

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall and also remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on
Wednesday, 1st September, 2021 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor;
(Councillor Nicholl) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey,
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, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons,
Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer,
McCabe, McCullough, McDonough-Brown,
McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds,
Mulholland, Murphy, Newton, O'Hara, Pankhurst,
Smyth, Verner and Walsh.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors McCusker, Spratt and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Aldermen Haire) and Councillors Brooks, Flynn, M. Kelly, McMullan and McReynolds declared an interest in relation to the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th August, under the heading "Community Diversionary Festivals Programme", on the basis that they were on the Board of the Eastside Partnership, which had been recommended for funding. However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in relation to the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th August, under the heading "Community Diversionary Festivals Programme", to refer issues which had been raised around the Wolfe Tones concert on the night of 15th August to the Party Group Leaders for further consideration, on the basis that she was employed by Féile An Phobail. However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors McKeown declared an interest in relation to the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the People and Communities Committee

of 10th August, under the heading “Partner Agreement – Ulidia Playing Fields”, on the basis that his son was a member of Rosario Youth Club, which had been recommended for additional funding. Councillor Smyth also declared an interest, on the basis that he was on the Steering Committee of Rosario Youth Club. However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, they were not required to leave the meeting.

The High Sheriff (Councillor Long), Alderman Copeland and Councillors Carson, Corr, Flynn, Garrett, Hanvey, Heading, Kyle, M. Kelly, McKeown, McMullan, McReynolds, Pankhurst and Smyth declared an interest in relation to the motion on NHS Pay, in that they either worked for or had a family member who worked for the National Health Service, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed.

The following Members declared an interest in relation to the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the People and Communities Committee of 10th August, under the heading “Community Provision Grant Funding 2021/22”:

- Alderman Kingston - on the Board and a Trustee of the Greater Shankill Partnership;
- Councillor Black - managed Grosvenor Community Centre;
- Councillor Canavan - on the Board of the Greater Shankill Partnership;
- Councillor Corr – employed by Falls Community Council;
- Councillor Donnelly – employed by the Upper Springfield Development Trust;
- Councillor Gormley - on the Board of the Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group;
- Councillor Hutchinson - on the Board of the Greater Shankill Partnership; and
- Councillor Verner - an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership.

However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl),
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Monthly meeting and the Special meetings of 1st July be taken as read and signed as correct.

Request for Meeting

At the request of Councillor Heading, the Chief Executive confirmed that officers would again contact CAPITA, on behalf of the Lord Mayor, to invite representatives to meet with an all-Party delegation from the Council to discuss Capita's handling of the Personal Independent Payment assessment process and that the issue would be progressed through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Official Announcements

Afghanistan

The Lord Mayor referred to the recent disturbing events in Afghanistan and welcomed the announcement by the First and Deputy First Ministers that the Northern Ireland Executive would do everything within its power to settle Afghan refugees in Northern Ireland. She added that the Council would also work with its partners to ensure that those who may settle in the City were assured of their safety and fully supported in rebuilding their lives.

Request for Meeting

The Lord Mayor drew the Council's attention to a letter which she had received from Miss Ragda Dawood, an eighteen-year-old who had, in 2020, moved with her family from Yemen to Belfast. Miss Dawood had, in stating her ambition to study medicine, highlighted the difficulties which she and similar newcomers had faced in trying to understand and access the education system in Northern Ireland.

The Lord Mayor confirmed that she had agreed to meet with Miss Dawood to discuss those difficulties in greater detail and that all Members would be invited to attend that meeting.

Expressions of Sympathy

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

At the request of Alderman Rodgers, the Lord Mayor agreed to forward a letter of condolence to the family of Mr. George Haffey, a former Belfast City Councillor, who had died recently.

Change of Membership on Committee

The Chief Executive reported that the Democratic Unionist Party had confirmed that Alderman McCoubrey would be replacing Councillor Pankhurst on the People and Communities Committee.

The Council noted the change.

Decisions of the Chief Executive taken under Delegated Authority

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

- i. That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th August, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Update on Standards and Business Committee", which was subject to call-in and is not before the Council for approval and adoption, and those matters which are delegated to the Committee, be approved and adopted;
- ii. Resolved - That the minute of the meeting of the Members of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th August, under the heading "Assets Management", be ratified by the Council, now that the enabling legislation permitting the holding of remote Committee meetings has been put in place; and
- iii. Resolved - That the minutes of the special meetings of 11th and 23rd June and 2nd August be noted by the Council.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Alderman Copeland and

Resolved - That the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th August, under the heading "Requests for Use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality", be amended to reflect that the Council agrees to accede to a request for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK to be granted the use of the City Hall and provided with a drinks reception on 21st September, to mark the hosting of the British Islands and Mediterranean Regions Parliamentary Associations Conference in Belfast, subject to all relevant criteria being met.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Committee of 20th August, subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Update on Standards and Business Committee", which was subject to call-in, and those matters which were delegated to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

**Appointment of Members to the Standards and
Business Committee and Positions of Responsibility - Year 3**

The Council noted that, since the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 20th August, under the heading "Update on Standards and Business Committee", had been subject to a valid call-in requisition, this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the People and Communities Committee and the minutes of the meetings of the Members of the People and Communities Committee of 3rd and 10th August, be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11th August, be approved and adopted.

Just Eat Belfast Bikes Strategic Review

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and

Resolved – That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decision of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the minute of the meeting of the Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 9th June, 2021, under the heading "Just Eat Belfast Bikes Strategic Review" which was called in, be referred back to the Committee for review, given the opinion of the call-in, in terms of equality screening.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe, and

Resolved – That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for

the Licensing Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Licensing Committee of 18th August, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Planning Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Planning Committee of 17th, 19th and 24th August, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster
Hall Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor McCabe,
Seconded by Councillor Mulholland and

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 2nd August, be approved and adopted.

Brexit Committee

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

Resolved - That, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the decisions of the Chief Executive, taken under delegated authority for the Brexit Committee and the minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Brexit Committee of 12th August, be approved and adopted.

Motions

Triple Lock Guarantee

In accordance with notice on the agenda Alderman Copeland proposed:

"As the Chair of the Reference Group on Older People, I am deeply concerned at the consequences for local pensioners, should the Government move to end the State Pension "Triple Lock Guarantee", which was introduced in 2010 to inflation proof the UK state pension.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, requesting him to honour the "Triple Lock Guarantee", thereby ensuring the real time, real value of the State Pension.

The Council is aware of other proposed reforms which may be used to camouflage a diluting of the "State Pension Triple Lock Guarantee". This is not acceptable."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hutchinson.

At the request of Councillor Heading, the proposer agreed to insert the following paragraph at the end of her motion:

"The Council also notes the Government's decision to cut the Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit uplift and reiterates its call for the uplift to be retained."

The motion, as amended, was thereupon put to the Council and passed as follows:

"As the Chair of the Reference Group on Older People, I am deeply concerned at the consequences for local pensioners, should the Government move to end the State Pension "Triple Lock Guarantee", which was introduced in 2010 to inflation proof the UK state pension.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, requesting him to honour the "Triple Lock Guarantee", thereby ensuring the real time, real value of the State Pension.

The Council is aware of other proposed reforms which may be used to camouflage a diluting of the "State Pension Triple Lock Guarantee". This is not acceptable.

The Council also notes the Government's decision to cut the Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit uplift and reiterates its call for the uplift to be retained."

NHS Pay

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

"This Council notes with concern the 3% pay offer set to be made to health workers. This offer falls way short of satisfying the health unions' demands for a substantial pay uplift.

Our health workers deserve a real pay increase for their efforts throughout the pandemic. A 3% pay increase is only 1% above the UK inflation rate and is not nearly enough recognition for health staff and their efforts in these difficult times.

The Council notes that this offer comes at a time when health workers are under considerable strain, with Northern Ireland currently struggling with one of the highest Covid-19 death rates across the world.

The Council also notes with concern the recent reports of understaffing in our health service, with 1,800 nursing positions currently vacant in the North, while a further 1,000 vacancies exist in the social work and domiciliary care sector.

In order to retain a vibrant and world class health service, we must reward staff for the vital work which they carry out. Pay disparity with other jurisdictions has left many seeking employment elsewhere and low pay has contributed to staff resigning from the profession altogether.

The pandemic has shown how vital our health service is. Yet many NHS staff still suffer poverty wages and continue to be paid less when compared with other regions in the UK.

The Council resolves to write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann, and the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, urging them to not implement the planned offer of 3% for health workers and implores the Executive to explore ways to fund a more substantial pay uplift for health workers here.

The Council also resolves to convene a cross-party meeting with Political Parties in Belfast City Council and Trade Unionists in the Health service, to discuss the urgent need for a more substantial pay uplift for NHS staff, and the practical steps which can be taken to achieve this.

The motion was seconded by Michael Collins.

At the request of Councillor McLaughlin, the proposer agreed to replace the penultimate paragraph of his motion with the following:

“The Council resolves to write to the Health Minister, Robin Swann, calling upon him to refuse to bring forward the 3% pay offer, urging him, alongside the First and Deputy First Ministers, to lobby the British Government to award a substantial offer and asking him to bring forward proposals on safe staffing.”

The motion, as amended, was thereupon put to the Council and passed as follows:

“This Council notes with concern the 3% pay offer set to be made to health workers. This offer falls way short of satisfying the health unions’ demands for a substantial pay uplift.

Our health workers deserve a real pay increase for their efforts throughout the pandemic. A 3% pay increase is only 1% above the UK inflation rate and is not nearly enough recognition for health staff and their efforts in these difficult times.

The Council notes that this offer comes at a time when health workers are under considerable strain, with Northern Ireland currently struggling with one of the highest Covid-19 death rates across the world.

The Council also notes with concern the recent reports of understaffing in our health service, with 1,800 nursing positions currently vacant in the North, while a further 1,000 vacancies exist in the social work and domiciliary care sector.

In order to retain a vibrant and world class health service, we must reward staff for the vital work which they carry out. Pay disparity with other jurisdictions has left many seeking employment elsewhere and low pay has contributed to staff resigning from the profession altogether.

The pandemic has shown how vital our health service is. Yet many NHS staff still suffer poverty wages and continue to be paid less when compared with other regions in the UK.

The Council resolves to write to the Health Minister, Robin Swann, calling upon him to refuse to bring forward the 3% pay offer, urging him, alongside the First and Deputy First Ministers, to lobby the British Government to award a substantial offer and asking him to bring forward proposals on safe staffing.

The Council also resolves to convene a cross-party meeting with Political Parties in Belfast City Council and Trade Unionists in the Health service, to discuss the urgent need for a more substantial pay uplift for NHS staff, and the practical steps which can be taken to achieve this.”

A Changing Places Toilets Policy for Belfast City Council

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor McMullan proposed:

“Changing Places are specialised toilet facilities which make public places and spaces accessible and inclusive for everyone, including children, adults and older people with complex needs or mobility issues.

Where they are not provided, people are changed on a toilet floor, which is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified. Without them, people may be excluded entirely from certain public spaces.

The Council notes its commitment in the Belfast Agenda to deliver an accessible City for all and its unanimous support for a COVID-19 response and recovery inclusive of disabled people, older people and carers in July, 2020.

It further recognises the importance of Changing Places toilets in delivering our vision of an accessible and inclusive Belfast.

The Council notes that Building Regulations in Northern Ireland only require standard accessible toilets to be provided. Despite discussion to add Changing Places toilets to these regulations, there is currently no requirement for these facilities. As a result of this, Changing Places are not usually provided as a matter of course, even in new buildings.

This Council will, therefore, develop a Changing Places toilet facility policy for Belfast City Council, with input from disabled people, older people and carers, to include the following:

- The Council will commit to include a Changing Places facility in every new building in which the public will have access to its services and where public toilet provision is available for others.
- The Council will also make every effort to include Changing Places facilities when it extends or extensively refurbishes an existing Council-owned building. These schemes will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the early stages of feasibility/design to establish whether there is an opportunity to install a Changing Places.
- It will review where such facilities could be installed on the Council Estate (e.g. playgrounds) and put a plan in place to ensure that all inclusive playgrounds are equipped with such a facility.
- It will ensure that organisers of all large-scale public events (e.g. concerts, festivals, family days) with a license from the Council will have a fixed or portable Changing Places unit as part of the design of the event.
- Where the Council is organising a large public event, it should be considered if it can take place at a venue that already has a Changing Places facility and include a mobile/portable facility, if a permanent Changing Places toilet is not available.
- For smaller public events, these should be advertised early and adequately communicated with the option to request access to a

Changing Places facility whereupon they can be moved or have a mobile/portable facility provided.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mulholland.

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

The Right of Nature

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Smyth proposed:

“This Council notes the legal and social movement globally for the ‘Rights of Nature’, which aims to strengthen protections for people, place and planet.

It believes that ‘Rights of Nature’ can help inspire an innovative rethinking about how to create regenerative, not extractivist, economies while also making human and other living communities safer, stronger and more resilient.

The positive work already being done by Council staff and groups on the climate emergency and biodiversity crises are commendable, but we recognise the need for a rights-based approach to nature.

It is proposed that, over the next twelve months, the Council will collaborate with civic society to explore what rights of nature mean for the people and economies of the region and to investigate how Rights of Nature could be expressed in community plans, corporate plans, improvement objectives and other strategic frameworks. In particular, the Council will, in the next twelve months, hold community workshops and work with the local community and stakeholders to draw up a Declaration for the Rights of Nature for the City, to be brought back before the Council for adoption.

It is also requested that a report, authored in collaboration and with input from the local community, be brought to the Council in relation to embedding ‘Rights of Nature’ as a keystone concept into the Council’s operational practices, planning processes and long-term decision-making.

Mindful of our mutual environmental obligations under the Espoo Convention, we call on all councils in Northern Ireland to also explore ‘Rights of Nature’ for their council areas.”

The motion was seconded by Alderman Copeland.

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

Bonfire Procedures

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Beattie proposed:

“After multiple incidents, including the tragic incident in Ballysillan on 11th July, this Council agrees to remove all bonfire materials from Belfast City Council assets, unless permission has been granted through an application process.

A bonfire application must include:

- permission being requested by a constituted organisation;
- a risk assessment provided by the applicant and agreed with the PSNI, Fire Service and landowner (BCC);
- Public Liability Insurance;
- an Event Management Plan;
- a commitment to ensuring that there will be no burning of any toxic materials (e.g. tyres);
- an Entertainments Licence;
- the demonstration of sufficient consultation with local residents; and
- a site cleansing plan.

In addition:

- The display or burning of offensive materials such as flags, emblems, effigies, and posters will not be permitted and a commitment must be provided. Any breaches will impact upon future applications; and
- Bonfire Beacons will be preferred, unless an applicant can demonstrate the necessity and safety of a non-structured bonfire.

Any failure to follow an open, transparent, robust and successful application procedure for a bonfire will result in the Council requesting the support of the PSNI to provide protection to our contractors for the removal of materials.

Applications must be received three months before a planned event.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin.

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

A Four-Day Working Week

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Garrett proposed:

“Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, businesses and workers have re-evaluated and re-assessed the issue of work life balance and productivity.

It has been almost 100 years since Trades Unions secured workers the right to a weekend and it is important that, as part of the economic recovery, we consider how we can modernise the working arrangements to the benefit of workers and employers.

There are numerous examples from across the world where a four-day working week has been successfully trialled, leading to increases in positivity and an improved work life balance.

The latest trial from Iceland has been hailed as an 'overwhelming success', with productivity remaining unchanged or actually going up and the health and wellbeing of workers improving significantly.

The Council agrees, therefore, to work alongside Trades Unions and other relevant bodies, to bring forward a plan within twelve months to implement a trial under review within our own Council workforce, based on best international examples and practices elsewhere.

The Council agrees also that progress and implementation reports be presented to the Council on a quarterly basis, to support and inform any policies being progressed within the Department for Economy or other relevant bodies elsewhere.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Murphy.

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

Lord Mayor
Chairperson