and the movement of illicit goods through potential new transportation routes and new compliance and regulatory practices. He added that it was too early to identify any patterns or trends within criminality and that the PSNI had increased its collaboration with a range of agencies and were utilising existing structures.

He reported that part of the PSNI's response had been the successful funding and allocation of staff and officers associated with EU exit, with 308 additional officers and staff as a result, the majority of whom were in local neighbourhood policing.

Superintendent Pollock reported that the key issue was that normal policing continued throughout the period of transition and that the additional officers would be able to deliver increased neighbourhood policing in Belfast, supplementing the service.

He stated that the PSNI's key operating principle was that, if you were a victim of crime, your case or investigation would not be hindered by the EU exit.

Following further discussion, the Committee thanked Superintendent Pollock and Superintendent Davidson for their representation and they retired from the meeting.

NI Protocol/Trade and Cooperation Agreement - Verbal Update

The Director of Economic Development reported that he had attended a meeting, which had been facilitated by Invest NI, with regard to free ports to explore possible opportunities stemming from the NI Protocol for foreign direct investment.

He advised the Members that he had sought further clarity and was unaware of any work having being commissioned. He reported that officers would present a report to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the Council's endorsement of free ports, the Director of Economic Development stated that Belfast City Council had not

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established or sought a position with regard to free ports and he added that HM Treasury had released a prospectus for competition to become a free port and, as far as he was aware, there had been no submission from any Northern Irish local authority.

The Committee noted the update.

Restricted Items

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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Equality for LGBTQ+ Community

“This Council recognises the struggle for equality by generations of people who identify as LGBTQ+; acknowledges the successful work of LGBTQ+ activists in eradicating elements of institutionalised discrimination and condemns the continued inequalities experienced by those who identify as LGBTQ+.

We endorse in full the recommendations of the LGBTQ+ advisory panel and welcome the timeframe for the LGBTQ+ strategy (December 2021).

This Council calls on all Ministers and Departments with responsibility to proactively and robustly implement all elements of the LGBTQ+ strategy, including with adequate resourcing and funding.

We call on the Executive to commit to equality, respect and human rights for all sections of our society in its actions, words and deeds.”

Proposer: Councillor Maskey

Seconder: Councillor O’Hara

(To be debated by the Council)

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Immediate need to tackle the waiting lists for diagnosing autism in children

“Autism can cause significant social, communication and behavioural difficulties. The number of school age children with autism has soared in recent years. A total of 2,562 children were diagnosed as on the autistic spectrum last year across the north of Ireland. Five years previously the figure was 1,472. Children from social and economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have autism - with boys three times more likely to be diagnosed than girls.

However, in Belfast thousands of children with suspected autism are waiting up to two years to get a diagnosis from the Belfast Trust. Early diagnosis and intervention is key to the future of these children and parents are distressed that valuable time is being lost while their children remain on waiting lists.

Many parents have had no option but to pay for private assessments which cost circa £1,400. All 5 of the norths health trusts now accept private referrals and this is leading to concerns about a two-tier health system that will see children from disadvantaged backgrounds left further down the waiting lists.

This Council asserts that, whilst the pandemic has affected autism services, all children with autism deserve to have timely assessments and the vital support they need at the earliest possible stage in their development. This Council will write to the Minister for Health to ask him to take all steps necessary to immediately tackle the unacceptable waiting lists for diagnosis of autism in children and to provide the necessary supports and interventions for their development.”

Proposer: Councillor McAteer

Seconder : Councillor Magennis

(To be debated by the Council)

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Charges for the Use of ATMs

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

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

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

The Council therefore will write to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) urging them to cap the number of ATMS that charge for withdrawing cash.

The Council will also ask the FCA to check on behalf of consumers, how such ATMS are sited and criteria applied and if there is any correlation between the siting of cash ATMs which charge in areas of social deprivation on the grounds they may be used more often in a 7 day period by people on fixed incomes and are therefore more profitable.”

Proposer: Councillor Brian Heading

Seconder: Councillor Donal Lyons

(To be debated by the Council)

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Mater Hospital Services

“This Council recognises the role played by healthcare staff in the Mater Hospital, on the front line of the pandemic. While working hard to battle COVID at a local level, these staff saw their normal workday overhauled and many worked multiple redeployments. The Council thanks the staff at the Mater Hospital for their efforts.

The Council notes that the Mater Hospital is an incredibly important asset for North Belfast, both as an employer and in terms of services provision. Further notes the concerns that no timeline has been provided for the return of Mater Hospital services which were removed to facilitate COVID operations; including general surgery, ICU, day procedures, mental health services, births, and more.

Along with Unison, the Council agrees that all services which were removed during the pandemic should be returned to the Mater as soon as is reasonably possible, and that staff and trade unions should be provided with a working timeline for this to take place.

Therefore, the Council will seek a cross party meeting with Cathy Jack and a representative from the Department of Health to discuss plans for the future of the Mater, after COVID.”

Proposer: Councillor Ferguson

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

(To be debated by the Council)

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Ban Conversion Therapy

“This Council supports calls for a ban on the harmful practice commonly referred to as conversion therapy.

The Council acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the Ban Conversion Therapy NI coalition, made up of LGBTQ+ organisations, mental health charities and faith groups which are united in calling for this ban.

The Council notes the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK' which describes this practice as unethical, potentially harmful and not supported by evidence.

Further notes the Association of Christian Counsellors' stance regarding conversion therapy, which states that Reparative (or Conversion) Therapy does not fit within the ACC Ethics and Practice framework.

The Council agrees that it is fundamentally wrong to view minority sexual orientation or gender identity as something that needs fixed or cured - and that any practice, including religious practice, that is conducted with a specific pre-determined outcome, such as changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, is harmful and denigrating, and must be banned.

This Council will therefore write to the Minister for Communities on the following;

- To support a legislative ban on conversion therapy in all its forms, before the end of the current assembly mandate.
- That there should be no special exemptions for religious organisations in implementing a ban on conversion therapy.
- That any ban should clearly distinguish from safe and supportive therapies, delivered by suitable qualified and regulated professionals, that assist people to explore and better understand their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.”

Proposer: Councillor Flynn

Seconder: Councillor de Faoite

(To be debated by the Council)

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Pay Rise for Public Sector Workers

“This Council notes the disappointing pay offer of a 1% non-consolidated pay increase for public sector workers. Given levels of inflation this amounts to a pay cut, and goes nowhere near far enough to reward workers for the valuable work they have carried out over the last 13 months of the pandemic. This offer is a slap in the face to staff and falls abysmally short of a fair and just pay offer.

This decision will unfairly impact thousands of staff across the civil service, as well as employees of the Education Authority, Health and Social Services bodies and HSC Trusts, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Local Government, Libraries NI and a number of other public bodies and voluntary organisations.

NIPSA, the main trade union representing public sector workers, has stated its opposition to this offer, and is engaging in a consultation period with members urging them to engage in industrial action to resist it.

The Council supports the trade unions in their calls to reject this offer and demands a fair pay rise for public sector workers.

Any pay rise must be fully consolidated, as has been the case with staff in other regions of the UK, such as the Department for Work and Pensions in Britain whose staff received a 2.5% consolidated offer. There should be no continued pay disparity between staff in the north compared to those in Britain and staff here must be afforded the same incremental pay increases as other regions.

This Council resolves write to the Minister for Finance, Conor Murphy, urging him to go back to the negotiating table with a better offer. The Council also resolves to convene a meeting with NIPSA and the relevant trade unions to discuss how the Council, as a local government body, can assist the trade unions in their campaign for a fair pay deal for public sector workers.”

Proposer: Councillor Michael Collins

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

(To be debated by the Council)

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Statue of Mary Ann McCracken

“This Council resolves to install a statue of Mary Ann McCracken in the grounds of City Hall.”

Proposer: Councillor Long

Secunder: Councillor Nicholl

(To be referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee)

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Extension of the Belfast Bikes Scheme

“This Council:

Acknowledges the record-breaking month for the use of Belfast Bikes, with 30k journeys made in March this year, and commends once again the scheme and our officials working on it.

Recognises that it must continue to promote and invest in the positive environmental, economic and social benefits of cycling and pedestrianisation throughout our city.

Calls on Council officers to carry out a scoping exercise to examine the further extension of Belfast bikes, beyond the city core and further out into communities across the city.

Agrees to write to write to the Infrastructure Minister Nicola Mallon to reiterate the need for working in support of investment into the required protected cycle lane network in our city and communities, to support the further rollout of the Belfast Bikes Scheme extending its reach and accessibility throughout the city.”

Proposer: Councillor Baker

Seconder: Councillor McAteer

(To be referred without discussion to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee)

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War Years Remembered

“This Council notes the priceless and globally renowned work of War Years Remembered as well as the impact COVID-19 has had on the museum.

Consequently, given the importance of not only preserving our social and military history as well as offering educational lessons that offer excellent ways of building bridges between communities, including ethnic minorities, this Council agrees to engage with War Years Remembered on finding a suitable solution to their current struggles, including a proposed relocation to Belfast.

This Council agrees that such a move would be beneficial not only to our city’s economy and attractiveness through local tourism, but also through the provision of education to our schools, colleges and local community groups.”

Proposer: Councillor Pankhurst

Seconder: Alderman Copeland

(To be referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee)

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Recent Violence and Public Disorder

“This Council condemns the recent serious violence and public disorder that took place not only in Belfast, but across Northern Ireland

It condemns paramilitarism, the use of violence for political ends and the exploitation of young people and working class communities.

We were deeply troubled to see images of children and young people involved in violence and deplore the risk of another generation seeing violence as a response to political frustrations. Whilst matters have thankfully settled over the past 2 weeks, we still believe that the underlying issues prevail and the threat of violence is near too far away from the surface in Northern Ireland.

As the main political body of this city, we have a moral and ethical duty to do everything we can to protect our citizens, particularly those young people at risk of being manipulated into street violence, as well as our duty of care to front line council staff carrying out daily essential services. We must also move away from simply offering condemnation and begin to look at solutions that will offer our young people hope and invest in their futures.

This Council will: commit to supporting all elements of the Youth Service, including our own Belfast Youth Forum; and will convene an urgent meeting of the relevant statutory agencies and third sector organisations to develop a consistent, young person led approach for the coming summer period; engage with relevant departments to ensure that discretionary funding is made available to support youth engagement and intervention; engage with Trade Unions to ensure safety of our staff and; will support the ongoing process for the formation of a NI Youth Assembly; and seek assurances that Youth Citizens' Assemblies will be considered as an engagement model to make recommendations for the city on addressing poverty, inequality, eradicating paramilitarism, integrating communities, expanding opportunity and tackling the climate crises.”

Proposer: Councillor Smyth

Seconder: Councillor Mulholland

(To be referred without discussion to the People and Communities Committee)

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