

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 12th October, 2021

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Cobain (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Baker, Black, Bunting, Michael Collins, Corr,
de Faoite, Flynn, Garrett, M. Kelly, Magee, McAteer,
McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton and Verner.

Also attended: Councillor O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mrs. C. Mathews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Mrs. K. McCrum, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th September were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th October, subject to the following amendments:

Alleyway Transformation - scheme pilots

- the Council agreed to adopt the amended wording for the decision in respect of unadopted alleyways: The Committee agrees to the delivery of a number of pilot alleyway transformation schemes throughout the city and further agrees that consideration would be given by the Area Working Groups to the area selection; the number of pilots; the detail of intervention and the flexibility of approach in terms of how funding would be allocated, which would then be subject to final decision by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- the City Solicitor is to consider any potential legal action that the Council could take against other bodies for their failure to take action in respect of unadopted alleyways.

Community Provision Funding Update

- note that the Council agreed to extend the existing Community Development Grants' Funding Agreements for Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Buildings and Advice to 31st March, 2023, as per the September Committee report and that a further report, on capacity building and potential further funding for other groups, be submitted to the Committee in November.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 3 items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the Members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion on the following 3 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resources and Fleet Update **(Waste Collections and Management)**

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Committee with a comprehensive update in respect of the following matters:

- the latest performance data on waste arisings and recycling, including the impact of Covid-19;
- the resumption of Wheelie Box Pilot Scheme and the initial findings;
- recycling centres and pedestrian access;
- interaction with the Customer Hub and the ongoing work with policy implementation and missed bin collections;
- developments within the sphere of inter council collaborative working; and
- developments with Interim Residual Waste contracts.

The Director of Resources and Fleet advised the Members that, following the decision taken at the September meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, a further report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for it to rectify the minute in regard to the pre-treatment of waste and the implications in respect of what this means, it's cost and the ability of arc21 to adopt this measure. She also referred to the cost implications associated with the additional treatment of waste, advising that the introduction of such would have huge cost implications which would have to be considered as part of the future rate setting process.

The Director highlighted that, at the September Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, it had also been agreed that a Residual Waste Workshop would be organised to consider the future options. She advised that the provisional date for the Workshop was Thursday, 18th November and stressed the importance of all parties being represented.

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed that the Council should progress immediately to undertake a detailed independent analysis of the costs and benefits of proceeding to expand the brown bin organics and glass recycling services across the city.

During discussion, the Director addressed a number of queries, during which she agreed that the next update report would include updates in respect of free compost, food recycling bags, the recycling of commercial waste and an update on the findings from the DAERA Deposit Return Scheme Consultation.

The Committee noted the update provide and:

- agreed that officers would progress a detailed independent analysis of the costs and benefits of expanding the brown bin organics and glass recycling services across the city, with a report to be submitted in due course for Members consideration;
- noted that a report would be being submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for it to rectify the minute in regard to the pre-treatment of waste and the implications in respect of what this means, it's cost and the ability of arc21 to adopt this measure;
- noted that any additional treatment of waste would have cost implications which would need to be considered as part of the future rate setting process; and
- noted that the next waste report would include updates in respect of free compost, food recycling bags, the recycling of commercial waste and an update on the findings from the DAERA Deposit Return Scheme Consultation.

Request for the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields

The Committee considered a request from the Great Russian Circus Ltd. seeking permission to use the Boucher Road Playing Fields from 13th – 29th November 2021 for the purpose of hosting a series of Circus Extreme Performances which would be open to the public daily from 12.00 p.m. – 9.45 p.m. from 17th – 28th November.

It was estimated that there would be in the region of 1000+ per performance.

The Committee granted authority to the Great Russian Circus Ltd. to use of the Boucher Road Playing Fields from 13th – 29th November 2021 for a series of Circus Extreme performances and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to:

- i. negotiate an appropriate fee which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Manager;
- ii. negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement 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;
- compliance with Coronavirus restrictions in place at the time of the event; and
- 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.

The Members 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 taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial team.

Request for use of Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park

The Committee considered a report in relation to a request from MayWE Events Company seeking to host "Santa Safari Christmas Event" at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park from Thursday 16th – 19th December 2021, from 3.00 p.m. – 9.00 p.m.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the proposed event was of a commercial nature, and whilst it would be held outside of the normal park opening hours it would require the closure of a substantial part of the park.

A Member highlighted that the proposed entrance ticket price for the event was £15.00 per person and requested that the promoter be asked to consider adding a reduced-price children's ticket. In addition, she welcomed the inclusion of the one hour 'relaxed sensory session' and requested that the event organiser be asked to consider extending this to a two-hour session.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services undertook to highlight these requests to the promoter.

Following a query in regard to major promoters and the streamlining of the current pricing policy, the Director of Neighbourhood Services suggested that, in the first instance, this would be better considered within the context of the Events Policy review and the Corporate Pricing Policy review and he undertook to submit an update report to Committee in due course.

The Committee granted authority to MayWE Events Company to host a 'Santa Safari Christmas Event' at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park from 16th – 19th December 2021, from 3.00 p.m. – 9.00 p.m. daily and agreed to delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to:

- i. negotiate an appropriate fee which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Manager;
- ii. negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement 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;
- compliance with Coronavirus restrictions in place at the time of the event; and
- 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.

The Members 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 taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial team.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Local Air Quality Management Matters – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware that a number of ambient air quality projects are presently being progressed by officers from the City and Neighbourhood Services Department, including development of new 5-year Air Quality Action Plan for the city and completion of a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).
- 1.2 This report serves to provide a further update to the Committee on progress with these two projects.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- Note the contents of this update report.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues.

Air Quality Action Plan.

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Committee has already received a number of update reports during 2021, concerning progress with development of a new 5-year Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast 2021-2026, including at the:
- 9th February 2021 Committee meeting, wherein the Committee considered the various actions proposed by the council and our Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group and Competent Authority partners for

inclusion within the new Action Plan, to address the remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) hotspots within our four Air Quality Management Areas and to improve ambient air quality generally for the city. The Committee will be aware that our Air Quality Management Areas have been declared for a combination of exceedances of annual mean and hourly objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), associated principally with road transport emissions.

- 13th April 2021 Committee meeting, wherein Members considered proposals for public consultation and engagement on the new Air Quality Action Plan.

3.2 The Committee is advised that as part of the now completed consultation and engagement process, the council undertook a 12-week public consultation exercise into a draft version of the new Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 from the 12th May to 3rd August 2021 inclusive. The consultation process comprised a detailed online questionnaire, delivered via the council's 'Your say Belfast' consultation hub, and the provision of four online information events to equality groups that had been identified by the council. As a consequence of the continuing Covid 19 pandemic, no face-to-face consultation events were held. The online questionnaire was augmented by a non-technical summary of the Action Plan and an Equality Screening and a Rural Needs Assessment. The consultation exercise was publicised via the council's various social media channels, through email and via the Summer 2021 edition of the Belfast City Council 'City Matters' residents' magazine, which is provided to every Belfast household. Consultation emails were also sent to those interest groups specifically identified for engagement by the council's People and Communities Committee, including, adjoining councils; the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; the British Heart and Lung Foundation; Belfast Healthy Cities; Belfast Chamber of Commerce; Friends of the Earth; Belfast Taxis and Trade Unions, etc. The consultation process was designed to achieve the statutory consultation requirements detailed within, 'Schedule 2 Air Quality: Supplemental Provisions. Consultation Requirements' of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002.

3.3 The Committee will be aware that the Air Quality Action Plan proposes various measures to further address ambient concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), grouped under the broad themes of public transport, active travel, sustainable energy and fuels, and monitoring and reporting of ambient air quality. Consultees were therefore invited to give their views on the importance of taking forward the various Air Quality Action Plan measures proposed under these themes. We then invited consultees to provide comments on the proposed measures, to provide recommendations for additional measures or actions to be included within the final Action Plan, to provide views on the current state of ambient air quality within Belfast, to comment on any lifestyle

changes that consultees would themselves be prepared to make in order to further improve ambient air quality, to indicate their support for the actions contained within the Action Plan and to provide any additional comments. We received 65 responses from individuals and specific interest groups at the conclusion of the consultation process.

- 3.4 For the purpose of communicating the outcome of the consultation process to our Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group and Competent Authority partners, we have circulated a summary of the consultation responses and recommendations received and we will also be providing a detailed statistical analysis of the consultation process as a separate report. In addition, we have invited Steering Group members and Competent Authorities to consider the outcome of the consultation process and to indicate whether they wish to amend or augment the Action Plan measures that they have proposed, in light of the consultation process. Their responses and any amendments will be captured in an Appendix to the Air Quality Action Plan. It is the council's intention that subject to fulfilling all general data protection requirements, a formal consultation report will be published as an addendum to the final Air Quality Action Plan.
- 3.5 The Committee is advised concerning some of the headline statistics from the consultation process, e.g. around 75% of the respondents live, work or study in Belfast; around 85% of respondents strongly agree and a further 10% agree with the aims of the Action Plan; after reading the draft Air Quality Action Plan, around 65% of respondents indicated that they are more concerned about ambient air quality within Belfast and; around 38% of respondents strongly agree and a further 51% agree that the actions proposed within the Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 will improve ambient air quality within Belfast City.
- 3.6 Members will be aware that the Air Quality Action Plan is subject to technical appraisal by DAERA's independent assessors. The council's air quality officers would therefore propose, that subject to final comments, concerning the consultation process, being received from the Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group members and Competent Authorities, and any necessary revisions to the Action Plan being completed, the completed Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 for Belfast will be presented to the 9th November 2021 hybrid meeting of the People and Communities Committee, with a view to the Committee accepting the Action Plan and recommending that it be forwarded to the independent assessors for appraisal, and for subsequent implementation by the Air Quality Action Plan Steering Group.

Detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).

- 3.7 At the 11th May 2021 remote meeting of the Committee, Members received an update concerning progress with the 'Detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5})', together with a presentation from AECOM consultants and council officers regarding the proposed installation of additional Zephyr ambient monitoring equipment. AECOM have since completed installation of these additional Zephyr monitors and are now collating particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) monitoring data. At this time, the monitoring data remains provisional in nature and subject to various quality assurance and quality control procedures before it can be considered ratified and reportable. Intercomparison work is also to be undertaken by AECOM to compare the Zephyr monitoring data with data from the council's automatic reference method analysers, installed at our roadside and urban background monitoring sites, in order to derive appropriate scaling factors. The ratified monitoring data will then be used to augment existing ambient air quality monitoring undertaken by the council across the city and in calibrating the atmospheric dispersion modelling, to be undertaken by AECOM as a component of the detailed assessment project. Members will be aware that current targets for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) are expressed as annual mean values and so air quality monitoring data must be collected over an appropriate time period to allow comparison with these annual targets. In addition, our new Action Plan is tasked with delivering the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide.
- 3.8 AECOM are currently in the process of sourcing activity and emissions data to be used in the development of an emissions inventory for Belfast and as an input to the atmospheric dispersion modelling software. As the principal focus of our Air Quality Management Areas and our new Air Quality Action Plan is on achieving the nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) objectives, associated principally with road transport emissions, AECOM have therefore been in recent contact with DfI Roads concerning obtaining detailed traffic census and traffic modelling data for the Belfast area.
- 3.9 In addition, AECOM will shortly be undertaking a series of automatic number plate recognition surveys (ANPR) for a number of arterial transport routes and residential locations across the city. These ANPR surveys will identify the registration numbers of motor vehicles passing the various survey locations, which can then be compared with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA) registration database to obtain the vehicle type, fuel type and year of first registration, etc. This vehicle specific data can then be used to derive a more accurate local road fleet composition and

more representative road transport emissions data for the Belfast area, to augment and refine existing information published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Devolved Administrations via the Emissions Factor Toolkit (currently version - v10.1, August 2020). The more accurate road transport fleet composition and emissions data will be used to refine inputs to the atmospheric dispersion modelling software and to help inform any subsequent source apportionment studies, undertaken for identified areas of objective exceedance.

3.10 The Committee is reminded that the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is scheduled to conclude and report in early 2023. Further periodic reports will however be provided to Committee during the intervening time to advise of progress with major project components.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

The Committee is further reminded that funding to support delivery of the detailed assessment project has been secured from the DAERA Local Air Quality Management grant scheme for the 2021-2022 grant period.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments

An Equality Screening and a Rural Needs Assessment have been completed for the draft Air Quality Action Plan for Belfast 2021-2026. These documents currently remain available to review on the council's Your Say consultation platform, via the following web link:

<https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/air-quality>"

The Members considered the report and discussed at length the ongoing air quality issues in the Colin area and it was agreed that a briefing meeting would be convened for Members of the Committee to specifically consider the ongoing issues and monitoring of such in the Colin area. It was further agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee which would provide a detailed breakdown of air quality monitoring across the city, including specific detail regarding the west/outer west.

Following further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

Resolved – The Committee agrees that the Council, as part of the Air Quality Action Plan, would include greater enforcement of smokeless zones and agree to

develop an awareness campaign to educate residents on the impact of polluting home fuels. In addition, it was agreed that future Council reports relating to air pollution would benchmark the Council against the new WHO standards.

Update on DAERA consultation on the Designation of Quiet Areas

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 10th August 2021, it had agreed to write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to reaffirm the Council's support for the designation of the Lagan Meadows as a Quiet Area and to seek and update as to the Department's next steps and a timeframe for the proposed designation.

The Director of City Services drew the Members' attention to the response received from the Department, which provided an overview of the work to date in terms of previous mapping exercises, and explained that it was proposed that these would now be updated by a round 4 noise mapping exercise, using 2021 data.

The correspondence explained that round 4 noise mapping would use new mapping methodology as set out in Directive 2015/996 (CNOSSOS-UE Common Noise Assessment Methods in Europe). This methodology had been designed to increase accuracy of the noise maps and to enable increased comparison between European Countries' noise climates. It was the Department's intention that any further work relating to Quiet Areas in Northern Ireland would be based on the results of subsequent rounds of noise mapping using the new methodology.

Following a request from a Member, the Committee noted the response received and agreed to write back to DAERA to:

- request the results of the Round 3 mapping exercise that had been undertaken for Lagan Meadows;
- seek clarity regarding the designation threshold and whether the results would bring the Lagan Meadows close to the designation threshold; and
- ascertain what the expected designation threshold would be for the Round 4 noise mapping exercise.

Framework Document for Civil Contingencies Northern Ireland

The Director of City Services drew the Members' attention to the new Framework for Civil Contingencies Northern Ireland 'Building Resilience Together' document that had been produced by the Executive Office (TEO) available [here](#). She advised that this document was the first product within a wider strategic programme of work setting the direction for civil contingencies strategic planning in Northern Ireland.

Several regional emergency planning related protocols and reference documents were in place, however, some of these were outdated and therefore did not fully align to local level preparedness, response, and recovery structures.

The new framework document had been designed to work as a foundation for all governance structures and procedures across the civil contingencies' structures. The framework did not alter the existing local multi agency structures both in planning and response but the new approach focused on providing a coordinated strategic risk managed environment for civil contingencies in NI with TEO bringing together all the partners and providing leadership and strategic direction for the management of an agreed portfolio of NI risks.

Presentations on the draft framework had been delivered by TEO to the Civil Contingencies Group NI on 26th March and 30th June 2021, and a detailed update had been provided to SOLACE in June 2021. A workshop had been facilitated on the 13th May 2021 for NI Emergency Preparedness Group (NIEPG) members to ensure a clear understanding of the prepare, respond and recover phases in addition to any changes that might impact local government and other partners working at a local or sub regional level.

She advised that the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch in The Executive Office (TEO) were responsible for the management and dissemination of this Framework.

In addition, NILGA would be hosting an interactive workshop for Elected Members on civil contingencies/emergency planning on 26th October 2021 from 10.30 a.m. -1.00 p.m. The session would be physically held in Craigavon Civic Centre and simultaneously available on zoom. The Regional Civil Contingencies Team and some emergency planning partners would be presenting. She advised that Elected Members, officers, and other interested stakeholders were welcome to register to attend.

The Committee was advised that further work was required to ensure local emergency planning documents and arrangements were fully aligned to the framework. This work would be progressed by the Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern and Southern Emergency Preparedness Groups. Training and familiarisation on the Framework would be arranged by TEO in the forthcoming months and local Councils would be kept fully apprised of these arrangements.

The Committee noted the Framework for Civil Contingencies Northern Ireland 'Building Resilience Together' document.

Update on Commonwealth War Graves

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek Members' views on a request for a new Commonwealth War Grave Headstone in Dundonald Cemetery and a request to plant a tree under the Queens Green Canopy Scheme in Shankill Graveyard.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Consider and agree to the requests from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to erect a**

new headstone in Dundonald Cemetery and plant a tree in Shankill Graveyard under the Queens Green Canopy Scheme.

3.0 Main Report

Main Issue

3.1 The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) was established in 1917 to construct cemeteries and memorials and maintain records for the war dead of the First World War. The commission owns 2,500 cemeteries; and has built 23,000 memorials across 150 countries and territories. One of the principles of the CWGC is to make no distinction between rank, race or creed. The CWGC works under a royal charter as a not-for-profit organisation. Currently the CWGC is paid £23 per year for every UK related grave and other governments have similar arrangements.

3.2 *CWGC*

The Commission has constructed 791 headstones for graves of war dead in all of the Council's cemeteries (apart from Friar's Bush) and 172 in Milltown Cemetery. They have constructed and maintain a 'Cross of Sacrifice' in Dundonald and City Cemeteries. The large screen wall monument in City Cemetery also belongs to the CWGC. The CWGC undertakes extensive research on all the dead it is responsible for commemorating. The CWGC's comprehensive and linked websites are a significant resource for those doing genealogical research and this contributes to some of the visitors to our cemeteries.

3.3 *Construction*

The CWGC use Kilkenny Limestone to construct their headstone. Their unique foundations and ground anchoring system complies with BS 8415 and all memorial safety requirements. The sculptor they use is registered with the Council. The foundation system comes with the stone and the sculptor undertakes all the work. If a CWGC headstone is damaged or fails a safety test they carry out the repairs quickly. There is no cost to Belfast City Council in the construction and maintenance of CWGC headstones.

3.4 *Application*

Recent research has identified one additional war casualty who died from wounds after the First World War. They are currently buried in Dundonald Cemetery with only a wooded cross as a marker. The Plot was bought in 1915 and the grave owners registered with the Council are no longer alive.

The CWGC have conducted an established communication process to connect and consult with any remaining family members and a descendant of the deceased has consented. The CWGC has applied to the Council to erect a headstone at the grave. Members may be aware that on 25th February 2019 the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group decided that that the administrative charge of £18 would not be applied to CWGC as it is not-for-profit organisation and this decision was approved at P&C on 5th March 2019 and ratified at Council on 1st April 2019.

3.5 *The Queens Green Canopy Scheme*

The Commission have asked permission to plant a tree in Shankill Graveyard adjacent to one of their headstones under the Queens Green Canopy Scheme. The Commission are planning to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by planting a tree in every County in the UK, adjacent to one of their marked graves. Shankill Graveyard is their choice for County Antrim.

This is in line with the agreed policy of tree planting which states:

'Permission for future tree planting requests may be granted by the People and Communities Committee on a request by request basis. Any tree planting proposals/request received by the Council should fit in and be aligned with the Council's 'Tree Management Plan' for that individual Park/Open Space as advised by Council Officers within City and Neighbourhood Services'

3.6 If Committee support the tree planting proposal, it will come under the tree management plan for Shankill Graveyard, as part of a replacement planting programme and can be resourced from the related revenue budget. The additional tree will be included as part of the one million tree planting running total.

3.7 The Commission will work with the Councils Woodland and Recreation Officer to source a local species. The planting season is from November to March. The Commission have confirmed that they will plant the tree with minimal publicity, and it is not planned to have any additional markers onsite. Subsequent maintenance will be completed by the OSS team in North Belfast.

3.8 Based on the noted policy statement above, Committee is asked to accede to the request.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.9 The administrative fees will be borne within everyday budgets.

**Equality and Good Relations implications /
Rural Needs Assessment**

3.10 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Ormeau Park BMX Track

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that, at its meeting held on 7th September, 2021, it had agreed ‘in principle’ for a preferential use agreement to be developed with Cycling Ulster in relation to the BMX track at Ormeau Park, subject to further details being submitted to a future meeting specifically regarding the proposed priority use of the track at limited times by Cycling Ulster.

The Committee was advised that officers had since negotiated with Cycling Ulster representatives to agree a proposed timetable of priority use at limited times for Cycling Ulster clubs. The track would be available for recreational use at all other times. He reported that the timetable would be seasonal to reflect the seasonal nature of the sport, the anticipated demand from Cycling Ulster clubs and to align with the park seasonal opening times, which were based on available daylight. He drew the Members’ attention to the proposed times that had been identified in the table below:

	Midweek usage	Start - end times	Weekend usage	Start - end times
January - March	nil	n/a	Sunday	10:00am – 12:00noon
April - June	Tue & Thu	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Sunday	10:00am – 12:00noon
July - September	Tue & Thu	6:30pm – 8:30pm	Saturday & Sunday	10:00am – 12:00noon
October - December	Nil	n/a	Sunday	10:00am – 12:00noon

Table 1. Timetable of priority use for Cycling Ulster

The Committee granted approval for a preferential use agreement to be developed with Cycling Ulster in relation to the BMX track at Ormeau Park, affording priority use of the track at limited times as detailed in the report, subject to Cycling Ulster accessing external partnership funding to upgrade the existing track.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Red Cross Funding Extension

The Director of Neighbourhood Services referred to the additional funding that had been provided by both the Council and central government over the past 18 months to provide support to community/voluntary partners, individuals, families and communities who had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

He reminded the Members that one of the organisations that the Council had funded was the Red Cross, with £50,000 having been awarded to assist with the following measures:

- Community Support Essentials – responding to vulnerable in need to buy supplies;
- Community Support Pick up essentials – food, prescription pick-ups;
- Financial Hardship Fund – purchase of gas, electric and white goods; and
- Transport to essential medical appointments.

This project had been established as a fall back where existing services could not meet the demand from vulnerable individuals and families who required urgent support during the pandemic or if no other services existed. Due to the excellent work of local community organisations and statutory partners this service had not been required to the level that had initially been anticipated.

He reported that the project had a funding agreement in place which allowed for delivery until the end of September 2021, £9,297 had been spent to date, leaving a balance of £40,703. The emergency support had provided a helpful safety net to ensure that adequate support was available to the most vulnerable people in the city when they had been unable to access help elsewhere. Within the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and rapidly approaching winter pressures it was recommended that this funding agreement be extended until the end of March 2022 to allow further uptake.

The Committee noted that, whilst officers could not be sure of the exact level of demand for this service, officers from the Red Cross and the Council would continue to engage with community and health partners to maximise awareness of the support available through the funding agreement.

The Committee noted that the following factors might lead to increased demand over the coming months:

- winter pressures;
- the recent spike in utility costs increasing financial pressures on vulnerable people;
- furlough scheme ending; and
- any further circuit breakers, lockdowns or other forms of restrictions that might occur.

The Committee agreed to an extension to the COVID-19 Emergency Provision Red Cross Funding contract to the end of March 2022.

Operational Issues

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

As at least two thirds of the total numbers of persons surveyed in the streets were in favour of the proposal to erect a second street nameplate in Irish at Clifton Street, Stephen Street, Forest Street and Fort Street, the Committee approved the applications.

General Maintenance Program at Roselawn Cemetery

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the current challenges around maintaining Roselawn Cemetery and to make recommendations going forwards

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the update**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The site at Roselawn Cemetery is the largest and busiest cemetery in Northern Ireland with a 268 acre site containing woodland, 4 lakes as well as grave and memorial tree sections. Aside from fields which are let out yearly to farmers – there are no areas of grass in Roselawn which can be cut with large machinery. Roselawn has approximately 39,000 family graves, 5,500 new unused graves and 14,000 memorial trees, and these all need to be cut around with small ride-on and pedestrian machines. Roselawn has 2 Cemetery Supervisors and 12 Cemetery Operatives who are responsible for all burials and estates management duties. Due to the pandemic there are 4 additional temporary staff employed at this site. In general, the upkeep of Roselawn is to a high standard and the site maintains its Green Flag status every year. This is evidenced by the thousands of visitors to the site every year who do not make complaints.

Summer Duties

3.2 From mid- February to the end of October the grass in all the grave sections and the lawned memorial tree areas is cut every two weeks. The Council does not lift any cut grass and it is left to mulch into the ground. All flower beds are dug

over, rotavated and replaced with summer plants. As it is not possible to mechanically cut around the headstones/memorials on the 39,000 used graves and therefore, these are required to be manually sprayed with weedkiller and this is usually done 3 times every summer with pedestrian knapsack sprayers. In compliance with the Wildlife (NI) Order 1985 we cannot cut any hedges before the end of August. After this staff cut the small landscape hedges within the cemetery. The large roadside boundary hedges are cut by a contractor in October and which for the above reasons cannot be done earlier. Every Saturday morning a large street sweeper cleans all the vehicular roads throughout Roselawn, however this is too large for the small pedestrian grave paths.

The number of burials

- 3.3 It is usual during summer months for the number of burials to decrease across all our cemeteries. This means that the cemeteries workforce can be directed to grounds maintenance duties. During the summer of 2020 we conducted 27% more burials than the average for the past three years. During the summer of 2021 we conducted 32% more burials than the average of summers 2017/18/19. As Roselawn is the only Belfast City Council cemetery with new graves, most of the burials are conducted there. The labour requirement for most burials is three-fold, firstly for the gravedigging and the committal, then for topping up and pressing the soil on the grave after a couple of weeks, and then for final dressing and grass seed planting. These labour demands take place over 8 weeks and are dependent on weather conditions. The increase in burial numbers this summer has meant that the Roselawn cemetery staff were much less available to carry out grounds maintenance duties.

Staff protection measures

- 3.4 The burial procedure involves reducing the 2m social distancing guidance and putting in place mitigating controls around protection from Covid. As an infection control measure, the Council ceased the practice of family and Funeral Directors from being involved directly in the coffin lowering procedure and this is done solely by Council staff. Hence for the above reasons more of the cemetery staff are needed at each burial to carry this safe system of work out, and ultimately cemetery staff have been committed to burials for much of their working day.

Weather conditions

- 3.5 This summer the weather has been hot, humid and interspaced by wet days. These conditions are ideal for extreme vegetation growth. The grass in Roselawn grew excessively between fortnightly cuts and so the cut grass

(risings) were very visible throughout the cemetery. The cut grass then gets dragged onto grave paths and was an unsightly problem this summer. These weather conditions were also ideal for the propagation of Rosebay Willowherb which is now apparent in many sites across the city. In Roselawn there was an infestation of this weed between many of the 39, 000 headstones by July. Due to the high burial operational workload the second application of chemical weed control in July was not early enough and this resulted in the weed going brown but not dying back throughout the site. The weed spraying work requires a special license (PA6) which not all cemetery staff have as this is a specialised skill. At the start of August, the tall brown weeds had become an unsightly problem through most of the grave sections. The fortnightly grass cutting regime was maintained as a priority across the entire site. However, because the grass was growing excessively between cuts, this appeared to be an additional problem. Another result of the hot damp conditions was that undergrowth proliferated throughout some of the memorial tree barked copse sections. Between June and August Roselawn received 20 complaints regarding grounds maintenance and the general condition of the site. There was also negative publicity on social media. With the high number of burials taking place, it was operationally difficult to commit the required staff numbers to rectify the above problems in a timely manner but members should be assured that staff have been doing all they can to try and address this.

Steps taken

- 3.6 To remove the Rosebay Willowherb it was necessary to trim or hand weed 43,500 graves. This was very labour intensive. In September some staff were moved from other cemeteries to trim or hand weed on a daily basis. In addition, it was agreed to seek additional support to tackle the issues and a contractor was employed for 3 days to assist with strimming weeds. By the 17th of September all 43,500 graves and the required sections of barked memorial tree copses had been strimmed and/or hand weeded and most of the work was done by our staff.
- 3.7 It is clearly important to conduct all estates management work at the required seasonal time, however in cemeteries burial work takes priority and if the burial workload is high it may be necessary to find staff from other sites. It is also proposed that we explore the cost of procuring a mechanical brush to fit on a small tractor which would allow us to sweep the narrow grave paths.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

All costs are within operational budgets

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

There are no equality or good relations issues.”

The Committee welcomed the update and encouraged officers to explore all options to ensure that the cemetery was kept well maintained throughout the year.

Noted.

Regional Home Safety Facility

The Committee noted a letter sent to the Chief Executive by the Head of Health and Build Environment at the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in relation to the closure of both the “Hazard House” facility in Ballymoney and the regional safety facility (Risk Danger Awareness Resource) in Belfast.

Noted.

**Update on the Reference Group
on Older People**

The Committee was advised that a meeting of the Reference Group on Older People had been held on 13th September and the Director of City Services provided a brief overview of the items that had been considered:

- Update from the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland;
- Development of Age-friendly Belfast Plan 2022-2025;
- Age-friendly Belfast Activities and Events; and
- Climate engagement by older people;

A Member welcomed the inclusion of Cara-Friend’s LGBT+ telefriending service in the Belfast City Council guide that had been produced to mark positive ageing month, available [here](#) and he requested that the Committee write to the Minister for Communities to seek the inclusion of action on positive ageing for LGBT+ people as part of the Executive’s expected LGBTQI+ Strategy.

The Committee:

- approved and adopted the minutes and the recommendations from the Reference Group on Older People meeting held on 13th September, 2021
- noted the request at 3.5 in the report for the Council to support the Commissioner for Older People in Northern Ireland’s campaign and agreed that Belfast City Council would support the campaign via its corporate communication channels; and
- agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to seek the inclusion of positive ageing for LGBT+ people as part of the Executive’s expected LGBTQI+ Strategy.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

City Centre Safety for Women - Councillor Black

At the request of Councillor Black, the Committee agreed that an update report be submitted to a future meeting, to include relevant information and feedback, from the PSCPs, Partners and other Stakeholders, on the issue of City Centre Safety for Women.

**Request for Trade Unions to present to Committee –
Councillor Cobain**

Following a query, the Committee noted that the Active Belfast Board Ltd. had Trade Union representation on its Board.

Chairperson