

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast
City Council**

21st March, 2023

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the on Friday, 24th March, 2023 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

- (a) Apologies
- (b) Minutes
- (c) Declarations of Interest

2. Restricted Items

- (a) Belfast Local Development Plan - Plan Strategy (PS) Adoption (Pages 1 - 1126)
- (b) Outstanding Accounts (Pages 1127 - 1130)
- (c) Medium Term Financial Plan (Pages 1131 - 1138)
- (d) Refresh of Belfast Agenda Update (Pages 1139 - 1210)
- (e) Advertising Spend (Pages 1211 - 1214)
- (f) Signage at Olympia Leisure Centre EQIA (Pages 1215 - 1230)

3. **Matters referred back from Council/Notices of Motions (Pages 1231 - 1232)**
 - (a) Motion – Maternity Leave Provision for Mothers of Babies defined as Premature (Pages 1233 - 1234)
4. **Governance**
 - (a) Revisions to Scheme of Allowances (To Follow)
 - (b) Local Government Elections May 2023 - Update (Pages 1235 - 1250)
5. **Strategic Issues/Belfast Agenda**
 - (a) City Region Growth Deal – update (Pages 1251 - 1260)
 - (b) 2028 UEFA European Championship (To Follow)
 - (c) Community Ownership Fund (To Follow)
 - (d) Modern Slavery Act 2015 - updated Modern Slavery Statement and update on corporate action plan (Pages 1261 - 1272)
6. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**
 - (a) Physical Programme Update (To Follow)
 - (b) Asset Management (To Follow)
 - (c) Area Working Update (To Follow)
7. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**
 - (a) CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 2023-24 (Pages 1273 - 1292)
 - (b) Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme Re-allocation (Pages 1293 - 1294)
 - (c) Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 7th March 2023 (Pages 1295 - 1320)
 - (d) Social Value Procurement Policy Delivery Report (Pages 1321 - 1332)
 - (e) Contracts Update (Pages 1333 - 1342)
8. **Equality and Good Relations**
 - (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 6th March 2023 (Pages 1343 - 1370)
9. **Operational**
 - (a) Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum (Pages 1371 - 1376)

- (b) Requests for the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality (To Follow)
- (c) Minutes of the meeting of the Installations Working Group 22nd February (Pages 1377 - 1380)
- (d) Minutes of the Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore 27th February (Pages 1381 - 1384)
- (e) Minutes of the Meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group (To Follow)
- (f) Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE (Pages 1385 - 1388)

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of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	Motion – Maternity Leave Provision for Mothers of Babies defined as Premature
Date:	24 th March, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
	To bring to Members' attention a motion on Maternity Leave Provision for Mothers of Babies defined as Premature, which the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21 st February, referred to this Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
	The Committee is asked to consider the motion.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21 st February, considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 1st February:

	<p><u>Maternity Leave Provision for Mothers of Babies defined as Premature</u></p> <p>“This Council will amend maternity leave provision for mothers of babies defined as premature so that maternity leave will not commence until the certified due date of the child. All/any leave required from delivery date of a premature baby by parents will be considered compassionate leave and not reduce an employee’s right to standard parental leave.”</p> <p>Proposer: Councillor Gareth Spratt</p> <p>Seconder: Councillor Sarah Bunting</p>
3.2	<p>Members are reminded that in accordance with Standing Order 13(l), where the notice of motion seeks to commit the Council to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process, the motion will stand referred to the relevant Committee for consideration. If the motion is agreed at the Committee, then this will usually require a further report from officers outlining the financial and other implications should the notice of motion be adopted.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None at this stage.</p>
3,4	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>This motion, if agreed, may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and should be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None



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4.0	Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Local Government Elections May, 2023 - Update
Date:	24 th March, 2023
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Local Government Elections in May, 2023.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the contents of the report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Committee will be aware that the Returning Officer (EONI) appoints the Chief Executive to be the Deputy Returning Officer (DRO) for the Local Government Elections. It is therefore his responsibility to organise the Election Count, amongst other things, from the Notice of Election through to the Counting of the ballot papers to determine the 60</p>

	Councillors who are elected to serve the Belfast District for the next Council term: May, 2023 till May, 2027.								
3.2	<p>To assist him in this process, the DRO has appointed Jim Hanna and Stephen McCrory as Assistant Deputy Returning Officers who are authorised to take all decisions in relation to the election in his place. The Chief Executive will be present throughout the count.</p> <p><u>Date of Election</u></p>								
3.3	<p>This year's Local Government Election poll was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 4th May, with the Counts to each of the 10 District Electoral Areas to take place on Friday, 5th and Saturday 6th.</p>								
3.4	<p>However, due to the Coronation of King Charles III on Saturday 6th May and the possible impact on the count, the Northern Ireland Minister has determined that the date of the Election will be moved as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Polling Day</td><td>Thursday, 18th May</td></tr> <tr> <td>Overnight verification of unused ballot papers</td><td>Thursday, 18th – Friday 19th May</td></tr> <tr> <td>Count - Day 1 (5 DEAs)</td><td>Friday, 19th May</td></tr> <tr> <td>Count - Day 2 (5 DEAs)</td><td>Saturday, 20th May</td></tr> </table>	Polling Day	Thursday, 18 th May	Overnight verification of unused ballot papers	Thursday, 18 th – Friday 19 th May	Count - Day 1 (5 DEAs)	Friday, 19 th May	Count - Day 2 (5 DEAs)	Saturday, 20 th May
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Count - Day 1 (5 DEAs)	Friday, 19 th May								
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3.5	<p>The election timetable is attached at Appendix 1 for information.</p> <p><u>Count Venue</u></p>								
3.6	<p>The venue for all of the counts will be the City Hall. This would require 3 counts to take place in the Great Hall and 1 each in the Banqueting Hall and the Reception Room.</p> <p><u>Order of Counts</u></p>								
3.7	<p>It is recognised that most Members would prefer the count for the DEA in which they are standing to take place on the Friday rather than the Saturday. In deciding which 5 DEAs should be counted in which room, there are some logistical matters which need to be taken into account:</p>								

3.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Reception Room is being used as a count venue and it is significantly smaller than the other count venues in the City Hall. The Banqueting Hall is the largest of the venues being used.
3.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 10 DEAs do not all elect the same number of councillors. Black Mountain and Ormiston DEAs elect 7 members each; Balmoral and Botanic DEAs elect 5 members each; and Castle, Oldpark, Court, Collin, Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs each elect 6 members.
3.10	<p>It is accepted that the number of members to be elected to a DEA does not necessarily mean that the count will take less time to complete but that is the only variable which can reasonably be used to assess which counts should be held in which venue. Accordingly it is suggested that the following breakdown is agreed:</p> <p>Reception Room – Balmoral and Botanic DEAs (5 members each) Banqueting Hall – Black Mountain and Ormiston DEAs (7 members each) Great Hall (1) – Castle and Oldpark DEAs (6 members each) Great Hall (2) – Court and Colin DEAs (6 members each) Great Hall (3) – Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs (6 members each)</p>
3.11	<p>In 2014 the Committee agreed which counts would be held on which day. It was agreed also that the counts held on the Saturday in 2014 would be held on the Friday in 2019 and this was subsequently confirmed at that time. Again, it is recommended that the counts should alternated and be held as follows:</p> <p><u>Friday 18th May, 2023</u></p> <p>Reception Room – Balmoral DEA Banqueting Hall – Black Mountain DEA Great Hall 1 – Castle DEA Great Hall 2 – Court DEA Great Hall 3 – Lisnasharragh DEA</p> <p><u>Saturday 20th May, 2023</u></p> <p>Reception Room – Botanic DEA Banqueting Hall – Ormiston DEA</p>

	<p>Great Hall 1 – Oldpark DEA</p> <p>Great Hall 2 – Colin DEA</p> <p>Great Hall 3 – Titanic DEA</p> <p><u>Pre-Election Period of Heightened Political Sensitivity</u></p>
3.12	<p>The Pre-Election Period of Heightened Political Sensitivity (previously known as Purdah) will commence with effect from 6th April. Whilst there is currently no legislation in Northern Ireland which governs the publicity and council activity during the pre-election period for local government, the Council has previously approved an Election Protocol which provides guidance in dealing with issues which might impact on the election process and a copy is appended to this report.</p> <p>Motions and Issues raised in advance by Members</p>
3.13	<p>In previous years, Motions and issues raised in advance by Members have been perceived as publicity which could influence public opinion or to promote the public image of a particular candidate or group of candidates. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that these will accepted for inclusion on the agendas for Committees during the month of April (please note that this will require the meeting of the Standards and Business Committee on 18th April to be cancelled).</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.14	<p>The costs of the Local Elections in May 2023 will be met out of the existing elections budget.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.15	<p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Local Elections Timetable</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Belfast City Council Election Protocol</p>

Local Council Elections Timetable

Polling Day

Thursday 18 May 2023

Event	Deadline (If no time specified the deadline is midnight on that day)
Publication of Notice of Election by the Deputy Returning Officer	11 April 2023
Delivery of nomination papers	10.00am to 4.00pm on: 12 April, 13 April 14 April, 17 April, 18 April, 19 April, 20 April, 21 April and from 10.00am to 1.00pm on 24 April
Delivery of notices of withdrawals of candidature	10.00am to 4.00pm on: 12 April, 13 April, 14 April, 17 April, 18 April, 19 April, 20 April, 21 April and from 10.00am to 1.00pm on 24 April
Receipt of notice of appointment of election agents	1.00pm on 24 April
The making of objections to nomination papers	10.00am to 4.00pm on: 12 April, 13 April, 14 April, 17 April, 18 April, 19 April, 20 April, 21 April and from 10.00am to 2.00pm on 24 April
Publication by the Deputy Returning Officer of statement of persons nominated: a) If no objections to nomination papers made b) If any objections to nomination papers are made, after they have been disposed of but no later than 24 hours after the deadline for delivery of nomination papers	 6.00pm on 24 April 2023 or as soon as practicable thereafter 1.00pm on 25 April 2023
Publication by the Deputy Returning Officer of notice of names and addresses of Election Agents	6.00pm on 24 April 2023 or as soon as practicable thereafter
Receipt at Electoral Office for NI of postal and proxy vote applications	5.00pm on 26 April 2023

Receipt at Electoral Office for NI of late registration applications	28 April 2023
Receipt at Electoral Office for NI of additional information in relation to late registration applications	9 May 2023
Receipt at Electoral Office for NI of late postal and proxy vote applications	5.00pm on 10 May 2023
Publication by the Electoral Office for NI of notices of alteration as a result of late registration	11 May 2023
Receipt by the Deputy Returning Officer of notice of appointment of polling and counting agents	5.00pm on 11 May 2023
Receipt at Electoral Office for NI of spoilt postal votes for replacement	5.00pm on 17 May 2023
Polling day	7.00am to 10.00pm Thursday 18 May 2023
Alterations to the register due to clerical error	7.00pm on 18 May 2023
Verification of 'unused' ballot papers	As soon as practicable after 10.00pm on Thursday 18 May 2023 (completed overnight)
Verification of 'used' ballot papers (the opening of ballot boxes) and the Count	19 May 2023

Note: the above timetable excludes Saturdays (with the exception of the count), Sundays and the following Bank Holidays with exception of the deadline for receipt of additional information in relation to late registration applications which is computed in accordance with regulation 8 of the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008

- May Day 1 May 2023
- King's Coronation Bank Holiday 8 May 2023

After the Declaration of Result

Receipt by candidates/agents of claims for election expenses	21 calendar days after the result of the election is declared
Payment by candidates/agents of claims for election expenses	28 calendar days after the result of the election is declared
Receipt by the Returning Officer of returns and declarations of election expenses by election agent	35 calendar days after the result of the election is declared
Receipt by the Returning Officer of candidates' declarations of election expenses	7 working days after receipt of the agents declaration and return (or at the same time that the election agent delivers the return) (If the candidate is outside the United Kingdom when the agent's return is delivered, the declaration must be delivered 14 calendar days after their return)
Publication by the Deputy Returning Officer in two or more newspapers circulating in the District Electoral Area for which the election was held, a summary of the returns accompanied by a notice of the time and place at which the return and declarations (including the accompanying documents) can be inspected	10 calendar days after receipt of the election expenses returns
Inspection of returns and declarations of election expenses	During the period of 12 months from the date of publication by the Deputy Returning Officer of the time and place for inspection.

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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

ELECTION PROTOCOL

**GUIDANCE IN DEALING WITH ISSUES WHICH
MIGHT IMPACT ON THE ELECTION PROCESS**

**Approved by Council on
3rd February, 2014**

**BELFAST CITY COUNCIL
ELECTION PROTOCOL**

1.0 Introduction

This protocol has been prepared primarily to provide guidance to Council Officers in dealing with issues relating to the functions and policies of the Council which might impact on the election process, particularly in the run-up periods to the various elections held in Northern Ireland. It sets out some general advice and principles to ensure that the impartiality and integrity of Council Officers is maintained during such periods when there is increased political sensitivity.

The protocol also provides useful information to Members of the Council, other elected representatives and prospective candidates for election in terms of the principles which the Council will observe in the run-up period to any election.

2.0 Types of Election

The three main types of election in Northern Ireland are;

- Local Council Elections
- Westminster Parliamentary Election
- Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly

There is also potential for bye-elections in relation to vacancies which might occur at a Westminster level although the introduction of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (Amendment) Order 2010 makes it most unlikely that bye-elections will be required for casual vacancies arising in the Council.

The guidance contained in this protocol relates to all of the elections mentioned above but it does not refer to the actual arrangements and procedures for the running of such elections.

The responsibility for running all elections in Northern Ireland rests with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland and enquiries relating to the running of elections should be made to her or her Electoral Officers in Belfast as set out below:

Ms Virginia McVea, Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, St Anne's House, 15 Church Street, Belfast, BT1 1ER.

Telephone: 028 9044 6680
Email: bfs.info@eoni.org.uk

The Chief Executive is the Deputy Returning Officer for local elections in the Belfast City Council area and is responsible for making the arrangements for Council elections in Belfast.

3.0 General Principles

The guidance contained in this protocol relates to the main areas of Council activity which might impact on the election processes including the conduct of employees, the provision of support services to Members, the use of Council premises, publicity and the holding of public meetings.

However, it is recognised that because of the Council's diverse range of functions there may be other issues outside of these general areas of activity which might from time to time impact on the election processes. It is important therefore to set out some general principles which Council Officers should observe when conducting business during the run up period to any election.

The run up period is generally taken to be that period from the issuing of the notice of election to polling day at the election. The notice of election would generally be issued some three or four weeks in advance of election day but the Chief Executive's Department will issue to Departments the proposed date of publication of the notice of an election as soon as this is known.

The general principles which Council Officers should observe in relation to all activity during the run-up period to any election are:

- they should not undertake any activity which would call into question their political impartiality
- they should ensure that Council resources are not used for party political purposes
- they should not undertake any activities which could have a direct bearing on the election campaign

In relation to matters which are not specifically mentioned in this protocol and about which there may be uncertainty, Departments are advised to seek guidance from the Democratic Services Section.

4.0 Employees and Elections

There is specific legislation, together with rules and guidance, which relates to the participation of Council employees in political activities.

4.1 Disqualification

The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, Section 4, provides that a person shall be disqualified for being elected or being a Councillor if he holds any paid office or other employment, appointments to which are made by a council if it is a prescribed office or employment. This means that a person employed as the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer or Scrutiny Officer of a Council cannot stand for election to the Council which employs them or any other Council. Any other officer cannot stand for election to the Council which employs them but may stand for election to another Council so long as their remuneration does not exceed spinal column point 32 on the NJC pay spine.

4.2 Political Neutrality

The Council's code of conduct for employees states:-

“Employees serve the Council as a whole. They must serve all councillors and not just those of a particular group and must ensure that the individual rights of all councillors are respected.

Employees may be required to advise political groups. In the provision of such advice employees should not compromise their political neutrality. Any advice given should be available to all political groups, if requested.

All Employees must follow all lawful policies of the Council and must not let their own personal or political opinions interfere with their work. While the Council recognises and respects the rights of all employees to hold personal or political opinions; employees should ensure that the expression of those opinions does not constitute a conflict of interest for their role within the Council. This does not compromise an officer's rights in relation to collective trade union representation engagement in lawful trade union activity.

Employees who have concerns about whether there is a potential conflict of interest should raise the matter with an appropriate manager.”

The requirements of the Code of Conduct

The requirements of the code of conduct in relation to political neutrality are clear and should be observed at all times by all employees but assume particular sensitivity in the run up to an election. The holding of public meetings and other events involving elected representatives, for example, needs careful consideration in such a period and this is dealt with separately elsewhere in the protocol.

5.0 Support Services to Elected Members

Belfast City Council provides a wide range of support services to its elected Members including the provision of party rooms, research and library services, the provision of personal computers and typing, photocopying and postal services. The support services provided to Members are to assist them in discharging their roles as Councillors and are not for use for political campaigning or private purposes.

On this basis the Council will continue to provide a full range of support services to Members in the run up period to elections.

6.0 Use of Council Premises

The Council owns and operates a wide range of properties within the City and the use of such properties for election purposes will depend on the conditions which apply to each property.

The Belfast Waterfront Hall, the Ulster Hall, Malone House and Belfast Castle all operate on a commercial basis and are used from time to time for party political meetings and events. The normal booking arrangements would apply to the use of these buildings for political purposes even in the run up period for an election. Other Council premises including the City Hall, Leisure and Recreation Centres and Community Centres would not be available for political purposes although there is a discretion for the Council to permit the use of the City Hall for an event involving a range of political parties which has the purpose of increasing voter interest and participation in the electoral process generally.

7.0 Publicity

7.1 Legislation: The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 amended the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 to provide for the prohibition of political publicity. The relevant insertion to the principal Act reads as follows:-

115A – “Publicity

(1) A council shall not publish any material which, in whole or in part, appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party.

(2) In determining whether material falls within the prohibition regard shall be had to the content and style of the material, the time and other circumstances of publication and the likely effect on those to whom it is directed and, in particular, to the following matters.

- (a) whether the material refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party or promotes or opposes a point of view on a question of political controversy which is identifiable as the view of one political party and not of another;
- (b) where the material is part of a campaign, the effect which the campaign appears to be designed to achieve
- (c) A Council shall not give financial or other assistance to a person for the publication of material which the council is prohibited by this section from publishing itself.”

7.2 Specific Requirements at Election Time

The run up period to any election is a particularly sensitive time in terms of Council publicity. The Council communicates regularly with the people of Belfast through responding to media enquiries, issuing press releases, holding press launches of major initiatives and publishing the Council’s newsletter.

It is important in the run up period to an election that any Council publicity issued could not be perceived as seeking to influence public opinion or to promote the public image of a particular candidate or group of candidates. The Council should also in this period, in its communication, avoid dealing with controversial issues or reporting views or proposals in a way that identifies them with individual members or groups of members. The Council should avoid where possible mentioning or quoting individual members in press releases.

This is not to say that all Council publicity should be stopped in the run up period to an election. It is appropriate for example that the Council should respond to the media in relation to legitimate service enquiries or to important events, such as a major emergencies. The media also have their protocols in place during election periods and the council will need to take that into account. The Lord Mayor will continue to carry out civic engagements and it will be a matter for the media whether they wish to cover these events or not. Depending on the nature of the issue, the usual policy of political primacy may have to be set aside and Directors or other senior staff members may be quoted if required. Council comment to the media will be factual in nature and will avoid issues of political controversy. If the council is unable to put up official political spokespersons, Members may wish to comment individually or as a spokesperson for their party on events in their own locality or of a city wide nature if approached by the media.

The council holds a range of photographs featuring elected members who request use of these from time to time in their election material. These can be provided if they feature only the politician in question and/or colleagues from the same party who are happy for the images to be used. However, images that also include elected representatives from different political parties cannot be used without their stated permission. Photographs that include members of council staff will not be provided and cannot appear in any election material at any time.

In relation to elections where the polling date is known in advance (such the Local Government Elections) Council Departments should avoid arranging major press launches or other such publicity events in the run up period to the elections.

Where the date of an election is not known in advance, and where it transpires that a major launch or other publicity event has been arranged during the run up period to the election, then the Department concerned should consider the postponement of the event until a later date.

8.0 Public Meetings

In the normal course of events, Chief Officers, Heads of Service and other Senior Officers will meet regularly with Members of the Council and other public representatives about a range of issues affecting their constituents. Where such meetings are about legitimate service issues then there is no reason why they should not continue even in the run up period to an election. Officers, however, should observe the general principle that there should be even-handedness in

considering requests for one-to-one meetings with members or other public representatives particularly during the run up period to an election.

Particular care needs to be exercised at election time in cases where a public representative wishes to bring a delegation of local people to a meeting with a Council Officer. Even though this may be a private meeting it may be perceived that one candidate at an election is being given an advantage over another candidate. It is suggested that unless such a request for a meeting relates to some urgent service delivery issue then the meeting should be delayed until after the completion of the election.

Officers should avoid participation in public meetings involving public representatives during the run up period to an election. Such meetings could involve representation from some political parties and not others and officers may also be asked to comment on sensitive political issues in a public forum. To avoid a situation where officers may be accused of promoting the views of one political party as opposed to another the general assumption should be that participation in public meetings is to be avoided during the run up period to an election.

However, the situation might arise whereby the Council has issued a policy document for consultation and the consultation period extends into the run up period to an election. If this consultation includes the holding of public meetings or meetings with particular interest groups, then the Council officers should firstly seek the authority of the appropriate Council Committee before proceeding and, if such authority is granted, ensure that all political groupings on the Council are afforded equality of opportunity to either attend or arrange such meetings.

9.0 Conclusion

This protocol is not likely to have covered all the many different situations which are liable to occur during the run up period to an election. However, the general principles set out in section 3.0 and the general thrust of the advice contained in the protocol can be applied to specific situations which arise.

If Departments are unclear about how they should act in any given situation then they should seek advice from the Democratic Services Section.

Updated 30 October 2019 – to take account of the revisions to the employees' code of conduct



Subject:	City Region Growth Deal – update
Date:	24 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Damien Martin, Programme Director

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The progress being made on the Contracts for Funding which are required for each of the capital projects delivered through the Deal and the update on project development and delivery across the pillars of investment. The update in relation to the BRCD Annual Report. The update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Contracts for Funding</p> <p>As previously noted by the Committee, a number of contracts for funding have now been approved and signed which will allow for funding to begin to flow to projects. Since the last update to Members in January the first funding drawdown requests for the City Deal to the</p>

	<p>Department for Economy and Department for Communities have now been submitted marking another significant milestone for deal delivery.</p>
3.2	<p>It was also noted by the Committee that Members would be advised of progress to agree the funding agreements for each project. Since the last update to the Committee progress has continued to prepare and agree a number of contracts as outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contract for The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) has now been approved and signed. • The Contract for Mourne Mountain Gateway is at a very advanced stage and it is anticipated this will be submitted this month to Newry, Mourne & Down District Council for their agreement. • Contracts for the Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (iREACH), and the Global Innovation Institute have been finalised and are expected to be signed during this month. <p>Progress across BRCD Pillars</p> <p>Innovation</p>
3.3	<p>AMIC has been advanced by Queen's University through to the detailed design stage and has now concluded the end of RIBA Stage 3, with the final report being considered by the Department of Finance and Invest NI. The invitation to tender for the prime contractor for the project has now been published since the last update to Members.</p>
3.4	<p>The Outline Business Case for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology is currently being revised to reflect proposed changes to the scope since Department of Finance approval in May 2022, including the consideration of early procurement of equipment for the Royal Victoria Hospital Living Lab. The updated Outline Business Case (OBC) is expected to be submitted in April.</p>
3.5	<p>As previously reported to Members construction work on Studio Ulster commenced on site in October 2022. Following the publication of the Prior Information Notice in November, and the successful completion of the Pre-Qualification phase, the Invitation to Participate in Dialogue is now under development in advance of the commencement of the competitive dialogue process.</p>

	<p>Digital</p>
3.6	<p>Since the last update to Members, OBC for the Investment Fund element of the Innovation Challenge Fund has progressed well, with a Strategic case review completed with key Government and partner stakeholders in December and a detailed workshop focusing on delivery held in early March. The first draft of the business case is expected to have been prepared by April after which a detailed review involving key stakeholders, including economists will take place. Members also previously approved the commencement of a separate business case for the Augment the City pilot project in October 2022. Since then and following consideration by the Digital Advisory Board a draft business case has been shared with the Department for the Economy and the Belfast City Innovation team are currently finalising the OBC following feedback from the Department. The OBC is expected to be submitted to the BRCD Digital Advisory Board on 29th March and a further update will be brought to committee in April.</p>
	<p>Tourism and Regeneration</p>
3.7	<p>As previously reported a number of the Tourism and Regeneration projects now have a signed contract for funding or are progressing towards finalising contract for funding signing. The development of procurement documentation is ongoing, with a number of key project procurements now live.</p>
3.8	<p>The prequalification stage for the procurement of Integrated Consultancy Teams (ICT) for Carrickfergus Regeneration and the Gobbins Phase 2 has now been commenced with documentation now published by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council.</p>
3.9	<p>Development of the prequalification stage for the procurement of ICT for Bangor Waterfront and the Mourne Mountain Gateway is ongoing with publication of documentation expected in the coming months.</p>
3.10	<p>Newry Regeneration are preparing their PQQ documentation for the Integrated Supply Team, with appointment of Contractor expected later this year.</p>
3.11	<p>Belfast Stories, the Council's flagship project continues to progress against the agreed programme. The procurement of professional services continues with tender reports for the pre-qualification stage completed and approved and Invitation to Tender documents expected to be published later this month.</p>

3.12	<p>The OBC for Destination Royal Hillsborough approved by the Department for the Economy Minister in late October has now received Department of Finance supply approval allowing the Contract for Funding to be actively progressed.</p>
3.13	<p>Employability and Skills (E&S)</p> <p>Members were updated in January on the skills assessment process developed through the E&S pillar to understand the labour and skills implications of the city deal investment projects. The first assessment was focused upon the construction opportunities arising through the city deal investment and the assessment informed a series of recommendations which relate to BRCD partners, as well as to wider stakeholders. An early action as a result of this assessment is the delivery of two events taking place on the 21st March (jointly hosted with the Construction Employers Federation) and 23rd March. These events will help to ensure that local businesses are aware of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the construction pipeline arising from the Belfast Region City Deal capital investment programme with a specific focus on opportunities that will be brought to market in the coming 12 months - communicate the inclusive growth ambitions of the Deal, including expected social value commitments; - the employability and skills support available through the Belfast Region City Deal, council, college, and university partners to help the sector respond to labour and skills challenges, including those relating to social value commitments.
3.14	<p>Both events were widely communicated to key stakeholders and on the BRCD website and both events were fully booked.</p>
3.15	<p>Following discussions with partners, the relevant Government Departments and key stakeholders plans to establish a Cross Deal Skills Group to oversee and manage skills assessments relating to City and Growth Deals at the Northern Ireland level are well advanced. These Assessments will consider the projects emerging across all 4 Deals and focus on the sectors where city deal investment is aligned. A preliminary meeting of this group took place in late January in order to consider the draft Terms of Reference and to inform the schedule of skills assessments. The BRCD will play a key role in supporting this group – finalising terms of reference, agreeing the initial work programme and fulfilling the role of secretariat. The draft Terms of Reference for the Group was presented to the Executive Board for consideration at its March Meeting. Aligned to the establishment of this group two further skills assessments are currently underway for Advanced Manufacturing and Creative Industries (Virtual Production) and Members will be kept updated as both assessments progress</p>

3.16	<p>It is anticipated that the OBC for Digital Transformation Flexible Fund will progress to casework in early April through Invest NI. Concurrently Newry, Mourne and Down District Council who will lead the delivery of the project continue to progress with pre-development work to establish the application and funding process and developing marketing materials in preparation for the launch of the fund.</p>
3.17	<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Following the announcement by the then Minister on the preferred route for Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2, feasibility studies are being completed and the OBC is being updated and reviewed by Department for Infrastructure (DfI). The procurement of the design and build contract for Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge will commence in the early summer with appointment expected early in 2024. DfI has now confirmed that its preferred option for the bridge on the Newry Southern Relief Road is a non-opening 50m fixed bridge, allowing work on the statutory orders, public consultation and Environmental Impact Assessment to progress.</p>
3.18	<p>Annual Report</p> <p>The agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires the production of an Annual Report and the requirement to meet with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation' which is envisaged to take place in June. The Programme management team have been actively engaging with the Department of Finance in order to agree the timeframes and content of the annual reporting process and required documentation now that the BRCD is in delivery phase.</p>
3.19	<p>Members are asked to note that a high level, outward focused Annual Report will be produced following the end of the 2023 reporting year. The programme management office will lead on the development of the report and will engage with individual partners on project specifics where required in advance of consideration of the Executive Board and by partners through their own governance structures.</p>
3.20	<p>BRCD Council Panel</p> <p>A hybrid meeting of the BRCD Council Panel was held on 25 January hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Panel Members considered a detailed programme update and received presentations on the BRCD investments in Newry, Mourne and Down and also on Communications & Engagement which included a live demonstration of the newly dedicated BRCD website. A link to the new website was circulated to all BCC Members following the January panel meeting. The minutes of the previous Panel meeting hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council were also approved and are attached at Appendix 1.</p>

3.21	The next Council panel meeting was due to be held in April and hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council, however due to the upcoming Local Government Elections and the timeframes involved it has been agreed to postpone this meeting and reschedule for later in the year. Members will be kept informed when the date and host council has been confirmed.
3.22	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.</p>
3.23	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;</p> <p><i>‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’</i></p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Minutes of the BRCD Council Panel 28 September 2022

BRCD Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) Council Panel
Date:	12.30 pm, 28 September 2022
Councillors in attendance:	<p>Alderman Noel Williams - The Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Matthew Magill – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Julie Gilmour – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Richard Smart - Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Michael Long- Belfast City Council Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Amanda Grehan – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robert Logan – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p>
Officers:	<p>Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCD Programme Director, Belfast City Council David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Valerie Watts –Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Ursula O’Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Jonathan McGrandle – City Deal Programme Director, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Paul Duffy – Head of Planning & Building Control, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Steven Walls – Head of Digital Innovation & Corporate Governance, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Theresa Slevin, Ruth Rea, Lorraine Beggs – BRCD Programme Office</p>

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	<p>The Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Noel Williams welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council.</p> <p>Alderman Noel Williams outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.</p>
2.0	Apologies
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council Alderman George Dorrian – Belfast City Council Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council Councillor Barra O’Muirí – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>John Walsh - Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Alderman Noel Williams asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Alderman Noel Williams asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Alderman Audrey Wales proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed. Seconded by Councillor Timothy Gaston Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Programme Report
5.1	<p>Damien Martin (DM) presented the programme report key points of update included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A main priority for the team is progressing contracts for funding, the first contract for Studio Ulster has been signed with Carrickfergus Regeneration and AMIC expected to be progressed imminently. Work has also commenced for on a number of other projects with business cases approved. - Innovation projects are the most developed at this time with full business cases expected at the start of the new financial year; - Digital programme is at an earlier stage of development, with the exception of the i4C project, a number of additional business cases for Digital Twin, Advanced Wireless projects are also at an advanced stage of development; - Construction inflation is a key issue for the programme, discussions have taken place with NI and UK officials to agree a position that will enable projects to proceed to enable the financial impact of construction inflation to be better understood. Confirmation was provided by NI and UK officials that no additional funding is available and mechanisms to reduce costs including value engineering will be important moving forward.

Cllr Michael Henderson queried the implication of the absence of Ministers to approve business cases and if those in progress are due to be approved in advance of the impending deadline.
DM stated that all efforts are being undertaken to progress businesses cases currently in the system, confirming that business cases can be approved without ministers, however in this scenario there is expected to be some delays in the timing of decisions.

Cllr Charlie Casey noted the positive progress that has been achieved and queried the current position of the Newry Regeneration project.

DM responded highlighting that business case approval is in place and work is ready to commence on the contract for funding.

Cllr Timothy Gaston queried:

- the issues being experienced with government departments and if there was a sense that the commitment to the deal was still present; and
- the potential to access additional funding if project costs overrun or if it expected councils will cover this.

DM stated there remains an absolute commitment to the deal and its component projects, as the first city and growth deal in Northern Ireland there are challenges associated with this and the appetite to risk of the government departments, linked to key issues such as construction inflation. Confirmation has been provided by government officials that no additional funding is available, responsibility for cost overruns remain at a project level. Whilst opportunities may emerge for other funding opportunities in the future, projects may need to consider value engineering which will have a knock-on impact on benefits.

Cllr Billy Ashe queried when the contract for funding would be received for the Carrickfergus Regeneration project.

DM stated that two contracts are required, the first between DfC and BCC, following which a contract will be drafted between BCC and MEA. Feedback from DfC has indicated that the initial contract will be received imminently following which the contract to MEA will be drafted and issued.

Cllr Robert Logan queried if there was anything that Councils could do to encourage departments to move at pace.

DM flagged the opportunity of elected members to engage through party colleagues to encourage momentum and highlighted the possibility of an event to re-energise support for the deal.

Cllr Mark Cosgrove highlighted the specific construction inflation risk to the AMIC project and the financial implication of this upon Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, shouldering this risk with project partners. Majella McAlister further elaborated stressing the impact of delays which could erode the relevance of projects to the business community.

DM echoed the points raised highlighting through the example of Studio Ulster the risk of not progressing at pace, with the implication being that productions would be lost to the NI market.

Cllr Audrey Wales highlighted frustrations as to the pace of progress of city deals in NI in comparison with other parts of the UK and the resulting risk of delays devaluing the investment.

Cllr Michael Henderson queried the casework date for the Royal Hillsborough project. DM confirmed the Programme Management Office is pressing officials for casework date to be confirmed urgently.

Members noted the report.

6.0	Impact of Digital Investment: i4C at St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena
6.1	<p>A presentation was delivered by Valerie Watts and Jonathan McGrandle providing an overview of the three investment projects led by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council. The presentation focused upon the investment through the digital pillar to support the delivery of the i4C innovation and clean technology centre for SMEs. It was highlighted that i4C will serve as the anchor tenant building in the 15-hectare mixed regeneration of St Patrick's Barracks which is situated in the heart of Ballymena and will act as a catalyst and enabler of inclusive growth in Ballymena and the wider borough.</p> <p>Following the presentation Cllr Alan McDowell queried the confidence in achieving occupancy rates to cover operating costs.</p> <p>Ursula O'Loughlin responded noting the significant interest in the existing small incubator space at the councils EKOS facility and synergy with the work of the Manufacturing Task Force with clear areas of opportunity particularly around the clean tech supply chain.</p>
7.0	Integrating Social Value into BRCD Contracts
7.1	<p>Ruth Rea provided an update to members on the work undertaken to ensure that social value will be integrated into the tender process for BRCD procurements and to outline the plans to then ensure that social value benefits are ultimately delivered by the successful contractor.</p> <p>Alderman Alan McDowell requested a copy of the slides presented and referenced the shortage in skilled labour being experienced in the construction sector, particularly vocational skills and the need to change perceptions of parents on vocational pathways. Querying how can contractors be supported to help them fulfil their social value contributions.</p> <p>RR responded highlighting the challenging recruitment market businesses will continue to face due to restricted labour force growth and falling levels of migrant labour. The skills assessment process being undertaken through the Employability & Pillar will help to identify particular areas of constraint, there is a key opportunity to work with Councils via their Labour Market Partnerships, with FE College and University partners to ensure we target effort accordingly including in key areas such as apprenticeships and Higher-Level Apprenticeships.</p> <p>DM reinforced the partnership potential of the deal, ensuring there is connectivity of support across the skills system from lower to higher level skills, recognising that the city deal will provide opportunities across all levels.</p>
8	Press Release
	<p>Alderman Noel Williams asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Members agreed the press release.</p>
9.0	Date of next meetings
9.1	Alderman Noel Williams highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Newry Mourne & Down District Council on 25 January 2023.



Subject:	Modern Slavery Act 2015: updated Modern Slavery Statement and update on corporate action plan
Date:	24 March 2023
Reporting Officers:	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services David Sales, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Governance & Compliance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement to meet the obligations of the Modern Slavery Act, 2015 and an update on the related corporate action plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement (the “Transparency Statement”). Approve the addition of the Transparency Statement to the UK Government’s online registry. Note the progress made on the action plan.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the “Act”) aims to address slavery and trafficking by enhancing support and protection for victims, giving law enforcement the tools needed to target today’s slave drivers and ensuring perpetrators can be severely punished. It also includes a provision in Section 54 to encourage organisations to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free, known as the Transparency in Supply Chains arrangements (“TISC”).</p>
3.2	<p>Key Issues</p> <p>The Council has voluntarily published an annual Transparency Statement on our website since 2015. This sets out what the Council has done to ensure there is no modern slavery in its supply chains or any part of its business.</p> <p>This year, the annual Transparency Statement has been reviewed by Commercial and Procurement Services, the Council’s Safeguarding Officer and the Equality and Diversity Officer and has been refreshed to reflect current guidance on its content. An updated version for 2021-22 is set out in Appendix 1.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Recent changes to the Transparency Statement requirements</u></p> <p>The TISC provisions currently apply to commercial organisations, however, in recent years both the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice have reviewed and consulted on these provisions and their potential application to the public sector:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In July 2018, the Home Secretary undertook an independent review of the Act and made recommendations, one of which was to strengthen Section 54 by extending the requirement to publish Modern Slavery Statements to government and the public sector. • In July 2019 the UK Government launched a consultation on measures to strengthen the TISC arrangements and published its proposals on how it planned to take this work forward. Many of the proposed changes will require legislative change which has not happened to date. The proposed changes would see a strengthening of the TISC arrangements for commercial businesses, and would, for the first time, extend them so they apply to the public sector. • In January 2022, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice (“DOJ”) published its report, summary of responses and next steps in response to its consultation on TISC. It found that overall, there is widespread support for the strengthening of TISC arrangements.

3.4	<p><u>Approach to Modern Slavery in Northern Ireland</u></p> <p>In October 2022, in accordance with Section 12 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, (as amended by the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022), the DOJ launched a public consultation on a new three-year draft Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy. This is a multiagency collaboration, with actions to be delivered by members of Northern Ireland's Organised Crime Task Force, NGO Engagement Group and other agencies working to address modern slavery and human trafficking.</p> <p>The DOJ noted in its consultation that the UK Government plan to make additional changes to the TISC provisions in the Act when parliamentary time allows. The additional changes that the UK Government plan to legislate for include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reporting on specific topics; 2. Publishing the MS statement on a public registry; 3. Setting a deadline for submitting a statement annually; 4. Extending the requirement to publish a statement to public sector organisations with a turnover of over £36million; and 5. The introduction of financial penalties for those that do not publish a slavery statement.
3.5	<p>It should be noted that the Legislative Consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be required to extend any UK Government changes to Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Alongside the consultation, the DOJ published a progress report on the commitments laid out in the 2021-22 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Progress Report states in part that the DOJ “will engage further with public sector procurement leads once the additional measures to strengthen TISC are progressed in legislation and will become mandatory for all businesses with an annual turnover of over £36million.”</p>
3.6	<p>In March 2021, the UK Government launched an online modern slavery statement registry. Since its launch, over 7,000 statements have been submitted covering over 23,350 organisations on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>Members asked to approve the addition of the Belfast City Council Transparency Statement to this registry.</p>

3.7	<p><u>Action Plan</u></p> <p>In October 2021, Council approved an action plan to tackle modern slavery to be taken forward by various departments. This was based on guidance from NILGA. An update on the proposed actions is set forth in Appendix 2.</p> <p>Members should note that an initial awareness session for relevant Belfast City Council managers on recognising Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking was held on 17 November by the Department of Justice.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Reporting</u></p> <p>The Governance & Compliance Manager co-ordinates an annual report on progress to be brought to CMT and the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The implementation of the action plan will involve staff from City and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, Governance & Compliance Services, Commercial and Procurement Services, Corporate HR and Marketing and Corporate Communications.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Any equality, good relations or rural needs implications will be identified using the council's usual screening process.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Draft Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement 2021 - 2022</p> <p>Appendix 2: Modern Slavery Action Plan</p>



Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement for the period 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Introduction

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the “Act”) places specific responsibilities on organisations to ensure slavery and human trafficking does not exist within their supply chains, and in any part of their own businesses. Organisations need to demonstrate accountability through transparency to protect workers, adults and children from abuse and exploitation.

Belfast City Council is committed to improving practices to prevent slavery and human trafficking. The Council expects suppliers, partners and third parties to adhere to the same values and principles to combat slavery and human trafficking.

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Act and constitutes Belfast City Council’s slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 31st March 2022.

Our structure and our supply chains

The Council is the local authority for the Belfast area with responsibility for a wide range of services including local planning, economic development, tourism, street cleaning and parks, leisure and waste management.

The [Belfast Agenda](#) is the community plan that the whole city is working towards. Our vision is that by 2035 Belfast will be a city

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

Our political governance structure is set out below:



Belfast City Council procured goods, works and services from circa 2,400 suppliers during the last financial year with a supply chain mostly based in the UK and Ireland.

The Council has a responsibility to prevent slavery and human trafficking within its supply chain and in any part of the organisation. As the customer, the Council makes clear to our suppliers, and those wishing to do business with us, what is expected of them.

The Council's tender process require all applicable tenderers to provide confirmation that they are compliant with the Act. They are also required to confirm their subcontractors and suppliers comply with the Act.

Our policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking

Belfast City Council have the following policies or procedures in place, related to mitigating the risks of slavery and human trafficking:

Safeguarding

We recognise our responsibility to develop, implement and monitor policies and procedures to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Our child safeguarding procedures are well established. Our current focus is on reviewing, underpinning and improving how we take care of adults and the reporting system. This will include a new Safeguarding All ages policy to be in place by January 2023.

Equality and Diversity

We are committed to Equality and Diversity and actively seek to eradicate discrimination and inequality when developing services and when goods and or services are provided on the Council's behalf. To this end we have developed an internal toolkit which integrates equality and diversity into everything we do from policy development to service planning and delivery. The Council's new five-year Equality Scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 was approved in January 2021.

We are an Equal Opportunities employer and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We are a Lead Partner and Member of Excellence of Employers for Disability NI with members of our recruitment team being accredited as "Disability Positive". We have a dedicated helpline for any applicants who require reasonable adjustments or whose first language is not English. We appoint strictly on the merit principle and our recruitment processes require the completion of relevant pre-employment checks which include eligibility to work in the UK and the uptake of suitable references, where required.

We operate a job evaluation scheme to ensure all employees are paid fairly and equitably.

Raising Concerns

We encourage workers to raise any concerns that they may have and there are established arrangements in place for handling these. Externally, members of the public and customers can use our [Corporate Complaints Compliments and Comments](#) procedure to report concerns.

Fraud and bribery

We are committed to protecting the public money we look after and to making sure that the opportunity for fraud, bribery or any other financial impropriety is reduced to the lowest possible risk. We have policies and procedures to manage the risk of fraud, bribery and other financial impropriety, including arrangements for prevention and detection as well as arrangements for reporting and investigation.

Code of Conduct

We expect all employees and Councillors to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and ethical behaviour. We require all Councillors and relevant officer to submit declarations of interests to record and declare personal and pecuniary interests.

Social Value Procurement Policy

Our [Social Value Procurement Policy](#) sets out our approach to delivering on the council's inclusive growth commitments and explains our social value objectives, the impact these changes will make and how we will work with suppliers using our social value toolkit to achieve our ambitions.

Due diligence in assessing modern slavery risk in operations or supply chains

Belfast City Council's Commercial and Procurement Services team operate a Category Management structure. A Category Management structure within the team enables greater transparency in the identification of risks associated with modern slavery on a category basis.

Risk Assessment and Management

All new suppliers, for new applicable contracts, are assessed as part of the Council's tendering process to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Act.

The Commercial and Procurement Services team completed CIPS Ethical Procurement training achieving the professional standard of CIPS Corporate Ethics kite mark for the service.

An integral part of the risk management will be the new Safeguarding All Ages policy due to be introduced January 2023 and the associated updated training already in place, which includes Modern Slavery and Human trafficking as topics.

Key performance indicators to measure effectiveness of steps being taken

We will communicate this policy to our staff to make them aware of the issue and the Council's obligations.

In October 2021, Belfast City Council approved suggested actions for various council departments based on guidance from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. These actions include: providing Modern Slavery Awareness Training for all council personnel in public facing services; designating a point of contact to report modern slavery concerns and raise awareness of modern slavery among communities; and collaborating with other councils and agencies. This action plan is being taken forwards by officers.

The Northern Ireland Department of Justice is expected, at some point, to announce guidance on the new duty to report incidences of modern slavery. This may require further training and guidance being issued to staff.

Training on modern slavery and trafficking

The Commercial and Procurement Services team commit to retaining the professional standard of CIPS Corporate Ethics during 2021/22. Further Council officers involved in procurement activity will also be selected for this training.

Signed on behalf of Belfast City Council by:

Nora Largey
Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Date:

Policy Control

Organisation	Belfast City Council
Title	Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement 2021-2022 v. 0.1
Author	Sarah Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager
Owner	Nora Largey
Review date	
Location of document	Website home page
Approved by	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee and ratified at Full Council
Approval date	

APPENDIX 2 – SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR COUNCILS

Action	NILGA Guidance and Suggested Council Actions	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline	March 2023 Progress Update
1. Provide Modern Slavery Awareness Training for all council personnel in public facing services.	<p>NILGA Guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Justice and the Department of Finance's Construction and Procurement Delivery can advise on TISC (Transparency in Supply Chains) training for public sector and council procurement leads. The guidance provides a list of voluntary and community sector organisations which can advise on modern slavery and provide training. <p>NILGA's suggested next steps for Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver training for public sector procurement leads in respect of transparency in supply chains. Accessing "Train the trainer" sessions for Councils shared by the Department of Justice to provide Councils with the tools to deliver their own inhouse training on Modern Slavery. <i>(The Train the Trainers session will be built into NILGA's Regional Training Programme and further information will follow on an ongoing basis as appropriate).</i> Using Training Materials for Council Staff, available from the Department of Justice and PSNI. <i>(In April 2019, the Department of Justice and the PSNI wrote to all local Council CEOs to offer training materials for staff on modern slavery concerns.)</i> 	<p>Head of Commercial and Procurement Services</p> <p>Director of HR / Governance & Compliance Manager</p> <p>External provider to deliver approved training.</p>	March 2023	An initial corporate awareness session was delivered by the NI DOJ Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking branch to relevant managers (BDM&CP and Environmental Health) on 17 November 2022
2. Designate a point of contact to report modern slavery concerns and raise awareness of	<p>NILGA Guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councils should designate a lead officer or team who can act as a point of contact and expertise on the issue. Council Community Planning, Good Relations or Policing and Community Partnerships (PCSP) teams are ideally placed to fulfil this role. A Lead Officer from either one of 	<p>Nora Largey and David Sales.</p> <p>To be agreed, at the relevant time, how</p>	March 2023	CMT has discussed and agreed that Nora Largey and David Sales will act as points of contact for modern

Action	NILGA Guidance and Suggested Council Actions	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline	March 2023 Progress Update
modern slavery among communities.	<p>these teams could be nominated as the “go to” person for other officers or council workers who have concerns that modern slavery may be happening in certain businesses or in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A council protocol for reporting suspicions of modern slavery should be developed. • Community Planning Partnerships should be harnessed to share information and to raise awareness of modern slavery with communities and the drive to eradicate it. • PCSPs are a key council resource in the drive to eradicate modern slavery in Northern Ireland. Intelligence which can be disclosed by the PCSP should be shared with the lead person / team in the council appointed as the “go to” for modern slavery concerns. 	we will embed / promote through the Community Planning Structures, SCP and PCSP/DPCSP’s.		slavery and human trafficking concerns.
3. Establish clear procurement guidelines	<p>NILGA guidance: The modern slavery transparency statement required to be published by the Council under Section 54 of the MSA must include the steps the Council has taken during the financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, and in any part of its own business or; that the organisation has taken no steps in the financial year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency in supply chains is a process of continuous improvement. As stipulated in government guidance, the government expects organisations to <i>build</i> on their statements year on year • Guidance and resources include: Transparency in Supply Chains etc. A practical guide; Council Transparency Statements Portal; TISCReport Transparency Map; LGA’s Tackling Modern Slavery Guide <p>NILGA’s suggested next steps for Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking account of any further government developments on proposals to extend the scope of Section 54 (TISC). 	Commercial and Procurement Services – N Bohill	Annually	Annual update to Modern Slavery Transparency Statement has been drafted and approved by CMT. It will be uploaded to the council website and the UK Government registry after SP&R and Council approval

Action	NILGA Guidance and Suggested Council Actions	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline	March 2023 Progress Update
4. Collaborate with other councils and agencies	<p>NILGA guidance: Opportunities for collaboration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-Council Professional Officers Groups (e.g. the Environmental Health Professional Officers Group, the Local Government Safeguarding Network and the Planning Professional Officers Group); • Cross-council project collaboration (e.g. Arc21); and • Council collaboration with the private sector: e.g. for Economic Development teams to provide guidance to new and existing businesses in their districts on developing modern slavery transparency statements to enhance their competitiveness when bidding for new, or when renewing goods / services contracts. 	All Directors to raise with relevant officers	Immediate	This can be started following the roll-out of training to staff

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Subject:	CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 2023/24
Date:	24 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Helen Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the supporting Prudential and Treasury Codes produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), require the Council to consider the affordability and sustainability of capital expenditure decisions through the reporting of prudential and treasury management indicators.
1.2	The Prudential Code requires the Council to produce a Capital Strategy for 2023/24. This report provides information for Members on the Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators for Belfast City Council for the period 2023/24 to 2025/26, and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • note the contents of this report and the prudential and treasury management indicators included within the appendices to the report. <p>And agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authorised Borrowing Limit for the Council of £140m for 2023/24. • The Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24, which has been included as Appendix B to this report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 requires the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. In doing so, the Council is required to agree a minimum revenue provision policy annually and to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which are to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.</p>
3.2	<p>At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 9 December 2011, Members approved the Council's Treasury Management Policy which is based on the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Treasury Management Policy requires that a Treasury Management Strategy be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on an annual basis and that it is supported by a mid-year and year end treasury management reports. Recent changes in the CIPFA Prudential Code recommends best practice that treasury management reports are submitted on a quarterly basis and this will be effective from 1 April 2023</p>
3.3	<p>The Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators, is included as Appendix A, while the Treasury Management Strategy and treasury management indicators have been included as Appendix B.</p>
3.4	<p>The comparison of "Gross Debt" to "Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is the main indicator of prudence when considering the proposed capital investment plans of the Council. Estimated gross debt should not exceed the CFR for the current year plus two years. The Council's estimated gross debt position, illustrated in Table 6, Appendix A, is comfortably within the CFR in the medium term. The Director of Finance therefore considers the estimated levels of gross debt as being prudent.</p>

3.5	Table 10 (Appendix A) shows the estimated financing costs for capital expenditure as a percentage of the estimated net revenue stream for the Council, based on the medium financial plan. These illustrate that in the medium term, capital financing costs will represent an average of 6.35% of the Council's net running costs. On this basis the Director of Finance is satisfied that the level of capital expenditure is affordable.
3.6	<p>The Finance Act requires the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, relating to gross debt. The Prudential Code defines the affordable limit as the "Authorised Borrowing Limit" and gross borrowing must not exceed this limit. Table 8 (Appendix A) sets out the recommended "Authorised Borrowing Limit" for the Council as being £140m for 2023/24.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.7	<p>As detailed in the report</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.8	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix A – Capital Strategy Report 2023/24</p> <p>Appendix B – Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24</p>

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Capital Strategy Report 2023/24

1. Introduction

This capital strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

2. Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, which will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets.

In 2023/24, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £35m as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £thousands

	2022/23 forecast	2023/24 budget	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
General Fund services	22,913	35,358	30,095	21,522

The capital expenditure forecast for 2023/24 continues to be monitored and reviewed, in terms of both project delivery and affordability. The Council is currently working on a long term capital expenditure forecast and will update the above table when this becomes available.

Governance – The Council’s Capital Programme is agreed on a yearly basis by the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee in its role as the Council’s investment decision maker. All capital projects must go through a 3-stage approval process and decisions on which projects are added to the Capital Programme and which projects progress are also taken by SP&R Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and allows Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving capital projects. The Physical Programmes Department and Financial Services calculate the financing cost of all proposals, including emerging proposals. As part of the final investment decision it must be confirmed that any project is within the affordability limits of the Council.

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council’s own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing and leasing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing in £thousands

	2022/23 forecast	2023/24 budget	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
External sources	0	0	0	0
Own resources	16,897	18,218	10,443	14,050
Debt	6,016	17,140	19,652	7,472
TOTAL	22,913	35,358	30,095	21,522

Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP is as follows:

Table 3: Repayment of debt finance in £thousands (MRP)

	2022/23 forecast	2023/24 budget	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
Own resources	8,669	9,313	10,477	11,042

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to repay debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £8m during 2023/24. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £thousands

	31.3.2023 forecast	31.3.2024 budget	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget
General Fund services	132,480	140,307	149,482	145,912

Asset Management – The Council is committed to ensuring that all Capital projects contribute to the strategic direction of the city and continue to be of long term use. The Council is currently in the process of looking at its Asset Management Strategy and is implementing a new Asset Management System to support the strategic objectives of better financial management, information management, planning and performance and asset management

Asset disposals: When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. The Council plans to receive £5m of capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts in £thousands

	2022/23 forecast	2023/24 budget	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
Asset sales	£375	£4,946	£3,200	£1,996
Loans repaid	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	£375	£4,946	£3,200	£1,996

3. Treasury Management

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

The Council currently has £44m borrowing and due to legacy loans taken at higher rates in the past and transfers of debt under Local Government, the average interest rate of these loans is 7.87%. The council also has £21m treasury investments at current average rate of 2.67%.

Borrowing strategy: The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheap short-term loans (currently available at around 4.5%) and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher (currently over 5%).

Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, leases and transfers from local government reorganisation are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £thousands

	31.3.2023 forecast	31.3.2024 budget	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	43,782	53,064	71,447	79,925
Capital Financing Requirement	132,480	140,307	149,482	145,912

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, as can be seen from table 6.

Liability benchmark: To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10m at each year-end. This benchmark is currently £40m and is forecast to rise to £80m over the next three years.

Table 7: Prudential Indicator: Borrowing and the liability benchmark £thousands

	31.3.2023 forecast	31.3.2024 budget	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget
Outstanding borrowing	43,782	53,064	71,447	79,925
Liability Benchmark	39,619	54,946	73,422	80,351

The table shows that the Council's borrowing is currently above its liability benchmark. The Council is projecting to borrow over the next few years to meet capital expenditure requirements. This external borrowing is currently projected to be slightly lower than the estimated liability benchmark over the next three years, based on current forecasts. Work is progressing on the long term capital expenditure forecasts and when finalised the budget figures in the above table will be reviewed and amended accordingly.

Affordable borrowing limit: The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year and to keep it under review. In line with statutory guidance, a lower "operational boundary" is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 8: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £thousands

	2023/24 limit	2024/25 limit	2025/26 limit
Authorised limit – borrowing	140,307	149,482	145,912
Authorised limit – PFI and leases	0	0	0
Authorised limit – total external debt	140,307	149,482	145,912
Operational boundary – borrowing	124,307	133,482	129,912
Operational boundary – PFI and leases	0	0	0
Operational boundary – total external debt	124,307	133,482	129,912

Investment strategy: Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Table 9: Treasury management investments in £thousands

	31.3.2023 forecast	31.3.2024 budget	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget
Near-term investments	15,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Longer-term investments	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	15,000	12,000	12,000	12,000

Governance: Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Director of Finance and staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (SP&R). Tri-annual reports on treasury management activity are currently presented to SP&R. From 1 April 2023, the frequency of these reports will be reviewed in light of the recent changes to the CIPFA Prudential Code. Reports may be presented on a quarterly basis, where the SP&R committee is responsible for scrutinising treasury management decisions.

Liabilities

In addition to debt of £44m detailed above, the Council is making payments to cover its pension fund liability. It has also set aside £5.4m to cover risks of insurance claims and Landfill Closure. The Council is also at risk of having to pay for its share of the ARC 21 Joint Committee contingent liability but has not put aside any money.

Governance: Decisions on incurring new discretionary liabilities are taken by departmental Chief Officers in consultation with the Director of Finance. The risk of liabilities crystallising and requiring payment is monitored by central finance and reported quarterly to the Director of Finance. New liabilities exceeding £1m are reported to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval/notification as appropriate.

4. Revenue Budget Implications

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue. The net annual charge is known

as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from the District Rate and general government grants.

Table 10: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	2022/23 forecast	2023/24 budget	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget
Financing costs (£'000)	9,731	10,978	13,204	14,288
Proportion of net revenue stream	5.44%	5.69%	6.85%	7.41%

Sustainability: Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years may extend for up to 50 years into the future. The Director of Finance is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable due to the processes in place to scrutinise any plans coming forward and are designed to highlight not only the ongoing financing costs but also the recurring running costs to ensure they remain within the affordability limits identified and agreed by the Council.

5. Knowledge and Skills

The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions. For example, the Director of Finance is a qualified accountant with over 25 years' experience. The Council pays for junior staff to study towards relevant professional qualifications including CIPFA, ACT (treasury), ACCA, etc.

Where Council staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly, and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

Annual Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

1. Introduction

Treasury management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.

Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. In addition, the former Department of the Environment (DoE) issued Guidance on Local Authority Investments in October 2011 that requires the Council to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the *Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011* to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the DoE Guidance.

This strategy covers the following issues in respect of 2023/24:

- Outlook for interest rates
- Capital Financing Plans
- Establishing the Borrowing Requirement
- Borrowing strategy
- Debt rescheduling
- Investments
- Treasury Management Indicators

2. Outlook for Interest Rates

The ongoing impact on the UK from the war in Ukraine, together with higher inflation, higher interest rates, uncertain government policy, and a deteriorating economic outlook, will be major influences on the Council's treasury management strategy for 2023/24.

The Bank of England (BoE) increased the Bank Rate by 0.5% to 4% in February 2023. The Council's treasury management adviser Arlingclose forecasts that the Bank Rate will continue to rise in 2023 as the Bank of England attempts to subdue inflation which is significantly above its 2% target. Arlingclose expects Bank Rate to rise to at least 4.25% under its central case, with the risks in the near- and medium-term to the upside should inflation not evolve as the Bank forecasts and remains persistently higher.

3. Capital Financing Plans

It is essential that the level of borrowing is considered within the context of the Council's capital expenditure and plans, as is required by the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance.

On 28 February 2023, the Council held £44m of borrowing and £21m of treasury investments.

Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1, with the Council planning to increase borrowings over the next three years.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	2022/23 £'000 Estimate	2023/24 £'000 Forecast	2024/25 £'000 Forecast	2025/26 £'000 Forecast
Capital financing requirement (CFR)	132,480	140,307	149,482	145,912
Less: External Borrowing	43,782	53,064	71,447	79,925
Internal Borrowing	88,698	87,243	78,035	65,987
Less: Balance Sheet Resources	102,861	95,360	86,060	75,560
Treasury Investments (new borrowing)	14,163	8,117	8,025	9,573

The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. The Council's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.

The Council has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme, but minimal investments and may therefore may be required to borrow over £55m over the forecast period. The Council's long term capital expenditure forecasts are currently being developed which may change the above forecasts.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2023/24.

Liability benchmark: To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as table 1 above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

Table 2: Liability Benchmark

	2022/23 £'000 Estimate	2023/24 £'000 Forecast	2024/25 £'000 Forecast	2025/26 £'000 Forecast
Capital financing requirement (CFR)	132,480	140,307	149,482	145,912
Less: Balance Sheet Resources	102,861	95,361	86,060	75,561
Net loans requirement	29,619	44,946	63,422	70,351
Plus: Liquidity allowance	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Liability Benchmark	39,619	54,946	73,422	80,351

The Liability Benchmark is effectively the Net Borrowing Requirement of a local authority plus a liquidity allowance.

CIPFA recommends that the optimum position for external borrowing should be at the level of the Liability Benchmark (i.e., all balance sheet resources should be used to maximise internal borrowing). If the outputs show future periods where external loans are less than the Liability Benchmark, then this indicates a borrowing requirement thus identifying where the authority is exposed to interest rate, liquidity and refinancing risks. Conversely where external loans exceed the Liability Benchmark then this will highlight an overborrowed position which will result in excess cash in the organisation requiring investment thus exposing the authority to credit and reinvestment risks and a potential cost of carry. The Council's external debt is relatively close to the liability benchmark. The Council is currently working on long term capital forecasts and the above amounts may change. Given the increases in the bank rate, the level of debt required is closely monitored to minimise any interest rate risk.

4. Establishing the Borrowing Requirement

The starting point for ascertaining the appropriate level of borrowing is the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). The CFR is derived from the Balance Sheet and represents the Council's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose, as it takes account of all capital expenditure incurred which is resourced from borrowing.

However, in addition to the debt position created by historic capital expenditure met from borrowing, the Council also has significant values of reserves, provisions and balances supported by cash, which reduce the net indebtedness of the Council. These positive cash flows allow the Council to consider utilising this cash to support capital expenditure in lieu of external borrowing.

If external borrowing is higher than the CFR, this indicates borrowing in advance of immediate need (permitted within the Prudential Code) and borrowing below CFR would indicate internal borrowing (i.e. the level of cash used in lieu of external borrowing)

The relatively high levels of reserves and balances on the Council's balance sheet have therefore enabled the Council to benefit from not having to borrow externally to

the full extent of the underlying need. However, it cannot be assumed that this position can continue into perpetuity and needs to be given active consideration.

The Council currently holds £44 million of loans, a decrease of £5 million on the previous year. The balance sheet forecast in table 1 shows that the Council expects to borrow up to £15m in 2023/24. The Council may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £140 million.

5. Borrowing Strategy

In terms of meeting the external borrowing requirement identified above, one of the most important considerations is the timing, in terms of the potential to save significant interest costs and it is key that this position is proactively managed using all information available to inform decisions. It is essential therefore that the considerations of timing of borrowing form a key element of the borrowing strategy.

It is of course not possible for all borrowing to be undertaken at the lowest rates of interest available, as unforeseen events can significantly alter the path of rates. It is therefore essential that the risks to adverse movements are fully understood and actively managed. One of the key borrowing objectives is to achieve certainty around interest costs, and there is therefore little appetite to undertake variable rate borrowing.

Given the uncertainty around local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. With short-term interest rates currently lower than long-term rates, it is likely to be more cost effective in the short-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead. By doing so, the Council is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal / short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise.

It is recognised that whilst the capital expenditure and financing plans will be a driver of borrowing costs, the management of risk is the prime objective of the borrowing strategy and reduction of interest rate risk and refinancing risk within the portfolio is essential.

The Council remains prepared to undertake the potential borrowing ahead of immediate need (up to three years in advance), if it results in a reduction of interest rate risk within the portfolio. The Council recognises that this may temporarily increase investment balances, and increase net interest costs in the short term, and that these factors will form part of the decision making process when the strategy is executed. It would be necessary to demonstrate value for money when making a decision in respect of borrowing in advance of need, therefore it will only be undertaken if there is a strong view that this is the preferred approach.

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Government Loans Fund via Department of Finance. Government loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield; the Council intends to avoid this activity in order to retain its access to government loans. The Council may look to borrow any long-term loans from other sources such as banks, pensions and local authorities and may utilise money market

brokers to facilitate borrowing from other local authorities for short to medium term borrowing.

6. Debt Rescheduling

The prime objective of any restructuring is to reduce risk in the portfolio, whether that be interest rate or refinancing risk. Any savings that may be created as a result will be considered in the context of the overall risk profile.

Debt restructuring opportunities will be kept under constant review, however the penalties of premature redemption of loans at higher rates than prevailing interest rates mean that there may be significant costs associated with this, which will reduce the attractiveness of opportunities.

7. Investments

Annual Investment Strategy

The Council has regard to the CIPFA Code and Guidance for Local Government Investments for District Councils in Northern Ireland (the Guidance) as cited under Section 25(1) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act) when setting the Investment Strategy. The Department recommends that each local authority produce and publish an Annual Investment Strategy, approved by the Council and revised in year as required. This sets out the Council's policies for managing investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. This investment strategy states which instruments the Council may use for investment purposes, making a distinction between specified and non-specified investments. This strategy also determines limits in respect of their overall levels.

The prime objective of the Council's investment strategy is to ensure prudent investment of surplus funds. The Council's investment priorities are the security of capital, liquidity of investments and, within those objectives, to secure optimum performance.

All investments will be made in accordance with the Council's investment policies and prevailing legislation and regulations.

7.1 Specified Investments

An investment is a **specified investment** if:

- The investment is denominated in Sterling and all payments or repayments are payable only in Sterling,
- The investment is not a long term investment (i.e. due to be repaid within 12 months of the date in which it was made or one which the Council may require to be repaid within that period),
- The making of the investment is not defined as capital expenditure by virtue of regulation 12 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2011; and
- The investment is made with a body which has been awarded a high credit rating, or is made with one of the following:
 - a) The United Kingdom Government;
 - b) A District Council;

c) A Local Authority in England and Wales or a similar body in Scotland;

The following categories of investments may be used under the definition of specified investments:

- Short term cash deposits
- Call accounts
- Certificates of Deposit (with maturity dates < 1 year)
- UK Government Gilts
- Treasury Bills
- Money Market Funds

The Council considers a high credit rating for money market funds to be those with a long term Fitch Rating of AAA (or the equivalent highest rating from Standard and Poors or Moodys).

The Council will have regard to all 3 rating agencies and considers a high credit rating for other investments to be as follows:

Fitch Credit Rating	Minimum level
Short Term Rating	F1
Long Term Rating	A

Fitch defines these ratings as follows:

A: High credit quality.

'A' ratings denote expectations of low default risk. The capacity for payment of financial commitments is considered strong. This capacity may, nevertheless, be more vulnerable to adverse business or economic conditions than is the case for higher ratings.

F1: Highest short-term credit quality.

Indicates the strongest intrinsic capacity for timely payment of financial commitments

7.2 Non-specified Investments

In respect of **non-specified investments**. The following instruments have been identified by the Council.

Category of Non-specified investment
Sterling denominated Foreign Government Securities
Sterling medium term Deposits or Certificates of Deposit
Floating rate Certificates of Deposit
Highly rated Corporate Bonds (including investments in a Corporate Bond Fund)
Sterling Reserve Funds
Index-linked structured deposits
Collateralised deposits
Foreign Currency denominated investments
Deposits with non-rated Building Societies

The Council do not intend on making any investments in the 2023/24 year which meet the definition of non-specified investments and therefore there is no limit set on this within the Investment Strategy.

The CIPFA Code of Practice recommends that the Investment Strategy sets out the maximum period over which investments will be made.

The Director of Finance recommends that a maximum duration of 2 years should be set, although it is only expected that investments over 12 months will be made only in exceptional circumstances.

Regulation 12(1) (d) of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 states that some categories of investment are defined as Capital Expenditure. This relates to the acquisition of share or loan capital in any body corporate. However, in the event that this expenditure is made as an investment for the prudent management of the Council's financial affairs, it shall not be treated as capital expenditure.

The impact of investing in instruments of this nature are such that, unlike other investment instruments, either capital or revenue resources would have to be applied to this expenditure, and once the investment was sold or matured, the income would be a capital receipt.

The Council will monitor any proposals for such investments and will assess a suitable limit within the Investment Strategy.

7.3 Investment Risk

The prime consideration of risk within investments is the loss of capital invested. Therefore investments will only be made with bodies with a high credit rating defined above. Credit ratings will form the primary driver for assessing credit quality, although it is recognised that this is not the only means of assessing credit quality.

Caution will be exercised in determining the creditworthiness of investment counterparties, even if they meet the minimum criteria above.

In the event that any institutions are at the minimum criteria and are on negative rating watch, monies will not be placed with that organisation until such time that the negative outlook is revised.

Geographical limits will be considered to ensure an appropriate spread of risk. Sovereign ratings will be taken account of when placing funds with institutions outside of the UK.

Credit ratings for existing investment counterparties will be monitored on a monthly basis, as well as immediately before new deposits are placed.

Market intelligence will also be considered before entering into any investments with proposed counterparties meeting the minimum criteria.

7.4 Treasury Management Advisers

The Council currently utilise the services of external advisers, Arlingclose, when determining the credit quality of its investment counterparties. The Council recognise that responsibility for the decision to invest with a counterparty rests with the Council as the principle undertaking the transaction.

Credit ratings will be obtained directly from the rating agencies' websites, and officers will regularly read the financial press for information relevant to the credit-worthiness of counterparties.

7.5 *Investment Training*

The Council recognises that investments, as well as wider treasury management issues require a high level of specialist knowledge. Officers undertaking the decisions are all qualified accountants with many years of experience. However, the Council recognises the need for officers to be kept up to date with developments and through the annual appraisal system will identify any training needs to further enhance the current skills base.

In the event of new Officers joining the function, they will be provided with significant on the job training as well as being provided with the opportunity to attend relevant external training courses.

The Council recognises that although there may be costs involved with sending officers to training courses, when these costs are considered in the context of the size of the portfolios being managed, and the amount of the Council's money at risk, investment in training is a worthwhile area of expenditure.

In addition to the training of officers, in order for elected members to provide effective scrutiny of the strategy and to have the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding the strategy, it is also important that training is provided to Members of the Council.

7.6 *Other Investment Considerations*

The level of investment balances is not specifically targeted in the strategy; it will be a consequence of the net spending plans of the Council, and the level of external borrowing to be undertaken. To date, balances have remained relatively stable over recent years. However, the introduction of the Prudential Code, and the self regulation of borrowing limits and capital financing strategies, may result in higher or lower levels of balances going forwards as the level of external borrowing is given active consideration.

It should also be noted that the investments are largely as a result of the level of reserves and provisions that the Council has at any one point in time. In addition, there is an amount of working capital (excess of creditors over debtors) as well as being a factor of the extent to which investment balances have been used in lieu of external borrowing.

Investment balances are expected to decrease as further investment balances are used in lieu of external borrowing.

The remaining cash balances that will not be used in lieu of external borrowing will primarily exist to manage cash flow volatility within the Council. It is therefore not expected that investments of a long term strategic nature will be made. Instead the duration of new investments will remain relatively short in order to meet liquidity demands.

The Council recognises that a consequence of short dated investments is that it exposes the portfolio to interest rate risk, which would otherwise be reduced if investments were made of a long term nature. The budget for investment income takes a prudent approach to expected returns from investments.

8. Treasury Management Indicators

The CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice requires various indicators to be set within the strategy. This section of the report sets these out in the format required by the Code. Whilst they are required to provide boundaries within which the treasury management operations will be managed, it is also important that there is sufficient flexibility to enable officers to react to unforeseen favourable movements in the financial markets which may present beneficial opportunities to the Council.

8.21 Interest Rate Exposures

The Council is required to set upper limits for both fixed and variable exposures for the forthcoming years. The purpose of this indicator is to contain the Council's exposure to unfavourable movements in interest rates. The indicators are expressed as Fixed Rate Borrowing less Fixed Rate Investments and Variable Rate Borrowing less Variable Rate Investments. The Council defines variable rate investments as including those instruments maturing within each year, as the replacement of those instruments will be subject to prevailing rates of interest. The following table shows the upper limit of fixed rate exposure and the upper limit of variable rate exposure for the forthcoming three years.

	Estimate 2023/24 £'000	Estimate 2024/25 £'000	Estimate 2025/26 £'000
Upper limit of fixed rate exposure	124,307	133,482	129,912
Upper limit of variable rate exposure	3,729	4,004	3,897

8.2 Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate Borrowing

The Council is required to set upper and lower limits of fixed rate borrowing maturing within certain periods, in order to contain the exposure to re-financing risk which may arise if significant proportions of borrowing were maturing within a short period of time. The Council has set the following limits for the forthcoming financial year.

	Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Under 12 months	0.00%	25.00%
12 months – 24 months	0.00%	25.00%
24 months – 5 years	0.00%	50.00%
5 years – 10 years	0.00%	75.00%
10 years and above	0.00%	75.00%

8.3 Total Principal Sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

The purpose of this indicator is to contain exposure to the possibility of loss that may arise as a result of the Council having to seek early repayment of sums invested.

The Council would not, through its normal course of investment activities, expect to make investments beyond 12 months. However, there may be exceptional circumstances which may result in investments being made up to 2 years in duration, as is referred to within the Annual Investment Strategy.

	Estimate 2023/24 £2m	Estimate 2024/25 £2m	Estimate 2025/26 £2m
Total principal sums invested for longer than 364 days	£2m	£2m	£2m

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Subject:	Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme Re-allocation
Date:	24 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to advise members of funds available for potential re-allocation.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the amount of £220,254 available for members to either re-allocate or add to reserves.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 11 th January 2023 members agreed that the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme would not be reopened to new

	applications, and that any realised underspend be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committees for reallocation.
3.2	A further report was taken to City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 8 th February 2023 approving the final tranche of grants. As a result, the reserve that was set up will no longer be fully utilised and an amount of £220,254 is no longer required for this purpose.
3.3	SP&R at its meeting of 17 th February 2023 agreed that reallocations of forecast departmental underspends will be considered as part of year end reporting taking into consideration the 2023/24 budgetary gap. However, in this instance, as the underspend is from a specified reserve and not a departmental underspend then members can agree to reallocate this for other purposes or to include as a reserve to partly offset the 2023/24 budgetary gap.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.4	As per the report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.5	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of meeting of 7 th March 2023
Date:	24 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS)
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its March 2023 meeting and to present the minutes of the last meeting of the Audit & Risk Panel and the updated Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Panel for approval.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the key issues arising at the meeting, Approve the minutes of the March meeting of the Audit & Risk Panel at appendix A, Approve the updated Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Panel at appendix B.
3.0	Main report
	Key Issues
	<u>Key reports</u>
3.1	The Panel received summaries of the recently completed internal audits of the Capital Programme, Food Safety, Pest Control, Digital Information Security, Visit Belfast, Payroll

	(data analytics testing), the HR Payroll System Project and Continuous Improvement. The internal audit of Payroll received “substantial assurance” and the audit of Continuous Improvement resulted in a “major improvement required” opinion, with all other audits receiving the opinion of “some improvement required”.
3.2	The Panel agreed the Audit Strategy & Plan for 23/24 which sets out the role of AGRS as an assurance provider and advisory service which directly assists the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to internal control, risk management and good governance.
3.3	The Panel considered the corporate risk dashboard which provided an analysis and update on the progress being made to manage the 23 risks that are considered to present the greatest threat to the delivery corporate priorities and / or compliance with key statutory requirements. The Panel agreed to add a new risk to the corporate risk register around the provision of statutory duties. The Panel was also updated on how horizon scanning will be built into an annual review process to allow consideration of the themes emerging, how they could impact on city and council strategies and enable council to influence and challenge thinking on how to address city challenges. The Panel noted the quarterly assurances provided by senior management regarding compliance with risk management and internal control processes. Give the current status of recovery from the impact of the pandemic, the Panel agreed to reintroduce the annual review, update and exercise of Business Continuity Management (BCM) plans during 23/24, in line with BCM policy requirements. The Panel also agreed the action plan to implement the recommendations arising from the recent external review of the councils risk management arrangements .
3.4	The Panel was briefed on the updated version of the 2018 CIPFA publication on “Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police” issued in October 2022, which represents best practice and includes suggested terms of reference for audit committees in local authorities. The Panel agreed an updated terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel in line with the best practice guidance , tailored, where appropriate to Belfast City Council. The updates do not represent any change to the usual work of the Panel, rather the updates set out in more detail the work that the Panel currently undertakes.
3.5	The Panel was provided with a progress update on the agreed actions to be taken in relation to the recommendations contained within the report from Peter Coll QC of his independent investigation relating to events at Roselawn Cemetery on 30th June 2020.

	Subject to approval from Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Panel agreed that they did not require any further updates because the remaining four actions are either ongoing or due to be completed in Spring 2023.
3.6	The Panel also received quarter three reports on Corporate Health and Safety, Absence Management and Performance improvement . The Panel requested that the Corporate Health and Safety Manager reminds departments of the importance of the timely implementation of the actions arising from inspections. <u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u>
3.7	The NIAO Director and Local Government Auditor presented the Panel with a briefing on the changes to audit approach for the 2022-23 audit cycle due to significant changes to International Standards on Auditing (UK) and how this is likely to result in a greater number of inquiries at the planning stages of the audit. The NIAO Director and Local Government Auditor also drew the Panels attention to the Planning Fraud Risks Guide that had been launched recently by the NIAO. The Panel learned that the Director of Planning and Building Control will be updating the Planning Committee on this publication. <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.8	None
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.9	None known at this time.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix A - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 7 th March 2023 Appendix B - Updated Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Panel

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Audit and Risk Panel

Tuesday, 7th March, 2023

MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND RISK PANEL

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);
Councillors Carson, Matt Collins, Hutchinson and M.
Kelly; and
Ms. G. Fahy (Independent Non-Executive Member).

In attendance: Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal
and Civic Services;
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services;
Mr. L. Mulholland, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager;
Mr. M. Whitmore, Audit, Governance and Risk
Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Also attended: Ms. C. Kane, Director, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Groogan and McKeown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th December were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Absence Rates - Quarter ending December 2022

(Ms. C. Sheridan, Head of Human Resources, attended in
connection with this item.)

The Audit Panel considered the following report:

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 7th March, 2023**

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Audit & Risk Panel of the Council’s performance in managing absence in quarter three, April – December 2022.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Audit & Risk Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.**

3.0 Main report

Key corporate indicators:

At the end of quarter three:

- **The Council’s average sickness absence rate stands at 12.76 days per FTE, an increase of 1.08 days compared to absence for the same period last year (11.68).**
- **A total of 25980.97 working days was lost due to sickness absence. This accounted for 7.56% of the total working days available.**
- **The table below provides a summary of how departments are performing against the target. As indicated below, 4 departments did not meet the corporate target for quarter three (9.74 days).**

End of Year Target	12.99					
End of Q3 Target	9.74					
Department	Number of Staff (FTE)	Total lost days	Actual absence per FTE	Variance	% of workforce	% of absence
City and Neighbourhood Services	1141.12	16333.14	14.31	4.57	56.06%	62.87%
City and Organisational Strategy	121.42	693.71	5.71	-4.03	5.97%	2.67%
Finance and Resources	187.44	1088.35	5.81	-3.93	9.21%	4.19%
Legal and Civic Services	149.44	2351.7	15.74	6.00	7.34%	9.05%
Physical Programmes	122.55	1955.1	15.95	6.21	6.02%	7.53%
Place and Economy	313.56	3558.97	11.35	1.61	15.40%	13.70%
Totals	2035.53	25980.97	12.76	3.02		

Additional Absence information:

- There has been a decrease in the number of staff with no recorded absence in this period (45.01%) compared to the same time last year (46.87%).
- There has been an increase of 2.62% in absence classified as long term (20+ days) this year (17613.50 days) compared to the same time last year (17163.31 days).
- Council's average sickness absence rate further reduces to 11.18 days per FTE when COVID-19 related absences are deducted.
- The number of days lost per full time equivalent increased in quarter three (4.62 days) when compared to quarter two (4.26 days). This increase is illustrated in figure 1.
- Depression/anxiety/stress (36% of total days lost) and musculo-skeletal (23% of total days lost) continue to be the top two reasons for absence. Refer to figure 2 for further information.
- Between October and December 2022, 757 employees were off due to sickness absence (accounting for 9528.19 days). Discretion was applied to 90 of these employees (11.8%) and their absence accounted for 2532.23 days/26.58% of the total absence for quarter three. Refer to figure 3 for further information.
- A total of 306 cases were identified as having compliance related issues Refer to figure 4 for further information.
- Approximately 33% of absence (8535.31 days) is recorded as disability related, of which, 62% was managed as long term. Depression and Anxiety related absence accounted for almost 40% (39.82%) of disability related absence. Refer to figure 5 for further information.
- Since April 2022, a total of 484 employees were recorded as absent due to COVID and this accounted for 3213.75 days / 12.4% of the total absence in quarter three.
 - 24 employees met the trigger for a Stage 4 / FAH in quarter three.
 - Discretion not to proceed to a stage 4 / FAH was applied to 12 of these cases. The reasons for discretion include, 2 employees returned to work between month 6 and 7, one employee was medically redeployed, one employee required additional information,

one employee's case was bereavement related, 2 cases did not proceed due to disability related absence and five cases were not progressed due to employee related issues.

- 8 employees were ill health retired prior to Stage4/FAH being scheduled.
- 2 employees were dismissed at Stage 4 / FAH.
- 1 employee attended a Stage 4 / FAH however, they were provided with a final opportunity to meet the standards of attendance (disability related reasons)
- 1 case did not proceed to Stage 4 / FAH due to non-compliance reasons (delay organising case review subsequent Stage 4 hearing).
- All guidance documents and templates to assist departments with the development of Attendance Improvement Plans and DMT reporting has now been finalised and issued to departments in January 2023. A progress update will be provided at the end of quarter 4.

4.0 Resource Implications

Directors are asked to ensure that:

- Attendance management continues to be a priority item on DMT agendas and related matters discussed and appropriate actions taken forward.
- Resources are in place to ensure that adequate monitoring and review is in place at department level.

5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 5.1** Approximately 33% of absence (8535.31 days) is recorded as disability related.

The use of discretion and reasonable adjustments is considered in such cases.

Figure 1:

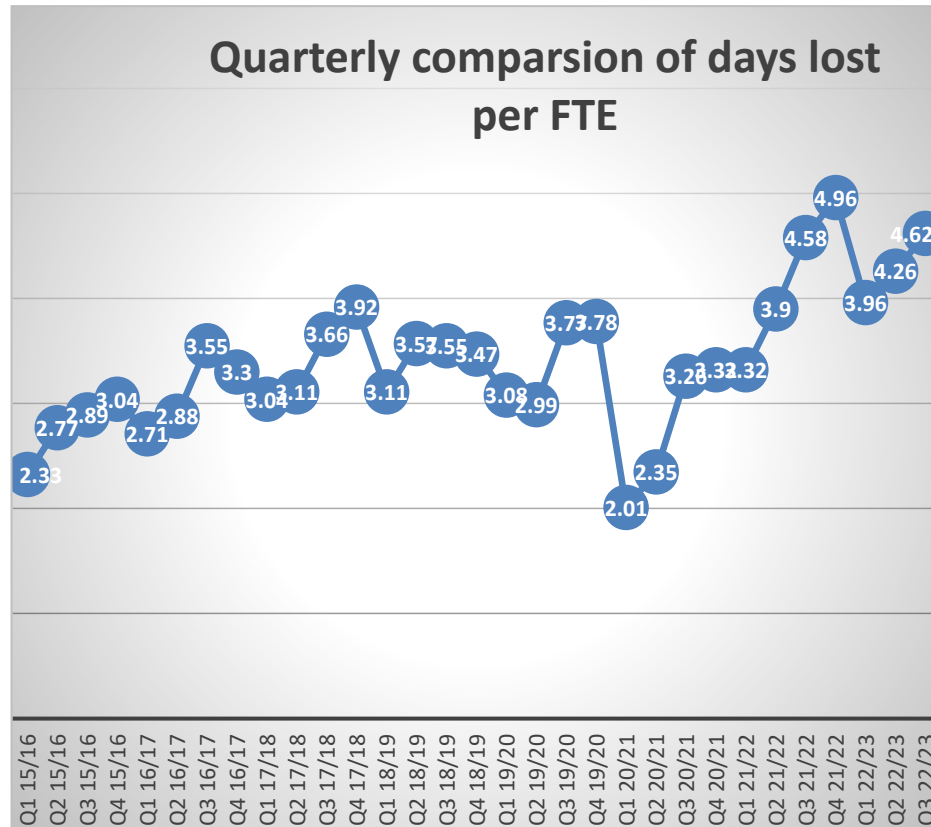


Figure 2:

Reason for absence	Days lost (FTE)	% of absence
Stress, depression, anxiety	9411.01	36.22%
Musculo-skeletal	6025.95	23.19%
Infections, Covid19	3213.75	12.37%
Stomach, digestive, etc	1712.33	6.59%
Infections, inc colds & flu	1516.44	5.84%
Chest and respiratory	990.15	3.81%
Heart, blood press, circ, etc	773.6	2.98%
Neurological, inc headaches	736.64	2.84%
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental	606.93	2.34%
Other	491.46	1.89%
Genito-urinary, inc menstrual	385.69	1.48%
Pregnancy related	102.02	0.39%
Indust/Neurological (head)	8.99	0.03%
Indust/Other	6.01	0.02%
Total	25980.97	

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 7th March, 2023**

Figure 3:

Reason for discretion	Total days	% of total
Underlying Medical Condition	545.88	21.56%
Planned surgery	382.7	15.11%
Hospitalisation	301.4	11.90%
Bereavement	254.17	10.04%
Mental Health	228.86	9.04%
Unresolved ER issues	227.22	8.97%
Industrial injury	176.36	6.96%
Emergency domestic responsibilities	160.09	6.32%
Work related issue	77.49	3.06%
Terminal illness	61.89	2.44%
Undertaking redeployment exercise	40	1.58%
Unresolved ER issue	26.49	1.05%
Violence at work	13.99	0.55%
Previous long service and good attendance history	12	0.47%
Infectious disease	11.75	0.46%
Maternity	11.5	0.45%
Covid Vaccine Reaction	0.44	0.02%
Total	2532.23	
Total days lost in quarter three (October to December 2022)	9528.19	
% of total days lost where discretion applied in quarter three	26.58%	
Average days off per occurrence of discretion in quarter three	28.13589	

Figure 4: Compliance issues

Department	Totals
City and Neighbourhood Services	250
City and Organisational Strategy	0
Finance and Resources	1
Legal and Civic Services	25
Physical Programmes	19
Place and Economy	11
Grand Total	306

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 7th March, 2023**

Figure 5:

Actual disability	Total days	% of total disability related absence
Depression / Anxiety	3398.56	39.82%
Osteoarthritis	567.06	6.64%
Cancer	542.29	6.35%
Chronic back pain	525.15	6.15%
Stroke	315.89	3.70%
Long Covid	249.63	2.92%
Epilepsy	232.51	2.72%
Arthritis	202.46	2.37%
Chronic hearing condition	190.19	2.23%
PTSD	149.26	1.75%
Chronic hip condition	147.97	1.73%
Chronic knee pain	118.3	1.39%
Chronic ear condition	117.97	1.38%
Ulcerative Colitis	117.97	1.38%
Chronic heart condition	112.54	1.32%
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome	101.29	1.19%
Anaemia	98.99	1.16%
Heart failure	97.97	1.15%
Osteoarthritis	94.46	1.11%
Crohn's disease	91.68	1.07%
Vertebral collapse	87.27	1.02%
Other	975.9	11.43%
Grand Total	8535.31	
Total absence end of quarter three	25980.97	
Disability related absence in quarter three	8535.31	
% if absence lost due to disability	32.85%	
% of disability related absence managed as LTA	61.63%	

*Other includes a total of 27 conditions that each individually account for less than 1% of total disability related absence.

After discussion, the Panel noted the contents of the report.

**Audit and Risk Panel,
Tuesday, 7th March, 2023**

**Update on Corporate Health and Safety
Performance**

(Ms. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Panel was reminded that it was responsible for overseeing the Council's risk, control and governance arrangements for health and safety. In undertaking this function, the Panel provided independent scrutiny of the Council's health and safety performance, with reports being presented to it on a quarterly basis.

Accordingly, the Health and Safety Manager submitted for the Panel's consideration a report on corporate health and safety performance and activities for the quarter ending on 31st December, 2022.

She provided, on a Departmental basis, information on the implementation of actions associated with the key performance indicators of health and safety and fire safety and pointed out that, at a corporate level, compliance rates had been 50% and 79% respectively.

In terms of accident/incident reporting, there had, in quarter one, been 19 employee accidents, 4 non-employee accidents, 9 RIDDOR accidents and 9 work related violence incidents.

She concluded by providing details of the information which had, during quarter three, been forwarded to the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland in response to enquiries/correspondence.

After discussion, during which the Corporate Health and Safety Manager undertook to relay concerns raised regarding the high levels of actions which were partially implemented/not implemented to the relevant directors, the Panel noted the corporate health and safety performance and activities for the quarter ending on 31st December, 2022.

**Audit, Governance and Risk Services
Progress Report**

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager submitted for the Panel's consideration a report providing an update on the work which had been completed by Audit, Governance and Risk Services from December, 2022 till February, 2023.

He explained that nine audits had been completed during that period and he provided an overview of the audits and the assurance opinion of the Service on each. In particular, he highlighted the audit of Continuous improvement and how

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management expect an action plan to be in place by June to address the issues which had been identified.

He provided details also on the assurance and advisory work on key corporate systems and programmes, the work currently in progress, an update on investigations/fraud risk awareness and the National Fraud Initiative.

In conclusion, he advised the Panel that a request had been received from the Interim City Solicitor for a deferral of the planned Audit of the Standards and Business Committee as it would overlap with the mini governance review which was being undertaken within Legal and Civic Services.

Following a query from Ms Fahy the Head of AGRS indicated that the review of the councils risk management strategy and risk appetite statement would consider how the risk appetite statement should be updated to take account of occasions where the council is accepting a higher level of risk for certain types of corporate risks e.g. Digital Information Security.

After discussion, during which officers answered a number of questions in relation to the audits on Digital Information Security and Visit Belfast, the Panel the noted the progress report for December, 2022 till February, 2023 and approved the management request to defer the internal audit of the Standards and Business Committee.

**Draft Internal Audit
Plan for 2023/24**

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager submitted for the Panel's approval the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24. The Plan set out the role of Audit, Governance and Risk Services as an assurance provider and advisory service which directly assisted the Council in meeting relevant statutory obligations in relation to internal control, risk management and good governance.

The detailed Plan listed the areas which Audit, Governance and Risk Services was planning to audit during 2023/24 and was based on an assessment of audit need, taking into account of a number of risk factors, with the aim being to audit key areas on a cyclical basis. The Plan had been discussed with each Department at quarterly risk and audit meetings.

In addition to specific assignments, it also provided for support to the Council in terms of advisory work, project assurance, fraud prevention, detection and investigation, including a continued focus on the corporate fraud risk assessment and participation in the National Fraud Initiative, as well as raising concerns, risk management, business continuity management and corporate governance.

The Plan would be achievable if Audit, Governance and Risk Services were to retain its full complement of staff during the year. However, should unforeseeable demands on resources arise during the year, it would prioritise the completion of

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high priority assignments. Any requests for deferrals made during the year would be brought to the Audit Assurance Board and the Audit and Risk Panel for consideration.

After discussion, the Panel approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24.

**Corporate Risk Management report
Quarter Ending December 2022**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services submitted for the Panel's consideration the Corporate Risk Dashboard which summarised the key updates from the risk review for the quarter-ending December, 2022.

The report updated the Panel also on compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements, which had been completed by senior management, the Action Plan to implement the recommendations from the external review of Risk Management arrangements in the Council and an update on business continuity management arrangements.

The Panel:

- a) Noted the corporate risk management dashboard and update for quarter-end December 2022, including agreement of a new corporate risk around statutory service failure;
- b) noted the assurances from senior management regarding compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for quarter-end December 2022;
- c) approved the action plan arising from the external review of Risk Management (as set out in Appendix 2 to the report); and
- d) noted the current position regarding review and update of business continuity plans for the critical services.

Assurance Map

The Panel was reminded that, at its meeting in September, 2021, it had considered a paper highlighting the benefits of assurance mapping, and had approved AGRS to undertake a piece of work on the development of an assurance map for Belfast City Council.

The Audit, Governance and Risk Services Manager advised the Panel that assurance work provided the Council with the confidence that what needed to be done, both operationally and strategically, was being done to manage the risks which might impact on the achievement of the Council's objectives / priorities.

There were a range of ways in which management could obtain and/or provide assurance to Members, known as sources of assurance. The various

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sources form the Council's Assurance Framework as set out in appendix 1 to the report. The Three Lines model would allow AGRS to collate these various sources of assurance into an Assurance Map, which demonstrates whether the assurance is provided via:

- **Operations / management** (*the first line*) - Identifying risks & improvement actions, implementing controls. Reporting on progress. Management assurance.
- **Corporate Oversight** (*the second line*) - Designing policies. Setting direction. Ensuring compliance. Monitoring progress. Assurance oversight.
- **Independent Assurance** (*the third line*) - Independent challenge, audit. Reporting on assurance. Can be internally or externally provided.

AGRS have worked alongside senior management, who have assessed the assurance arrangements in place over the following six core financial systems:

- Accounts Payable
- Payroll
- Treasury Management
- Procurement
- Accounts Receivable
- Capital programme

This had involved not only mapping the sources of assurance across each of the three lines, but also management's assessment of the quality of the assurance being provided as follows:

- **High assurance**
- **Moderate assurance**
- **Low assurance**
- **No assurance**
- **Not applicable**

This allowed management to identify any perceived gaps as well as actions for improvement arising specifically from this exercise for five of the financial systems (the results of the Assurance Mapping exercise for Capital Programme are not included as the exercise is a work in progress and has not yet been agreed with management). There might be existing actions from improvement arising from recent audits of these areas, but only actions arising specifically from the Assurance Mapping exercise had been included.

He explained that sources of assurance were routinely considered as part of the embedded quarterly Corporate Risk Management update process. As part of the process, management consider the sources of assurance listed on the Risk Action Plan for each of the 23 corporate risks, assess their ongoing adequacy and relevance and, where appropriate, create risk actions to develop and embed new sources of assurance where required.

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In developing the draft internal audit plan and strategy for 2023/24, AGRS have considered the work of other internal and external assurance and consulting service providers to ensure proper coverage and up to date assurance was available, and where relevant to minimise duplication of efforts.

The Panel noted the update on assurance mapping.

**Update on the Coll Report
Recommendations**

The Panel considered a report which provided an update of the agreed actions arising from the recommendations contained within Section 6 of Mr. Peter McColl QC's independent investigation into events at Roselawn Cemetery on 30th June, 2020.

The Interim City Solicitor advised that there was a total of 6 recommendations within the Report, which resulted in 18 actions. Good progress has been made in complying with those recommendations and there were only 4 remaining actions.

The Panel agreed to the proposal that the remaining outstanding actions may be closed, subject to the views of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Two of the actions (the facilitated leadership training and the development of an Organisational Crisis Response Protocol) have a target completion date of March 2023. One action relating to training on Managing in a Political Environment had a target completion date of Spring 2023 and thereafter on an ongoing basis and the remaining action relating to strategic workforce planning of Community and Neighbourhood Services was ongoing.

Noted.

**Performance Improvement Update Report
for Quarter 3**

(Mr. G. Dickson, Strategic Policy Lead Officer, attended in
connection with this item.)

The Panel considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This purpose of this report is to present the Quarter 3 status update on progress made against the improvement objectives and activities contained within our 2022-23 Improvement Plan (Appendix 1).**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Audit & Risk Panel is asked to note the Q3 status update on the 22-23 Improvement objectives.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act requires Councils to agree improvement objectives on an annual basis and publish these in the form of an Improvement Plan. BCC's Improvement Plan 2022-23 was agreed by Council in June 2022 and contained a strong commitment to securing continuous improvement through the delivery of 5 Improvement Objectives.**
- 3.2 The Act also requires that progress against the improvement objectives be monitored and reported in an annual assessment of performance. For this we produced a 2021-22 year-end performance assessment report which was submitted and agreed by the Audit and Risk Panel in September 2022. This assessment report was then published [online](#) ahead of the September 30th as required by legislation.**

BCC Improvement Plan 2022 / 23

- 3.3 SP&R Committee in June 2022 considered and agreed the Improvement Plan for 2022/23 period. The Improvement plan does not include everything that council plans to do that year, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. The Improvement Plan for 2022/23 includes five improvement objectives as set out below;**

Our services
1. We will continue to adapt and improve our services
Our communities
2. We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
Our economy

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3. We will work collaboratively to support businesses, jobs and inclusive growth
Our environment
4. We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
Our city
5. We will continue to support our city to recover and innovate in a safe, inclusive and sustainable way

- 3.4 The 2022/23 Improvement Plan was subsequently published on the council website by 30th June in order to meet the statutory deadline.**
- 3.5 Attached at appendix 1 is the quarter 3 report on progress made against activities contributing to the Improvement Objectives contained within our 2022-23 Improvement Plan. It sets out the key milestones and provides a summary of activity under each objective. The report also includes the most up to date position in relation to the performance indicators included within the plan.**
- 3.6 Progress against all the objectives is in the most part on target with only a few milestones that have been slightly delayed, ragged amber or red, with the explanations for the delays contained within the report. A further report on progress will be presented to the panel at the year end.**
- 3.7 The Panel should note that the Guidance accompanying the legislation advises that the lessons emerging from our performance improvement assessments and report should be used to:**
- Help inform the content of our next Corporate Improvement Plan (due 30th June**
 - 2023) in terms both of ongoing activity and other actions that may address any**
 - shortfalls in the current Plan and;**
 - Form the basis of our next *Year-End Performance Assessment Report* which must be made available to the Local Government Auditor by 30th September 2023.**

Financial and Resource Implications

3.8 None associated with this report.

Equality and Good Relations/Rural Need Implications

3.9 None associated with this report.”

The Panel noted the update on the 2022-23 Improvement objectives.

**NIAO Briefing - Changes to Audit Approach
for the 2022/23 Audit Cycle**

The Panel noted a report which provided details of the changes to the audit approach for the 2022-23 audit cycle which would be undertaken by the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

The NIAO Director / Local Government Auditor also drew the Panels attention to the Planning Fraud Risk Guide which had been issued recently. The Director of Finance indicated that the Guide has been received and that the Director of Planning and Building Control had indicated that she will update the Planning Committee on the Guide.

Audit and Risk Panel – Governance

The Panel considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel, Audit Assurance Board and Audit, Governance and Risk Services are reviewed and updated annually. The purpose of this paper is to present the Audit and Risk Panel with these updated terms of reference for review and approval, along with the 2023 programme of business.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Audit and Risk Panel approves the:

- **Audit and Risk Panel’s purpose and terms of reference statement (Appendix A)**
- **Audit Assurance Boards constitution and terms of reference (Appendix B)**
- **Audit Governance and Risk Services terms of reference (Appendix C)**

- Audit and Risk Panel's indicative programme of business for 2023 (Appendix D).

3.0 Main report

- 3.1** In line with good practice, the terms of reference for the Audit & Risk Panel and the Audit Assurance Board are reviewed on an annual basis.

Audit & Risk Panel Terms of Reference

- 3.2** An updated version of the 2018 CIPFA publication on 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police' and CIPFA 'Audit Committees Position Statement' was issued in October 2022, setting out guidance on the function and operation of audit committees and represents best practice. The updated guidance includes suggested terms of reference for audit committees in local authorities. The terms of reference of the Panel are important because they set out the role of the Panel in the context of the Council's governance structures. We have reviewed and updated the terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel in line with the updated guidance, tailored, where appropriate to Belfast City Council. The main changes are that the terms of reference have been broadened to include:

Financial and governance reporting

- To consider reports on the effectiveness of financial management arrangements, including compliance with *CIPFA's Financial Management Code*.
- To monitor the arrangements and preparations for financial reporting to ensure that statutory requirements and professional standards can be met.

Internal audit

- To consider any impairments to the independence or objectivity of the head of internal audit arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing and to approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
- To provide free and unfettered access to the audit and risk panel chair for the head of internal audit,

including the opportunity for a private meeting with the panel.

External audit

- To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence
- To provide free and unfettered access to the audit and risk panel chair for the auditors, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the panel.

Accountability arrangements

- To publish an annual report on the work of the panel, including a conclusion on the compliance with the *CIPFA Position Statement*.

- 3.3 AGRS will support the Panel in being able to meet these new requirements. The terms of reference, with tracked changes, are set out at appendix A for information. The proposed changes do not represent a change from the usual work of the Panel, but rather to ensure that they accurately reflect this work and are in line with best practice issued by CIPFA.

Audit Assurance Board Terms of Reference

- 3.4 The Audit Assurance Board is chaired by the Chief Executive. The principal activity of the Audit Assurance Board over the years has been to review and consider reports from internal audit, external audit and management that are to be submitted to the Audit & Risk Panel - but from a top management / Accounting Officer perspective rather than a Member perspective. This process enables the Chief Executive and the Board to be assured (or otherwise) of current risk, control and governance arrangements and consider any issues that require management priority /attention / direction.
- 3.5 We have reviewed the terms of reference and have updated them in line with the updates made to the terms of reference for the Audit and Risk Panel (as set out at para. 3.2). We have also updated the membership of the Board taking account of the new structure of the Corporate Management Tier. The terms of reference are at appendix B.

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Tuesday, 7th March, 2023**

Audit, Governance and Risk Services Terms of Reference

- 3.6 As AGRS has a role in supporting the implementation of the Risk Management, Business Continuity Management, Fraud and Bribery and Raising Concerns policies, and in line with a recommendation from the external quality assessment of AGRS, our terms of reference have now been updated to outline the safeguards that are in place to help preserve our independent and objectivity. The terms of reference are at appendix C.

Audit & Risk Panel – Programme of Business 2023

- 3.7 In line with good practice the quarterly meetings of the Panel have been aligned with an indicative programme of business, designed to ensure that the Panel demonstrably addressed / discharges its roles and responsibilities as set out in its purpose statement / terms of reference. The indicative programme of business is attached at Appendix D.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.0 None.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 5.0 None known at this time.”

The Panel adopted the recommendations.

Date of Next Meeting

The Panel noted that the date of the next meeting of the Panel would be scheduled following the Local Government Elections in May.

Chairperson

Belfast City Council

Audit and Risk Panel

Statement of Purpose and Terms of Reference

Statement of Purpose

1. The Audit and Risk Panel is a key component of Belfast City Council's corporate governance arrangements. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
2. The purpose of the Audit and Risk Panel is to provide independent assurance to those charged with governance (Members and senior management) on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of the council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It will provide an independent scrutiny of the council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it exposes the council to risk and weakens the control environment. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

Governance, Risk and Control

3. To review the council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework and consider the local code of governance.
4. To consider the effectiveness of the Standards and Business Committee (established October 2021) as part of the annual governance review.
5. To consider the council's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.
6. To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.
7. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the council, to include overseeing the council's risk, control and governance arrangements for health and safety.
8. To approve the council's risk management strategy and monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the Panel, including the corporate risk register and assurance information on the management of key corporate risks.
9. To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.
10. To consider reports on the effectiveness of financial management arrangements, including compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code.

11. To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the council from fraud and corruption.
12. To approve the council's fraud and whistleblowing (raising concerns) policies and monitor the implementation of these policies, including the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.
13. To oversee and monitor the Council's structures, processes, systems and related arrangements for performance management and to assure itself through receipt of regular reports on the planning, delivery, reporting and reviewing arrangements that appropriate plans and policies to support the performance management framework are in place and that its statutory responsibilities are being met.
14. To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

Financial and Governance Reporting

Governance Reporting

15. To review the Annual Governance Statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, including the head of internal audit's annual opinion .
16. To consider whether the annual evaluation for the Annual Governance Statement fairly concludes that governance arrangements are fit for purpose, supporting the achievement of the authority's objectives.

Financial Reporting

17. To monitor the arrangements and preparations for financial reporting to ensure that statutory requirements and professional standards can be met.
18. To review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council.
19. To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts

Arrangements for audit and assurance

20. To consider the council's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the council.

External audit

21. To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence

22. To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.
23. To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.
24. To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
25. To advise and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.
26. To consider the external auditor's report on performance management, specifically the annual improvement assessment and to consider the adequacy of management responses / action taken to address issues arising from these reports.
27. To provide free and unfettered access to the Audit and Risk Panel Chair for the auditors, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the Panel.

Internal audit

28. To approve the internal audit charter.
29. To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.
30. To approve the risk-based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.
31. To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.
32. To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.
33. To consider any impairments to the independence or objectivity of the head of internal audit arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing and to approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.
34. To consider reports from the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services on internal audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:
 - a) Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and action in hand as a result of internal audit work.
 - b) Regular reports on the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.
 - c) Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note, considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the Annual Governance Statement.

35. To consider the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services' annual report:

a) The statement of the level of conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and Local Government Application Note and the results of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme that supports the statement – these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.

b) The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion – these will assist the Panel in reviewing the Annual Governance Statement.

36. To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.

37. To receive reports outlining the action taken where the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.

38. To contribute to the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme, both to the internal quality assessment of internal audit and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.

39. To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the Annual Governance Statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

40. To provide free and unfettered access to the Audit and Risk Panel Chair for the Head of AGRS, including the opportunity for a private meeting with the Panel.

Accountability arrangements

41. To report to those charged with governance (Members and senior management) on the Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions. The Panel will do this by reporting to the council's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on a regular basis through reports and minutes of meetings. It may also report, with the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, to other standing committees on matters that are of direct relevance to the responsibilities of these committees.

42. To report to full Council (through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) on a regular basis on the Panel's performance in relation to the terms of reference and the effectiveness of the Panel in meeting its purpose.

43. To publish an annual report on the work of the Panel, including a conclusion on the compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement.

44. The Audit and Risk Panel shall consider any issue referred to it in relation to these terms of reference by the Council or any Standing Committee. Furthermore, the Audit and Risk Panel shall also consider any matter brought to its attention by the Chief Executive. Where any individual Member wishes to raise an issue under these terms of reference, the Member shall accordingly either raise the matter through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee or in the case of urgency with the Chief Executive.



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Social Value Procurement Policy Delivery Report
Date:	24 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee following consideration by the Social Value Policy Working Group at their meeting in February on the delivery of social value outcomes via open tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'
1.2	The report also provides an update on tenders awarded by Physical Programmes where, due to project funding rules, social value has been considered and included in accordance with the CPD Buy Social Model.
1.3	It is intended that this report will be provided every 2 months in line with Social Value Working Group meetings. This report covers the reporting period 1 st December 2022 to 31 st January 2023.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the update provided in the report
3.0	Main Report/Background
	Background
3.1	The SVPP was approved by Committee in April 23 with a 'Go Live' date of 1st June 2022.
3.2	SVPP applied to any new applicable open tender exercises with approval dated from 1st June 22.
3.3	To help Officers understanding the SVPP and how to apply this to applicable tender competitions, the Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS' team has developed a step-by-step guidance document which takes Officers through key considerations in line with the SVPP. This guidance was developed and communicated to Officers ahead of the 'Go Live' date in June 22.
3.4	As outlined in the guidance to Officers application of the SVPP is considered in 2 key parts:
3.5	<p>Part 1 – For all tender competitions valued over £30k, consideration by Officers about whether to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reserve the tender competition to a social enterprise/ VCSE sector taking into consideration levels of market competition in this sector 2. Include organisational behaviours (i.e., ethical procurement, environmental and HR policies and procedures) taking into consideration relevance of these policies and procedures to the goods, services or works being purchased and relevance to the market. When selected for inclusion in the tender these social value organisational behaviours are mandatory pass/fail questions for suppliers to demonstrate rather than scored questions.
3.6	Part 2 – the inclusion of a social value weighting (10% or 15%) and scoring for tenders valued over £250k.
3.7	The social value offer made by suppliers using the list of social value initiatives and points is then evaluated and scored with a minimum scoring threshold required to be met.
3.8	<p>Note from April 23 for all tender competitions valued over £30k the following be included (in addition to the above in Part 1):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Payment of the Real Living Wage by suppliers to their employees

	<p>2. The prohibited use of zero hours contracts by suppliers</p> <p>3. The inclusion of a social value weighting (10% or 15%) and scoring</p> <p><u>CPD Buy Social Model</u></p>
3.9	The CPD Buy Social Model is applied where external central government funding of 50% or greater is provided for a capital/ works project managed by Physical Programmes.
	<p>Main Report</p> <p>3.10 Appendix 1 of this report set out details of tenders valued over £30k which have been awarded during the Reporting Period and associated SVPP data/information</p> <p>3.11 Appendix 1 includes:</p> <p><u>Table 1 - Tenders awarded during Reporting Period</u></p> <p>3.12 This sets out details of tenders awarded during Reporting Period and whether SVPP was applied or not.</p> <p>3.13 For ease of reporting this shows tenders awarded by Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS' team and the Physical Programmes department.</p> <p><u>Table 2 – Summary of key data and findings associated with application of SVPP</u></p> <p>3.14 This shows a summary of key findings from the tenders set out in Table 1; in particular a summary of the Part 1 SVPP considerations i.e. reserved contracts and social value organisational behaviours.</p> <p><u>Table 3 - Summary of Supplier's Social Value Offers (Scored submissions)</u></p> <p>3.15 This shows a summary of the tenders that included a social value weighting (10/ 15%) and the social value offers put forward by suppliers for evaluation as explained under Part 2.</p> <p>3.16 A summary of each applicable tender has been set out in a table.</p>

	<u>Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement</u>
3.17	<p>A Social Value Review Team has been established to review how the SVPP is being implemented and any lessons learned that need to be applied following conclusion of tender competitions. Areas the team are currently reviewing include, but not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trends in the use of Reserved Contracts and any further guidance required for Officers on when these should be used 2. Trends in the selection of Social Value Organisational Behaviours by Officers when using the Social Value Toolkit and any further guidance required for Officers on when these should be applied 3. The quality of social value offers by suppliers (the scored submissions) and if further guidance is required in terms of how these are evaluated by Officers. In addition any further guidance required for suppliers to improve their understanding BCC expectations in line with Belfast Agenda aims and associated strategies. 4. Updated changes to templates and guidance ahead of the upcoming changes in April 23 i.e. Social value weighting for all tenders and Real Living Wage and Zero Hours Contracts provisions.
3.18	The Social Value Review Team will meet every 2 months in line with scheduled SPWG meetings and the production of this report.
3.19	The content/ format of this report will be reviewed with further information included as more social value data becomes available i.e. social value delivery by suppliers using SIB reporting database.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.20	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.21	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table 1 - Tenders awarded during Reporting Period • Table 2 – Summary of key data and findings associated with application of SV Table 3 - Summary of Supplier’s Social Value Offers (Scored submissions)

Table 1: Tenders awarded during Reporting Period

Table 1a: Tenders awarded by Commercial and Procurement Services Team 'CPS'

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
T2150c	Delivery of Business Service Employment Academies (under ES DPS T2150)	Services	£900,000.00	GEMS NI Ltd*	Yes	N/A	No	15%
T2355	Independent evaluation of the PCSP programme of work from 2022 - 2025	Services	£75,000.00	Copius Consulting	Yes	N/A	No	NA
T2333	Provision of Curation, Co-ordination and Delivery of Belfast Imagining 2024 – Creative Commissions	Services	£125,000.00	Household CIC*	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
T2214	Enterprise and Business Growth FW Lot 2 Grow a Business	Services	£2,000,000.00	Full Circle	Yes	N/A	No	15%
T2214	Enterprise and Business Growth FW Lot 3 Social Economy	Services	£2,000,000.00	Work West*	Yes	N/A	No	15%
T2352	Appointment of a contractor to develop and deliver a number of sector specific projects supported by the Council under the Output Belfast brand	Services	£48,000.00	Score Draw Music	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
T2374	Regeneration Framework	Services	£200,000.00	Avison Young UK	No	External Framework Used	No	N/A
T2335	Procurement of a Local Area Energy Plan for Belfast and Queens Island (STA)	Services	£180,000.00	Energy Systems Catapult	No	STA	No	N/A
T2341	Supply and Delivery of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil bulk fuel (HVO)	Supplies	£6,000,000.00	Nicholl Oils	No	External Framework Used	No	N/A

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T2362	SAP Annual licence support (STA)	Services	£53,000.00	SAP (UK) Ltd	No	STA	No	N/A
T2250	Delivery of the Gateway to Choices Service	Services	£2,000,000.00	GEMS NI Ltd*	Yes	N/A	No	15%
T2354	Provision of reusable period products scheme	Supplies	£150,000.00	Hey Girls CIC*	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
T2197	Supply, Delivery and Servicing of Tractors	Supplies	£147,645.70	Laird Grass Machinery Ltd	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
T2299	Manufacture supply and delivery of waste compactors	Supplies	£161,298.00	Gradeall International Ltd	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
T2350	Provision of Masternaut - Fleet GPS tracking/telematics (STA)	Services	£6,000.00	Masternuat Ltd	No	STA	No	N/A
T2386	Delivery of St Patricks Day 2023 commission as part of St Patricks Day Belfast Creative Development Award	Services	£100,000.00	Beat Trading Ltd*	No	Pre-dates SVPP implementation (Previous awarded Design Contest)	No	NA
T2150c	Delivery of St Patricks Day 2023 commission as part of St Patricks Day Belfast Creative Development Award	Services	£50,000.00	Féile an Phobail	No	Pre-dates SVPP implementation (Previous awarded Design Contest)	No	N/A
T2355	Delivery of St Patricks Day 2023 commission as part of St Patricks Day Belfast Creative Development Award	Services	£800,000.00	The Duncairn	No	Pre-dates SVPP implementation (Previous awarded Design Contest)	No	N/A

Table 1b: Tenders awarded by Physical Programmes

Ref	Contract Title	Contract Type	Value	Successful Supplier	SVPP applied (Y/N)	If No - Reason why?	Reserved Contract (Y/N)	Social Value Weighting % applied
ITT 36634	New Build Community Hub/Clubhouse at 341 Ravenhill Road, Belfast for Bredagh GAC	Services	£700,000.00	Hugh J O'Boyle	No	Pre-dates SVPP implementation	No	N/A
ITT 36571	Willowbank 3G Pitch Replacement	Services	£175,000.00	McAvoy Construction LLP	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
ITT 36820	City Centre - The 5C's 2D & 3D Treatments - Artworks	Services	£70,000.00	Daisy Chain	No	External funding– below CPD Buy Social threshold	No	N/A
ITT 36705	UV_Pitt Park FC - Main Contractor	Services	£900,000.00	CivCo Ltd	No	External funding– below CPD Buy Social threshold	No	N/A
ITT 36815	Paisley Park 3G Pitch Replacement	Services	£900,000.00	Tony Patterson Sportsgrounds	No	External funding– below CPD Buy Social threshold	No	N/A
ITT 36874	Replacement of metal railings at Victoria Park	Services	£128,000.00	NK Fencing	No	Pre-dates SVPP implementation	No	N/A
ITT 36880	Cherryvale GAA Fencing & Ancillary Works	Services	£90,000.00	Haffey Sportsgrounds Ltd	Yes	N/A	No	N/A
ITT 36881	Upgrade of Plant Room at Whiterock LC	Services	£75,000.00	WJM Building Services	No	Unknown	No	N/A

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ITT 36901	Replacement Roof covering at 3 Zoo Buildings	Services	£120,000.00	JPM Contracts Ltd	No	Pre-dates SVPP implementation	No	N/A
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Table 2: Summary of key findings/ data

Key area/ criteria	Summary/ Key Findings
Total number of tenders awarded during Reporting Period	27 tenders awarded
Total number of tenders awarded where SVPP was applied	10 out of 27 tenders 6 out of 27 <£250k so Part 1 considerations only i.e. Reserved Contracts and social value organisational behaviours 4 out of 27 >£250k so Part 1 considerations plus social value weighting and scoring
Summary of reasons why SVPP was not applied	6 out of 27 – Tender process was started before SVPP implementation in June 22 3 out of 27 – STAs/ Direct Awards 2 out of 27 – an external framework was used to award contract therefore restricted to framework evaluation criteria 1 out of 27 – externally funded project therefore CPD Buy Social policy applies but are below threshold to include social value 5 out of 27 'Unknown' – Dept have not provided a reason as to why SVPP was not applied.
Total number of tenders awarded where CPD Buy Social was applied	None
Number of Reserved Contracts	None. Note – according to available records 6 tenders were awarded to social enterprises, although not reserved. These suppliers are indicated with a '*' Social Value Review Team to consider if any further guidance is required about when/ what tenders should be reserved to social enterprises.
Social value organisational behaviours selected for inclusion in tenders.	Ethical Procurement Policies - included in 4 out of 10 tenders Environmental Managements Systems - included in 2 out of 10 tenders Single Use Plastics Policy - included in 4 out of 10 tenders Donating/recycling equipment to VCSE policy - included in 0 out of 10 tenders Equality and Diversity policy - included in 7 out of 10 tenders Employee development, health, and wellbeing policy - included in 7 out of 10 tenders The Social Value Review Team will review guidance to ensure it is clear when to include these organisational behaviours in tenders; particular areas where there are low levels of inclusion i.e. environmental management systems and donating/ recycling equipment to VCSE sector policies.

Table 3: Summary of Supplier's Social Value Offers (Scored submissions)

Table 3a: T2150c - Delivery of Business Service Employment Academies (under ES DPS T2150)

Key area/ criteria	Data/ Outcome
Contract awarded to	GEMS NI Ltd
Contract Value	£900k
Contract Period	Up to 3 years
Social value % weighting	15%
Social value score achieved	15%
Social value offer – Employment Opportunities	None offered
Social value offer – Employability Initiatives	Employability or skills initiatives to support Priority Groups offered Initiatives to enhance employability of young people offered
Social value offer – Use of VCSE in supply chain	None offered
Social value offer – Social opportunities	None offered
Social value offer – Environmental	Strategies put forward to cover: Action(s) to improve waste management including recycling, upcycling, supporting the circular economy

Table 3b: T2214 - Enterprise and Business Growth FW Lot 2 Grow a Business

Key area/ criteria	Data/ Outcome
Contract awarded to	Full Circle
Contract Value	£2m
Contract Period	Up to 4 years
Social value % weighting	15%
Social value score achieved	15%
Social value offer – Employment Opportunities	Employment weeks for Students offered
Social value offer – Employability Initiatives	Initiatives to enhance employability of young people offered
Social value offer – Use of VCSE in supply chain	None offered
Social value offer – Social opportunities	Initiatives to support VCSE organisation offered

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Social value offer – Environmental	Strategies put forward to cover: Action(s) to reduce carbon emissions associated with energy supply Action(s) to reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation
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Table 3c: T2214 - Enterprise and Business Growth FW Lot 3 Social Economy

Key area/ criteria	Data/ Outcome
Contract awarded to	Work West
Contract Value	£2m
Contract Period	Up to 4 years
Social value % weighting	15%
Social value score achieved	15%
Social value offer – Employment Opportunities	None offered
Social value offer – Employability Initiatives	None offered
Social value offer – Use of VCSE in supply chain	Offered/ included
Social value offer – Social opportunities	None offered
Social value offer – Environmental	Strategies put forward to cover: Action(s) to reduce carbon emissions associated with energy supply Action(s) to reduce carbon emissions associated with transportation Action(s) to improve waste management including recycling, upcycling, supporting the circular economy Action(s) to improve resource efficiency Action(s) to enhance environmental natural resources and biodiversity

Table 3d: T2250 - Delivery of the Gateway to Choices Service

Key area/ criteria	Data/ Outcome
Contract awarded to	GEMS NI Ltd
Contract Value	£2m
Contract Period	Up to 3 years
Social value % weighting	15%
Social value score achieved	15%

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Social value offer – Employment Opportunities	None offered
Social value offer – Employability Initiatives	Employability or skills initiatives to support Priority Groups offered Initiatives to enhance employability of young people offered
Social value offer – Use of VCSE in supply chain	None offered
Social value offer – Social opportunities	Initiatives to support VCSE organisation offered Initiatives to improve good relations between people from different religious, political, racial and ethnic backgrounds offered
Social value offer – Environmental	Strategies put forward to cover: Action(s) to improve waste management including recycling, upcycling, supporting the circular economy



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	24 March 2023
Reporting Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek approval from members for tenders and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000
1.2	And to ask members to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note contract modifications to contract term and retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs) Note contract modification to contract value to a quotation Note the award of contracts by Arc 21 on behalf the council
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1) Approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3) • Note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4) • Note the award of contracts by Arc 21 on behalf the council (Table 5)
3.0	Main report
	<u>Competitive Tenders</u>
3.1	Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender
3.2	Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
	<u>Single Tender Actions (STAs)</u>
3.4	<p>The following STAs are being submitted for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for up to £140,000 (Budget ceiling figure to cover any unplanned advertising requirements), for up to 18 months, awarded to Clear Channel for advertising at bus stops. Advertising council initiatives to the citizens of Belfast and areas of Northern Ireland as required. Clear Chanel is the only company that provides advertising at bus stops in Northern Ireland. • Contract for up to £140,000 (Budget ceiling figure to cover any unplanned advertising requirements), for up to 18 months, awarded to Global Outdoor for bus internal and external advertising. Advertise council initiatives to the citizens of Belfast and in areas of Northern Ireland as required. Global Outdoor is the only company to provide advertising on Metro and Ulsterbus buses in Northern Ireland. • Contract for up to £165,000, for up to 3 years, awarded to Land and Property Services (LPS) for annual asset valuations. LPS are the only suitable provider of this service due to conflicts of interests that exist with other local agencies. • Contract for up to £64,271, for up to 3 years, awarded to Tricostar for a legal case management system. Continued use of the Tricostar case management system to support Legal Services including facilities for document management,

	<p>communications and reporting. Continued use of proprietary system required whilst a strategy is developed to procure and implement replacement system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for up to £154,000, for up to 2 years, awarded to Land & Property Services (LPS) for NI agreement for proprietary mapping requirements and planning. LPS are the only provider of this service. • Contract for up to £62,000, for up to 1 year, awarded to NEC Systems, for Electronic Document and Records Management 'EDRM' for NI Housing Executive for hosting, maintenance and support. EDRM system used by NI Housing Executive to link to Housing Benefits System. Licences are perpetual. This is fully funded by NIHE. NEC Systems are the only suitable provider. • Contract for up to £33,000, one off purchase, awarded to The Foundation, for printing and delivery of ballot papers and associated documentation for local elections. Due to a change in election date, associated delay in ballot paper print specifications being issued and higher than anticipated costs there is insufficient time now to procure via an open tender competition.
3.5	<p>The following retrospective STAs were awarded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for up to £64,500, for up to 12 months, awarded to Honeycomb Recruitment, for requirement for temporary Assistant Manager (Houses of Multiple Occupation). The existing contracted provider for T1792 Provision of Temporary Agency Resources: Matrix SCM have confirmed they are unable to fulfil this required role HMO assistant manager within the contractually agreed time period. <p><u>Modification to Contract term</u></p>
3.6	<p>The following contract terms were modified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to a total of 12 months extension for contract T2213 - Bobbin Catering City Hall with Now Group. Approval was given verbally at Feb SP&R for an initial 3 month extension. In line with legislation the Bobbin had to close numerous times because of the Covid pandemic which presented significant financial and operational challenges and changes to the hospitality industry. The re-tender of this contract will be delivered within the next 12 months. • A 4 month extension and additional £7,125 for contract T2291a Development and submission of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community PEACE Action Plan - Locus Management. To facilitate ongoing work to develop the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Fully funded.

3.7	<p>The following contract modifications are being reporting as retrospective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 1 month extension for contract T2201 Provision of an Activities Co-ordinator for Forth Meadow Community Greenway PEACE IV Programme Services with ArtsEkta Ltd. An extension is required to allow delivery partners to continue to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. • A 6 month extension for contract T2084(b) A Key Deliverable of the PEACE IV Shared Space & Services theme (Intergenerational project) with Mediation NI. An extension is required to allow delivery partners to continue to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. • A 6 month extension for contract T1925 Peace IV On the Right Track; Good Relations through Sports with Active Communities Network. An extension is required to allow delivery partners to continue to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. <p><u>Modification to contract value</u></p>
3.8	<p>Reporting to Committee for information. An additional £11,944 was awarded to a quotation contract (CNS 22.10 - Quotation for Compliance Review of Funding Awards) with supplier, Cavanagh Kelly. Contract needed to be expanded to include additional funding awards that did not fall within the scope of the original exercise. This additional spend means the quotation now exceeds £30k limit (i.e. £34k).</p> <p><u>Award of contracts by Arc 21 on behalf the council</u></p>
3.9	<p>Arc 21 are in the process of completing the award of contract for the treatment and energy recovery/ disposal of residual waste arisings.</p>
3.10	<p>To facilitate the implementation of the above contract, the Committee is asked to note an extension of the current arc21 and BCC contracts until the new contract commences for the interim treatment and disposal of residual waste. Arc21 and the Council will commence negotiations with the current suppliers to extend the contracts until the commencement date of the new arc21, interim residual waste contract. CPS will continue to keep Committee up to date with the status of arc 21's award of contract on a quarterly basis or until the contract is awarded.</p>
	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p>
3.11	<p>The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets</p>

	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.12	None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 Table 1 - Competitive Tenders Table 2 - Single Tender Actions Table 3 - Modification to Contract Table 4 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

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Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Window Cleaning across BCC sites	Up to 4 years	Up to £60,000	S Grimes	To clean and maintain the window at various locations across BCC
Mobile Catering Contracts across BCC park sites	Up to 3 years	Up to £53,000 (income)	D Sales	There is a need & expectation from park users to provide mobile catering services within parks to complement the park facilities
The supply and delivery of grounds maintenance plant and equipment	Up to 4 years	Up to £400,000	D Sales	Supply and delivery of grounds maintenance plant and equipment to enable the replacement of end of lift machinery servicing the Open Spaces and Streetscene operation
The distribution of City Matters (Belfast City Council's resident's magazine)	Up to 2 years	Up to £140,000	L Caldwell	Secure and effective delivery of City Matters is required for over 160k homes in Belfast and boundary areas within Belfast City Council district area

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Total Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Advertising at bus stops	Up to 18 months	Up to £140,000	L Caldwell	Advertising council initiatives to the citizens of Belfast and areas of Northern Ireland as required. Clear Channel is the only company that provides advertising at bus stops in Northern Ireland. Value indicated is a budget ceiling figure to cover any unplanned advertising requirements.	Clear Channel

Appendix 1

Bus internal and external advertising	Up to 18 months	Up to £140,000	L Caldwell	Advertise council initiatives to the citizens of Belfast and in areas of Northern Ireland as required. Global Outdoor is the only company to provide advertising on Metro and Ulsterbus buses in Northern Ireland. Value indicated is a budget ceiling figure to cover any unplanned advertising requirements.	Global Outdoor
Annual asset valuations	Up to 3 years	Up to £165,000	S Grimes	LPS are the only suitable provider of this service due to conflicts of interests that exist with other local agencies.	Land and Property Services (LPS) NI
Legal Case Management System	Up to 3 years	Up to £64,271	P Gribben	Continued use of the Tricostar case management system to support Legal Services including facilities for document management, communications and reporting. Continued use of proprietary system required whilst a strategy is developed to procure and implement replacement system	Tricostar
NI agreement for proprietary mapping requirements & planning	Up to 2 years	Up to £154,000	T Wallace	LPS are the only provider of this service	Land & Property Services (LPS) NI
Electronic Document and Records Management 'EDRM' for NI Housing Executive – hosting, maintenance and support (Fully Funded)	Up to 1 year	Up to £62,000	P Gribben	EDRM system used by NI Housing Executive to link to Housing Benefits System. Licences are perpetual. This is fully funded by NIHE. NEC Systems are the only suitable provider.	NEC Systems

Appendix 1

T2414 - Printing and delivery of Ballot Papers and associated documentation	One off Purchase	Up to £33,300	N Largey	Due to a change in election date, associated delay in ballot paper print specifications being issued and higher than anticipated costs there is insufficient time now to procure via an open tender competition.	The Foundation
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T2213 - Bobbin Catering City Hall Reported verbally to Feb 2023 SP&R - approved for 12 months.	Up to 18 months	Up to a total of 12 months and up to £25,000 income (includes 3 months verbally approved)	N Largey	In line with legislation the Bobbin had to close numerous times because of the Covid pandemic which presented significant financial and operational challenges and changes to the hospitality industry. The re-tender exercise of this service will be delivered within the next 12 months.	Now Group
T2291a Development and submission of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Community PEACE Action Plan (STA) Fully Funded	Up to 1 year	Additional 4 months and £7,125	D Sales	A 4-months extension of Contract Period to facilitate ongoing work to develop the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan	Locus Management
T2201 Provision of an Activities Co-ordinator for Forth Meadow Community Greenway PEACE IV Programme Services	Up to 4 years	Additional 1 month	D Sales	An extension is required to allow delivery partners to continue to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. Request is retrospective	ArtsEkta Ltd
T2084(b) A Key Deliverable of the PEACE IV Shared Space & Services theme (Intergenerational project)	Up to 22 months	Additional 6 months	D Sales	An extension is required to allow delivery partners to continue to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. Request is retrospective	Mediation NI

T1925 Peace IV On the Right Track; Good Relations through Sports	Up to 43 months	Additional 6 months	D Sales	An extension is required to allow delivery partners to continue to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. Request is retrospective	Active Communities Network
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Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Requirement for temporary Assistant Manager (Houses of Multiple Occupation)	Up to 12 months	Up to £64,500	S Toland	The existing contracted provider for T1792 Provision of Temporary Agency Resources: Matrix SCM have confirmed they are unable to fulfil the required role of HMO assistant manager within the contractually agreed time period.	Honeycomb Recruitment

Table 5: Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the Council

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
The supply of services relating to the treatment and energy recovery/disposal of residual waste arisings	Up to 7 years. Initial 3 years with option to extend up to a further 4 years (2 + 2 year periods)	Up to £107m	C Matthews	Contract for the bulking, loading, transfer and processing of residual waste from the council's waste transfer station.	Contract managed by Arc 21



Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 6 th March 2023
Date:	24 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	David Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 6 th March 2023.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 6 th March 2023 including:
2.2	<p><u>PEACEPLUS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the high-level feedback from the public meeting on 27th February at 2pm in City Hall; and the updated process Stage 2 development of the Local Action Plan, including forthcoming Thematic Working Group meetings.

	<p><u>PEACE IV</u></p>
2.3	<p>Secretariat</p> <p>To note the contents of the report and agree contract extensions for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ArtsEkta for the provision of activities for Forth Meadow Community Greenway to 31/10/2022; Mediation NI contract for the Intergenerational Shared Spaces project to 31 March 2023 and the Good Relations through Sports contract with Active Communities Network to 31 March 2023
2.4	<p>CYP Theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To note the contents of the report and note that discussions with SEUPB have progressed and the further details presented as outlined in Appendix II Update NIHE position.
2.5	<p>SSS Theme</p> <p>To agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That a request for a 3-month extension to 30 September 2023 is explored with SEUPB to enable the installation of signage; The target audience for the SSS narratives publication as the local community and visitors to the Forth Meadow Community Greenway; and The name of the bridge at Springfield Dam as the 'Foundry Bridge'.
2.6	<p>BPR Theme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BPR 1 - NIHE- Cross Community Area Networks To note that discussions have progressed with SEUPB relating to proposed mitigations and next steps BPR 2 - Culture Unit - Creative Communities To note the quotation for an artist for the Short Strand/Walkway received nil submissions and therefore delivery of this project element is no longer viable.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPR6 St Comgall's <p>To agree the updated Educational Resources and Exhibition Materials as agreed by the Programme Board on 9 February 2023 via delegated authority. The exhibition materials (website) are to be approved, subject to SEUPB approval.</p> <p><u>GOOD RELATIONS</u></p>
2.7	<p>Good Relations Action Plan Q1 Expenditure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree to proceed with the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan 23/24 under delegated authority of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, allocating up to 25% of the total Plan until a formal Letter of Offer had been received by TEO. • Approve the increase in the allocation of Grant Aid under BCC1, to incorporate an additional £23,000 from the BCC9 Strategic Intervention Programme in order to include projects that met the objectives of the programme.
2.8	<p>Cultural Inclusion Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note the contents of the report and the activities that were being delivered during March 2023 as part of this project, to which the Members were welcome to attend.
2.9	<p>Update on the Belfast Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To agree that the feedback analysis template relating to the Good Relations priority would be circulated to Members with a deadline of receipt for feedback and comments by 15th March 2023, to allow for papers to be prepared in advance of the findings being brought to the Community Planning Partnership in March 2023; • To note that community planning partners would be asked to make a nomination to sit on a group which would oversee the delivery of the action to develop an inclusive Belfast intervention plan to address inequalities and support the inclusion of Minority Ethnic communities and to progress the delivery of the findings from the Report, launched in December 2022, 'Inequalities Experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast.' The Shared City Partnership would receive regular updates on progress; and • To agree that Ms. A. M. White and Ms. B. Arthurs be nominated from the Shared City Partnership to sit on the above group.

2.10	Storage Costs for donations to refugees and asylum seekers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree to allocate support costs to assist with storage for donations relating to the Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Scheme, of £300 for this financial year.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.
3.2	The key issues on the agenda at the March 2023 meeting were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update on PEACE PLUS – Local Community Peace Action Plan PEACE IV Updates Update on PEACE IV Secretariat Update on PEACE IV CYP Theme Update on PEACE IV SSS Theme Update on PEACE IV BPR Theme
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good Relations Action Plan 2023/24 Quarter 1 Expenditure Update on BCC3 Cultural Inclusion Programme Update on Belfast Agenda Consultation Refresh – Good Relations Storage Costs Kiltonga for Refugee Donations <p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1.</p>
3.4	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> All financial implications are covered through existing budgets
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Copy of the minutes of the Shared City Partnership of 6th March 2023

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 6th March, 2023

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Kyle (Chairperson);
Councillors Bower, Duffy and McCullough.

External Members: Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. I. McLaughlin, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. A. Tohill, Good Relations, TEO;
Superintendent Ford, PSNI;
Mr. A. Irvine, Faith Sector;
Mr. A. Hannaway, NIHE;
Ms. O. Barron, Belfast Trust;
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE IV Programme Manager;
Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. S. Lavery, Programme Manager;
Ms. L. Dolan, Good Relations Officer;
Mr. D. Robinson, Good Relations Officer; and
Ms. V. Smyth, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Mr. S. Hamilton and Ms. G. Duggan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th February, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Councillor Duffy advised that his attendance had not been recorded at the previous meeting on 6th February but had been advised by the Democratic Services Officer that this had been amended.

The Chairperson welcomed Godfrey McCartney, the newly appointed Good Relations Manager who had taken up the role on 1st March.

Declarations of Interest

Mr. J. Donnelly declared an interest in the PEACE PLUS and Peace IV projects.

Ms. A. Tohill declared an interest in Item 2 PEACE PLUS and item 3 Peace IV Updates and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Mr. A. Hannaway declared an interest in CYP5 (item 3b) and BPR 1 (items 3d).

PEACE PLUS

The Programme Manager provided Members with an update on recent activity and high-level feedback with regards to the development of the PEACE PLUS 1.1. Co-designed Local Community Peace Action Plan for Belfast.

He provided an update on the public event which had been organised for all stakeholders who were involved in the Stage 1 process which he described as robust. The event was also open to any group or individual who did not attend previous engagement sessions. He advised the Members that, in the lead up to the event, the details were circulated widely via council contacts and social media. This worked well as approximately 100 participants attended the event, with some in attendance who were not involved in Stage 1.

The Programme Manager explained that the overall purpose of the event was to:

- 1) Provide a brief recap on Stage 1 findings; and
- 2) Provide an overview of the Stage 2 methodology.

He informed the Members that event participants received feedback on the following:

1. Stage 1 engagement which included:
 - Issues and challenges;
 - Emerging Concepts;
 - Programme Constraints; and
 - Indicative Assessment Criteria.
2. Key steps to develop Stage 2 development of the Local Action Plan which included:
 - Methodology and dates for thematic working groups;
 - Dates for thematic working;
 - Options available on how the programme will be delivered; and
 - The role of participants in developing the action plan via the thematic working groups.

The Programme Manager reported that following the presentation which was delivered by appointed consultants Locus Management and Blu Zebra, a discussion took place on the challenges that stakeholders identified that may prevent local community and voluntary groups from getting involved in developing and delivering the plan. Feedback from participants included:

- Administrative burden of delivering PEACE projects;
- Lack of lead partners at local level;
- Larger organisations being best placed to win tender;
- Different levels of capacity in local groups;

- Full cost recovery issue for groups who deliver PEACE projects; and
- Lack of support for local groups to tender for programme delivery.

As part of this discussion, the Programme Manager advised that the importance of developing solutions in relation to collaboration to develop the plan was explored. It was agreed that it was vital for larger organisations and local community and voluntary organisations to work together to develop and agree the strategic projects that would be included in the final plan submission. He informed the Members that participants advised that it was important that local groups should be involved in both the development and delivery of the Local Action Plan.

The Programme Manager acknowledged that there would be challenges in developing the plan and the parameters of PEACE PLUS would not enable all issues reported during Stage 1 Engagement to be addressed. However, at the event it was outlined that the ambition of the Shared City Partnership was to have meaningful engagement with a wide range of stakeholders to develop the plan and maximise the investment on offer and, while there were challenges to overcome, the Council would endeavor to address these during Stage 2. He added that, to help overcome some of the challenges as part of the Stage 2 process, participants were advised that the Council would work with participants to support them to get involved in developing and implementing the plan, which would include:

- Having an open process for involvement in the thematic working groups;
- Exploring options on providing capacity support to those involved in Stage 2;
- Exploring options on providing tendering / procurement support to those involved in Stage 2; and
- Whilst, ensuring work was carried out within the parameters of the programme, developing a delivery model that was far as possible would enable local organisations to be involved in implementing the plan.

Stage 2 Thematic Working Groups

The Programme Manager outlined the next steps to developing the Local Action Plan which involved the facilitation of thematic working groups for the 3 themes within the plan.

1. Community Regeneration and Transformation
2. Thriving and Peaceful Communities
3. Building Respect for All Cultural Identities

The Programme Manager explained the process for the thematic working groups in that there would be up to 4 Thematic Working Group days held from March to June, with stakeholders having the option to be involved in all 3 Thematic Working Groups or choosing which themes were more appropriate for their organisation. He referred to the examples contained within the report as follows:

• Thematic Working Group Day One

The first Thematic Working Group meetings for all 3 themes would take place on **Wednesday 22nd March, St Comgall's, with times, provisionally set 10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.**

10.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.	Theme 1 Community Regeneration and Transformation
12.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.	Theme 2 Thriving and Peaceful Communities
2.30p.m. to 4.30 p.m.	Theme 3 Building Respect for All Cultural Identities

He advised that these were indicative times for the forthcoming Thematic Working Group and that details would be confirmed and sent to relevant stakeholders.

Date	Venue
Tuesday 18th April	Skainos Centre – 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Tuesday 16th May	Agape Centre – 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Wednesday 7th June	Girdwood – 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

- Stakeholder Involvement Stage 2

The Programme Manager advised that anyone who had been involved in the process to date could be involved in the Thematic Working Groups. The Members noted that participants at the event in City Hall on the 27th February had completed an Expression of Interest form and advised which Thematic Working Groups they wanted to be involved in. Further communication would be sent to all stakeholders (including those who did not attend the 27th February event) asking that they complete the Expression of Interest forms, and inviting them to the first Thematic Working Group meeting.

Discussion ensued, and the decision-making/governance process was queried with a request from a Member that clarification in relation to the process be clearly communicated during consultations. The Programme Manager and the Neighbourhood Services Manager clarified that it was not a funding application process. They acknowledged that work was needed around the communication piece about the process for Stage 2, and ultimately who would make decisions on which projects were submitted under the Local Action Plan and that plans for this were being drawn up.

The Programme Manager referred to the proposals in relation to the co-design parameters and principals around Theme 1. He advised that, due to the nature of developing capital projects and the tight timeframe with regards to submitting the plan as set by SEUPB, that this would be challenging. It was agreed that the communication around this was important and stakeholders should be advised of the constraints around Theme 1 on the 22nd March. He advised that work would be undertaken in advance of conversations on 22nd March to ensure the process was right and to manage expectations. In summary, the Programme Manager advised that some of the constraints with the development of capital projects for Theme 1 included:

- Belfast City Council would be responsible for delivering the capital projects agreed for theme 1, therefore these had to be prioritised within a tightly defined set of principles to ensure they are delivered;
- During Stage 1, participants advised that their preference would be to have a smaller area-based projects across the city rather than one large project;
- Any priority projects chosen would have to meet the principles / parameters that were agreed, proposed by Stakeholders and agreed by the Council; and
- When the action plan was being submitted to SEUPB, they would require detailed proposals, therefore projects which were at the emerging concept stage would be challenging to include.

There was further discussion around the Local Action Plan mechanisms, resources, delivery and community confidence and capacity building. The Neighbourhood Services Manager assured the Members that nothing would be ruled out at this point. She also advised the Members that, despite the elections in May, work would continue on the project over the next few months.

A Member relayed concerns around the Partnership's role in the process and acknowledged the complex nature of PEACE PLUS. The Neighbourhood Services Manager stated that the Partnership made recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and then the Council made the ultimate decision. In response, a Member remarked that the Partnership's advisory role needed to be made explicitly clear to communities. Concerns around the co-design process and articulation, in relation to same, back to communities were also raised.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that it would be 6 months from the end of April/beginning of May from the call for PEACE PLUS, and she was conscious of the timeframe and new Members being appointed following the election. Therefore, nothing would be firmly agreed until it could be taken to Council in June/July aiming to submit in September/October.

The Programme Manager advised that the Belfast application would be approved via the Department of Finance given the budget of over £10 million with the assessment period being around 30 weeks, rather than 22.

The Chairperson acknowledged the concerns from the Members and stated it was an ongoing process and that officers would take the concerns expressed on board.

The Programme Manager advised that there would be more scope for co-design in Themes 2 and 3.

The Members noted the high-level feedback from the public meeting on 27th February at 2pm in City Hall; and noted the updated process Stage 2 development of the Local Action Plan, including forthcoming Thematic Working Group meetings.

Peace IV Updates

Secretariat

The Peace IV Programme Manager provided the Members with an update in respect of the Secretariat activity associated with the implementation of the Peace IV Local Action Plan. She advised that final project activity and progressing closure of projects remained a key focus.

She updated the Members on the On-the-Spot verification visits (OSV) for CYP1 Tech Connects delivery by GIGA Young and CYP3 Personal Change with Extern had been completed. Final clarifications were being sought to enable closure and final payment to progress.

Discussions were progressing with SEUPB on the level of achievement and closure for CYP3 On the Right Track, CYP5 Networks and BPR1 Cross Community Area Networks Project, and further information had been submitted to SEUPB for consideration.

In relation to claims reimbursement, the Peace IV Programme Manager advised that verification by SEUPB of the claims backlog had progressed, with Period 30 and 31 NIHE CYP claims totalling £27k now progressing to reimbursement. The submission of the Period 33 claim by the deadline of 28 February was a key priority that was currently progressing.

The Members were advised that the Project Support Assistant and the Project Development Officer had recently resigned. As such the PEACE IV team would be operating with 4 out of 9 staff and would undoubtedly increase the risks associated with resource pressures.

The Peace IV Programme Manager advised that expenditure across the programme remained as previously reported, with spend up to Period 32 totalling £8.6m and reimbursement of £6.2m to date.

There was discussion around delays in payment in relation to SEUPB funding and the continued challenges around filling vacant posts in the public and charity sectors.

The Peace IV Programme Manager advised the Members that a recent review of contracts identified that some PIV contracts had expired, although delivery partners continued to deliver activity in order to fulfil the deliverables. As such, the Members were requested to agree to extend the ArtsEkta contract for the provision of activities for Forth Meadow Community Greenway to 31st October 2022; the Mediation NI contract for the Intergenerational Shared Spaces project to 31st March 2023 and the Good Relations through Sports contract with Active Communities Network to 31st March 2023.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and agree contract extensions for:

- i. ArtsEkta for the provision of activities for Forth Meadow Community Greenway to 31st October 2022;
- ii. Mediation NI contract for the Intergenerational Shared Spaces project to 31 March 2023; and

- iii. the Good Relations through Sports contract with Active Communities Network to 31 March 2023.

Children and Young People (CYP Update)

The Partnership considered the undernoted report.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership (SCP) with a progress report in respect of the Children and Young People’s (CYP) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to note the contents of the report and related appendices and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to:

CYP5 NIHE

- note that discussions with SEUPB have progressed and the further details presented as outlined in Appendix II Update NIHE position.

3.0 Main report

Project Updates

3.1 CYP 1 - TECH CONNECTS, GIGA Training (Afterschool’s and Digital Arts Academies’ Camps) (6-11, 12-16 yr. olds)

The on-the-spot verification visit took place on 10 February 2023. The delivery partner is to submit additional information in the end of project report and to return outstanding IT equipment. The project will then proceed to final closure and final payment will be processed.

CYP 1 – TECH CONNECTS, Belfast Metropolitan College (Digital Insights Programme) (17-24 yr. olds)

Belfast Metropolitan College now has 143 participants registered and participating in the project. Delivery of activity is ongoing, with two cohorts at Girdwood Community Hub. The project continues to encourage participants to build on their contact hours and will promote this further as part of the Festival of Learning in March. To date, 44 participants have achieved the required level of 26 contact hours.

The submission of monitoring data including registration and attendance details to evidence achievements has been progressed.

Total	143 from a revised target of 110	Exceeding target of 110 by 33 participants
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3.2 CYP3 – On the Right Track – Sports and Personal Change elements

Sports Leaders training took place on the 8th & 9th February 2023 with 17 young people attending.

Final outstanding evidence to confirm participation is progressing. Indications are 647 participants completing the required contact hours threshold. Of these participants, 99 have completed an additional Sports Leaders Award.

Total	647 from a target of 1260 99 sports leaders from a target of 160	613 remaining to achieve target figure of 1260. 167 registered but have not achieved hrs of engagement
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As final wrap up activity has now progressed, the project will now progress to closure, based on the level of achievement outlined above.

3.3 Personal Change – Delivered by Extern

Final closure and payment are now progressing.

Total	43 from a target of 42	0 remaining – Progressing to Closure
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3.4 CYP 4 – Cooperation Ireland (Young Advocates)

Point of clarity from the On-the-Spot Verification Site Visit are to be submitted to enable final closure to progress.

Total	87 from a target of 80	+ 7 achieved – Progressing to closure
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3.5 CYP 5 – NIHE Local Area Network Partner Delivery

Discussions with SEUPB have progressed and proposed mitigations were outlined. SEUPB requested further details on all deliverables to ensure a full picture on impact, outputs and outcomes, as detailed in Appendix II Updated NIHE positional paper. The next steps and agreed actions will be advised and progressed with the delivery partner once formalised by SEUPB.

Deliverables are summarised below:

Targets CYP 5	Original targets	Amended	Achieved before applied mitigations	Current Position with mitigations applied	% Contract achieved with mitigations
6 Local area networks	Establish 6 local area networks	Reduced to 4 networks	3 of 6 established	3 LAN	50%
24 participants per CCAN numbers	24 per LAN	Unchanged	See breakdown below	refer to table details below	42%
Core Participants - Hrs-	144 Core 200 hrs	104 core 100hrs	3/104	9/104	9%
Peer Participants Hrs-	756 Peer 30hrs	200 Peer 24hrs	101/200	170/200	85%
					% achieved 59%

Network 6 modified to 4	Original target 24 per LAN (144 total)- levels of achievement before mitigations	Numbers moved to Peer- Mitigations applied	Participant no. remaining in LAN Core	Comments
SWB Core	32	20	12	
NB Core	56	36	20	
FCA Core	44	32	12	
Total	132	88	44	42% achieved

SEUPB is open to the mitigations presented of reduced tolerances 60% and movement from Core to Peer participants. Although there may be impact on budget and expenditure which requires further discussions with all parties.

Members are requested to note the additional information as referenced in Appendix II. It should also be noted will be fully evaluated in March when all delivery has ceased.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

The financial position remains as previously reported, with claims totalling £2m submitted to SEUPB and £1.665m reimbursed to date. As such £340K remains outstanding from SEUPB.

Preparation for the submission of Period 33 claims by 28 February 2023 is now progressing.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 Nov 2020.”

The Partnership noted the contents of the report.

Shared Spaces and Services (SSS Update)

The Peace IV Programme Manager provided the Shared City Partnership with a progress update in respect of the Shared Spaces and Services (SSS) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan. She reported that both the capital and programming elements of the Shared Space and Services theme were continuing to be implemented. Risks associated with delivery were highlighted in RAG Report (Appendix I).

- **Springfield Dam**

The public vote for the naming of the Bridge at Springfield Dam which had opened via the Council's website on Wednesday 18th January, with the following 4 short-listed names for consideration, had now closed.

1. The Cotty Bridge – 33.8% of votes
2. The Foundry Bridge – 44%
3. The Seven Cygnets Bridge – 9.6%
4. The Spring Bridge – 12.7%

The Members were advised that 75% of the responses received were from the communities surrounding Springfield Dam in BT12 and BT13.

On the basis of the outcome of the public voting, the Members were requested to agree the name of the bridge as 'The Foundry Bridge'.

- **PEACE IV Network Scheme – Capital Works**

As reported in February, works in Section 2, remained on track for completion by June 2023.

- **Signage**

As reported previously, a Council decision on the language approach for the signage was being progressed by the Physical Programmes department and no decision had been confirmed as yet. As such, the installation of the signage within the current Letter of Offer timeframe was uncertain as redesign of the signage may be necessary.

Therefore, the Members were requested to agree, in principle, that a request for a 3-month extension to 30th September 2023 was explored with SEUPB to enable the installation of signage. Resource implications for this extended timeframe may need to be met by the Physical Programmes department.

- **Public Art Pieces**

The finalisation of a long-term lease of land from Invest NI was being discussed between the respective legal teams. Upon finalisation, the flag-ship art piece would move towards installation, however due to delays, the artist had advised that installation would take place in April 2023.

- **Programming**

Implementation of the programming aspects are progressing.

- **Shared History, Heritage and Identity Content / Narratives for Shared Space**

Deliverable targets	Targets achieved
300 individuals	257 recruited
51 narratives (3 narratives x 17 panels)	52 draft narratives
12 contact hours per participant	152 participants (68%) achieved over 10 hours 200 participants (89%) achieved 6 hours+.
Compilation document of all stories	A draft copy submitted for initial review.

The Peace IV Programme Manager informed the Member that a draft compendium of the narratives was submitted by the delivery partner and reviewed by the PEACE IV team, with a timeline agreed for a final publication by week commencing 13th March 2023. The Programme Board considered the target audience for the publication as the local community and visitors to the Forth Meadow Community Greenway. The Members were requested to agree this approach, which would influence the format and language of the publication.

She continued that, as works were progressing in Section 2 (Springvale) and commencing in Section 5 (West Link), narratives for inclusion on the proposed information panels in these sections were considered by the Programme Board in paper of 9th February 2023 (Appendix III refers). The narratives were agreed subject to a grammar, spelling and a plain English review together with creative input from Communications. As such, the Members were requested to consider and agree the Section 2 and 5 narratives.

- **Resource Allocation**

Following SEUPB approval for the interim coordination of volunteering, contract letters had been issued to the relevant Volunteer Lead delivery partners.

Two responses had been received for a coordinated programme of activities / events with the assessment meeting having taken place on 10th February 2023. Approval of the quotation process had been received by SEUPB and Artsekta, as the successful applicant, had been contacted. The unsuccessful applicant had also been informed of the outcome.

The revised resource allocation documentation to support local community activity along the Greenway was approved by SEUPB on 16th February 2023. A call for applications would open in early March 2023, for community groups / organisations along the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

- **Shared Space Volunteer Training**

Deliverable targets	Targets achieved
<i>Sustrans</i>	
30 volunteers (15 Walk & 15 Cycle Leads)	27 completers across 3 groups
<i>Volunteer Now Enterprise</i>	
15 volunteers (Local Ambassadors)	13 completers
<i>The Conservation Volunteers</i>	
15 volunteers (Nature Guides)	12 completers

Contract letters for the interim coordination of volunteering had been issued to Sustrans, Volunteer Now Enterprise and The Conservation Volunteers.

A further study visit to Cloughmills Community Action Team was being planned for March. The Volunteer Leads and volunteers had been contacted to gauge interest and availability.

- **Governance / Management Model**

The implementation of a suitable management and governance model was progressing with the delivery partners, MDL, facilitating further discussions with CNS Senior Managers and Council officers, regarding the resourcing and coordination of activities and services along FMCG, during a site visit to Belfast in early February 2023.

MDL had also facilitated an initial steering group workshop, during this visit, with interested community stakeholders. Due to the limited number of individuals involved at this stage, MDL had advised that subgroups were not an option as yet.

An interim report had been provided by MDL, on progress to date and the potential next steps, which would be presented to the late March Programme Board for review. The Members would be updated on feedback and comments.

- **Youth Engagement & Civic Education**

Deliverable targets	Targets achieved
280 young people	386 young people registered from Nubia, Blackmountain, Glencairn, Forthspring, St Peters, Ballysillan, Clonard, Corpus Christi, GVRT, Holy Trinity, Malone College, St Genevieve's, Belfast Boys Model and Youth Initiatives
60 contact hours per participants	265 young participants have achieved 60+ contact hours.

A total of 386 young people had participated or were participating on this project, with 265 achieving a minimum of 60 contact hours. Supporting registration forms and attendance tracker had been submitted.

A celebration event attended by approximately 60 young people had taken place in Crumlin Road Gaol, on 9th February. Certificates of Achievement were awarded to the participants by the Shared City Partnership Chairperson, Councillor John Kyle.

- **SSS Activities and Animation Programme**

Artsekta had submitted an end of project report, which was currently being reviewed prior to a final payment being processed.

The financial position remained as previously reported, claims for the SSS theme totalling £2.9m had been submitted to SEUPB, with £1.9m reimbursed to date. SEUPB verification of outstanding claims totally approximately £1m was progressing.

The submission of Period 33 claims by 28th February 2023 was a key priority and was progressing.

A Member questioned the accuracy of the Mackie's facts in the narrative compendium, and also requested detail on those who contributed to the narratives on page 74 of the report pack). The Peace IV Programme Manager advised that she would revert to Mediation NI to have the information fact checked with a further report to the Members for approval.

The Partnership noted the contents of the report and related appendices and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to agree:

- That a request for a 3-month extension to 30th September 2023 was explored with SEUPB to enable the installation of signage;
- The target audience for the SSS narratives publication as the local community and visitors to the Forth Meadow Community Greenway; and
- The naming of the bridge at Springfield Dam as the 'Foundry Bridge'.

Building Positive Relationships (BPR Update)

The Partnership considered the undernoted report.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide the Shared City Partnership with an update on progress report in respect of the Building Positive Relations (BPR) theme of the PEACE IV Local Action Plan.

2.0 Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to note the contents of the report and related appendices and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to:

BPR 1 - NIHE- Cross Community Area Networks

- note that discussions have progressed with SEUPB relating to proposed mitigations and next steps

BPR 2 - Culture Unit - Creative Communities

- note the quotation for an artist for the Short Strand/Walkway received nil submissions and therefore delivery of this project element is no longer viable.

BPR6 St Comgall's

- to consider and agree the updated Educational Resources (App III) and Exhibition Materials (App IV) as agreed by the Programme Board on 9 February 2023 via delegated authority. The exhibition materials (website) are to be approved, subject to SEUPB approval.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

As members are aware, projects are at various stages of delivery; some projects are completing, whilst activity is continuing with other projects. The status and progress of projects are outlined in Appendix I BPR Progress report.

3.1 BPR1 – Cross Community Area Networks (CCAN)

Discussions have progressed with SEUPB regarding the proposed mitigations, and whilst positive, SEUPB has requested a detailed breakdown of all deliverables across both BPR 1 and CYP 5, which is outlined in Appendix II Updated NIHE positional paper. The next steps and agreed actions will be advised and progressed with the delivery

partner once formalised by SEUPB. Deliverables are summarised in the table below.

The mitigations were presented to SEUPB, specifically the reduced tolerances of 70% and movement from Core to Peer. Members should note that a recent update from NIHE has indicated there may be impact on budget and expenditure based on under delivery from NIHE's delivery agents, therefore there will be underspend in the external expertise budget line. A revised budget and final position from NIHE have been requested.

Targets BPR1	Original targets	Amended	Achieved before mitigations	Current Position with mitigations applied- 70% tolerances	% Contract achieved with mitigations	Rationale
6 Cross community area networks	6 achieved	no amendments made	5 of 6	3 of 6	50%	*East CCAN engaged but the cross-community group did not continue therefore group was identified as single identity and not viable going forward. With movement from Core to Peer groups- 3 of 6 CCAN remain with 80% participant levels- refer to tables below for breakdown
24 participants per CCAN numbers-	6 networks with 24 in each 144	Amended to 100 20 per CCAN	See breakdown below	refer to App II	50%	*Core networks established but due to engagement levels those that attended both Core and peer sessions

						were transferred to Peer to increase peer outputs
Core Participants Hrs	144 participants 200hrs	100 participants 120hrs	13/100*	25/100 completed 70% or above of engagement hrs	25%	*Before mitigations is with 80% tolerances applied for 13/100
Peer Participants Hrs	900 participants 30hrs	485 participants 30hrs	73/485	214/485 completed 70% or above of engagement hrs	44%	Move from Core to Peer increased outputs under Peer tolerances reduced also helped increase levels of achievement in Peer participants completing.
					% achieved 41%	

3.2 BPR2 – Creative Communities Project

Project progress has been re-established and activity within the Football cluster is on track to complete by mid-March.

Members are requested to note that the new cohort previously advised from Short Strand/Walkway is unable to progress as nil submissions were received from the quotation exercise to appoint an artist.

Feedback from those invited to quote indicated reasons for not submitting a quotation as: other work priorities, limited delivery timeframe, stringent outputs and impeding of artistic licence.

The opportunity and time scale to deliver this project element has passed, as all contracts are due to finish by 31 March 2023. Therefore, members should note that it is

no longer viable to go seek further quotations as both the market and appetite for this piece of work have been fully explored.

Target	Status
8 cohorts established (reduced to 6)	5 achieved
144 participants registered (24 per cohort)	102
Participants completes 42 hrs (reduced from 60hrs)	78 (1 cohort still to complete)
8 publications completed	5 in progress

The draft publications from McCadden have been reviewed and are being progressed. The contract for McCadden managed by the internal delivery partner stipulates 8 booklets will be produced. However, given the number of cohorts this is now reduced to 5 outputs, revision of the contract has been advised to ensure payment aligns with outputs achieved and can be successfully processed through SEUPB claims.

3.3 BPR3 – Transform for Change Project

Project is closed and all activity complete. On the spot verification and subsequent report completed. The final verification of ILM qualifications has now been confirmed as 209 participants completing both the Transformative Leadership Programme and attaining an ILM level 3 qualification.

Final report from delivery partner and closure report are completed allowing progress to last stage of contract payment.

S3 Solutions have delivered on the final version of evaluation, pending last and agreed edits this is now complete and final stage of payment is underway.

Target	Status
45 cluster reports	48 submitted
15 case studies	13 submitted
45 TLP courses	42 achieved
634 participants	592 completed

3.4 BPR5 - LINC5 Project

The LINC5 project has completed and is in final stages of closure and progression of final payment is underway.

Target	Status
96 participants – to engage in 68 hrs of engagement	96 participants completed 68 hrs and over
1 Shared learning event per annum 2 Intercultural events per annum	3 achieved 14 achieved

3.5 **BPR5 – Traveller Project - Supporting Connected Communities**

Project activity has completed, and the project is progressing to final closure. An initial closure review and end report are now complete. Verification of all data and an inventory is being compiled.

Target	Status
40 participants – Traveller and Settled Communities	32 completed 26 hrs or more 3 completed between 23-25hrs
200 attendees at community events	135 people attended 3 community events and 1 festival.

3.6 **BPR5 – Roma Project - Supporting Connected Communities**

The Roma project has completed and is in final stages of closure and progression of final payment is underway.

3.7 **BPR6 – St. Comgall's**

Members are reminded that potential equality issues associated with the educational resources were highlighted and discussed with the delivery partner. As a result, further consultation was carried out with a cross-community group and the resources updated.

The updated educational resources and exhibition materials were considered as part of the Programme Board papers on 9 February 2023. The Programme Board has approved the materials under previously assigned delegated authority. Members are requested to consider and agree the updated Educational Resources (App III) and Exhibition Materials (App IV). The education resources have been approved by SEUPB. The exhibition materials (website) are being reviewed by SEUPB at present and so approval is subject to SEUPB approval.

All project workshops, seminars, and so on are now complete. The final level of completion is in the table below. The final celebration event took place on 31 January 2023 at the St Comgall's building, with a presentation of certificates to participants from the adult cohort.

Target	Status
20 core young people participants	27 completed target of 33 hrs
20 core adult participants	21 completed reduced target of 32 hrs
	48 out of 40 target complete

3.8 Cinematography Project

Production of content capturing the Belfast Peace Journey is wrapping up. Filming was completed for BPR6, and a voiceover captured for the Programme Film in February. Clips were finalised for FMCG Sculpture artist, CYP5 peer mentoring, OTRT and BPR1 end of project clips and BPR Thematic clip. End of project clips for CYP5, SSS and BPR6 are in draft being finalised. The final overall programme clip is in production.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

The financial position is as previously reported, claims for the BPR theme totalling £3.3m have been submitted to SEUPB, with £2.4m reimbursed to date. As such £965K remains outstanding from SEUPB, with verification of claims for Period 30 and 31 now being progressed by SEUPB.

Preparation for the submission of Period 33 claims by 28 February 2023 is underway.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The draft plan has been equality screened and discussed at the Equality Consultative Forum on 13 May 2015. The Equality Consultative Forum was further consulted on 18 November 2020.”

The Partnership noted the contents of the report.

Good Relations

Good Relations Action Plan **2023/24 Quarter 1 Expenditure**

The Good Relations Officer reminded the Members that the Council received 75% of the costs for the delivery of its Good Relations Action Plan from The Executive Office. While the Council could expect to receive the same allocation as it did in 2022/23, no formal Letter of Offer would be received until April or May. The Council contributed a minimum of 25% and currently contributed £328,263 towards the overall delivery of the Action Plan as well as £59,500 towards the bonfire programme for

beacon related costs. The total Council contribution to staffing and programmes in the Good Relations Action Plan for the full year was £387,763.

The Good Relations Officer informed the Members that officers had assessed that, if the delivery of the Action Plan was to proceed as planned, a number of projects would need to commence in Quarter 1 (April – June). This included the small grants programme, intervention projects, mobilisation and procurement of some projects such as the Civic Engagement and Learning Programme, the Cultural Inclusion Programme, the Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme, the allocation of beacons and the delivery of some events. He added that, if all desired projects were to commence, this would necessitate a commitment of roughly £300,000 to cover staffing and programmes for Quarter 1. This figure included a full commitment at 100% to any project allocated funding.

The Good Relations Officer explained that, as there would be reduced Shared City Partnership meetings over the months of Quarter 1, officers were seeking agreement to proceed with the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan 2023/24 under Delegated Authority of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, allocating up to 25% of the total Plan until a formal Letter of Offer had been received by The Executive Office (TEO). This would enable projects to start in line with what was in the Action Plan already agreed by Council. This approach was consistent with what was agreed in 2022. Given that the Council had already allocated the monies to cover these elements, the Members were asked to approve the continuation of this approach. All expenditure and allocations of funding were reported on a quarterly basis to the Shared City Partnership and to TEO.

The Members were also requested to approve that, due to the high volume of applications for the Small Grants programme under BCC1, officers were seeking to add an additional £23,000 to the original £120,000 for grants to include projects that met the aims of the Strategic Intervention programme, BCC9, given the demand received. These projects met the objectives of the BCC9 programme and would be reported on through that programme.

Ms. A. Tohill relayed a request from TEO which asked that the TEO Planned Intervention Programme be communicated to community groups.

The Shared City Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee:

- To proceed with the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan 2023/24 under delegated authority of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, allocating up to 25% of the total Plan until a formal Letter of Offer had been received by TEO; and
- Approve the increase in the allocation of Grant Aid under BCC1, to incorporate an additional £23,000 from the BCC9 Strategic Intervention Programme in order to include projects that met the objectives of the programme.

Update on BCC3 Cultural Inclusion Programme

The Good Relations Officer updated the Members on the ongoing work of the BCC3 Programme in the Good Relations Action Plan on Cultural Inclusion and Co-Design, within the broad Unionist Community.

He provided background to the project which was included in the Council's Good Relations Action Plan under BCC3, after it was highlighted in 2020 that there was a lack of applications coming to the Council's Culture/Arts/Heritage team for funding from a number of sectors and in particular, that there was significant under-representation in applicants from Unionist areas across the City. As reported to the Partnership in August 2022, as part of the Quarter 1 update on the Action Plan, this project got underway in June 2022 with the commencement of a co-design process with a number of groups across the City.

The Members recalled that, as part of the Good Relations Action Plan for 2022/23, provision was made for the development and delivery of a Cultural Inclusion project within the BCC3 Programme, which also included the provision of Beacons. The project focused on work with the broad Unionist Community, with activity including training, mentoring, capacity building and cultural events.

The Good Relations Officer outlined the programme goals and explained that a side-aim of the project was to increase the capacity within the broad Unionist community to be part of Belfast's year of culture, creativity and imagination in 2024. He explained, that as plans were being developed for this festival throughout 2024, one of the key elements of this programme was to create pathways for participation of the Unionist community in what would be developed for this significant year.

A core group of participants were invited to form part of the initial exploration group which met in June at 2 Royal Avenue. 15 participants attended and agreed to participate in a co-design process to explore how the project might develop and consider what relevant activities could be delivered. 7 further meetings were held in locations across the City to progress the project. The group had now agreed 2 strands of activity: capacity building and cultural activity. Within the capacity building strand, the following had been agreed and planned:

- Meet the Funders: East Belfast Networking Centre. Tuesday 14th March 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- Making the Case for Support: Learn How to Say Clearly Why Funders Should Fund You. NICVA. Thursday 23rd March. 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
- Belfast 2024. What Is It and How Could It Support Your Community to Take Part. GVRT. Wednesday 22nd March. 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
- One-to-One funding Support available by request
- Using Social Media Positively. Spectrum Centre. Tuesday 7th March. 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

For the Cultural Activity strand, the following had been created and planned:

- The creation of a short video to highlight positive cultural identity
- A Cultural Showcase Day event at 2 Royal Avenue on Friday 31st March from 11:00 a.m. This event would have the following activities:
 - The launch of the Cultural Identity video
 - A 'Living Library' event
 - A talk by historian and broadcaster, Dr David Hume
 - An exhibition of archival footage of cultural events by NI Screen

The Good Relations Officer and Ms. A. Roberts encouraged the Members to attend any or all of these events.

The Members noted the contents of the report and the activities that were being delivered during March 2023 as part of this project, to which the Members were welcome to attend.

Update on Belfast Agenda

The Neighbourhood Services Manager updated the Members on the findings of the Belfast Agenda Refresh engagement programme in relation to the Good Relations and Shared Future priority and asked for comment on the feedback analysis template in Appendix 2.

The Members recalled that a significant co-design and consultation process to inform the “Refresh of the Belfast Agenda” took place in October/November 2022 through 10 workshops which had been attended by over 180 participants from 110 organisations, along with online forum discussion and feedback received.

She informed the Members that the findings had been analysed and cross-tabulated against the proposed strategic intentions, goals and actions which had been presented to the Living Here Board in January 2023. The presentation also outlined some of the next steps and key asks from convening leads/partners in terms of considering the key feedback and assessing what changes may (or may not) be appropriate. She referred to the analysis template attached at Appendix 2 which provided a RAG status and rationale.

She explained that the intention was to ensure that the Phase 2 engagement feedback was reflected in the draft strategy document and action plans which would be brought through the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) on 22nd March 2023 and supporting CPP Delivery Boards for consideration and approval in advance of being published for a 12-week formal consultation period.

The Partnership nominated Ms. A. M. White and Ms. B. Arthurs to sit on a group which would oversee the delivery of the action to develop an inclusive Belfast intervention plan to address inequalities and support the inclusion of Minority Ethnic communities and to progress the delivery of the findings from the Report, launched in December 2022, ‘Inequalities Experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast.’

The Members

- (i) Agreed that the feedback analysis template relating to the Good Relations priority would be circulated to the Members with a deadline of receipt for feedback and comments by 15th March 2023, to allow for papers to be prepared in advance of the findings being brought to the Community Planning Partnership in March 2023;
- (ii) Noted that community planning partners would be asked to make a nomination to sit on a group which would oversee the delivery of the action to develop an inclusive Belfast intervention plan to address inequalities and support the inclusion of Minority Ethnic communities and to progress the delivery of the findings from the Report, launched in December 2022, ‘Inequalities Experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast.’ The Shared City Partnership would receive regular updates on progress; and
- (iii) Agreed that Ms. A. M. White and Ms. B. Arthurs be nominated from the Shared City Partnership to sit on the above group.

Storage Costs Kiltonga for Refugee Donations

The Good Relations Officer advised the Members of a request from the Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Consortium, who had written to each of the 11 Councils seeking support costs for the storing of donations in relation to support for asylum seekers and refugees.

To maintain the space required the Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Consortium had written to the Council to request a donation of £300 towards the operation at Kiltonga Christian Centre. Therefore, the Members were asked to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to consider allocating support costs to assist with storage for donations relating to the Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Scheme, including £300 for this financial year.

She explained that the continued arrival of Asylum Seekers and Ukrainian Nationals had generated a significant expression of goodwill from the public. Many donations of food and essential household items were donated from across Northern Ireland. Over the past number of years, Councils had acted collaboratively to contribute to the costs of storing these donations and Kiltonga Christian Centre in Bangor was identified as an ideal space to collect, hold, sort and distribute the donations received.

The Members agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to allocate support costs to assist with storage for donations relating to the Northern Ireland Refugee Resettlement Scheme, of £300 for this financial year.

Chairperson

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Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum Thursday 16th March 2023

Attendance

Members:

Councillor Ciaran Beattie
Councillor Michael Long
Councillor Billy Hutchinson
Alderman George Dorrian
Councillor Donal Lyons
Alderman Sonia Copeland
Councillor Mal O'Hara

Alison Allen, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Local Government Association (for Item 1)

Apologies: Councillor Fiona Ferguson, Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown,

Officers:

John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy
John Greer, Director of Economic Development (for Item 2)
Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance (for Item 3)
Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services (for Items 4, 7 & 8)
Siobhan Toland, Director City Services (for Item 8)
Cathy Matthews Director, Resources and Fleet (for Item 8)
Sinead Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes (for Item 8)

1. Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)

Alison Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA was in attendance, she presented a briefing for Members outlining the key role of NILGA in providing advice and policy support to the sector, and in particular support provided for Belfast. She outlined some of the key programmes of work that NILGA has taken forward including an update on key actions for Elected Member Development, Policy, Communications and Representation. Members also noted the outlined priorities for potential future support for Local Government and Belfast given Belfast's regional leadership role. Members thanked Alison for the update provided.

2. UK & Ireland Bid to host UEFA EURO 2028

The Director of Economic Development provided an update on the current status of the UK & Ireland Bid to host UEFA EURO 2028 which was previously considered at the February

Party Group Leaders Forum meeting. Members discussed the proposal, the requirement from Belfast and the challenging timescale involved in relation to the final bid submission to the Central Bid Team. There was detailed discussion in relation to the financial considerations and stadium provision and a report on the detail discussed will be submitted to March SP&R Committee for approval.

3. Finance Update

The Director of Finance provided an update for Members on the current financial position for 2022-23. He advised that some funds have become available for potential re-allocation and whilst it had been agreed that reallocations of forecast departmental underspends would be considered as part of year end reporting, in this instance the underspend is from a specified reserve and not a departmental underspend and therefore members could consider to reallocate this for other purposes. A report will be presented to March SP&R with the detail of the funds available for Members consideration.

The Director also advised that a report would be submitted to March SP&R Committee providing an update on the proposed strategy to fund the 2023/24 budgetary gap and highlighting the need for a longer-term, forward-looking approach to rate setting.

4. Freedom of the City

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a proposed request from a Member for the conferment of the Freedom of the City. There was consensus from all Party Group Leaders to support the proposal. Members noted the current process for considering requests for Freedom of the City and noted the next steps in the process, following which a report will be submitted to March SP&R recommending that the award be made and requesting to set a date for a special meeting of the Council to formally consider the proposal.

5. Belfast Agenda Refresh

The Director of City & Organisational Strategy provided an update on the progress made to date on the development of the refreshed Belfast Agenda strategy document and action plan following the recent Continuing the Conversation engagement programme. He outlined the key engagement activity that will be taking place over the coming months in advance of the draft Belfast strategy being issued for formal consultation in early July 2023.

A report will be brought to Mach SP&R outlining the key next steps and timeframes along with a draft of the strategy document and action plan for Members consideration.

6. Chinese Ambassador Visit to Belfast

The Director of City & Organisational Strategy provided an update on an upcoming visit to Belfast of Chinese Ambassador to the UK, Mr Zheng Zeguang. Members noted the dates of the visit and the Ambassador's programme which will be led by The Northern Ireland Executive Office. Members also noted the Lord Mayor's civic participation in the programme. A number of issues were raised by Members in relation to both the upcoming visit and other Ambassadorial visits. It was agreed clarity would be sought on the issues raised and an update will be brought back to Party Group Leaders.

7. Planning Update

The City Solicitor updated the Forum on the live planning applications and informed the Forum of applications that were being presented to the Planning Committee in the coming months. She also advised that the Local Development Plan adoption date would be considered by the Planning Committee and it is anticipated that this would be in early May 2023. In relation to some queries raised by Members in relation to the implementation date and the impact for current applications already in the system the City Solicitor advised a report on the process will also be submitted to the Planning Committee on any potential implications.

A Member raised an issue in relation to city centre living and how this is considered within a strategic context. City Solicitor to follow up with the Director City Regeneration & Development.

8. AOB

Freedom of the City

Councillor Lyons outlined for Members a proposed request for a further conferment of the Freedom of the City. There was detailed discussion from Members and a general consensus that this request and any further requests would be considered in the new council term. Councillor Long also put forward a request for consideration which the City Solicitor noted.

Members also asked that further consideration was given for alternative options on how citizens could be recognised by the council. The City Solicitor to follow up and progress in advance of the new Council term.

City of Belfast School of Music – North Belfast

Councillor O'Hara raised an issue in relation to the City of Belfast School of Music based in North Belfast. Councillor O' Hara advised he had previously written to Party Group Leaders on this issue and there was consensus from all Party Group Leaders that he take forward the next steps as discussed and outlined.

Illuminate Requests

The City Solicitor outlined for Members a number of illumination requests received namely:

- **National Day of Reflection** - 23 March
- **Brain Tumour Awareness** - 30 March
- **Endometriosis Awareness Month** – date to be agreed in line with availability
- **Global Intergenerational Week** - 24 April

Members noted the requests would be agreed under the City Solicitors delegated authority. A member raised in query in relation to World Down Syndrome Day and the City Solicitor advised that this had already been actioned. The City Solicitor to review the process for illumination where possible repeated illuminations could be added to the schedule rather than being considered as separate requests annually.

Forth Meadow Community Greenway Signage

The Director Physical Programmes advised that Members had been updated previously that a request had been received for Irish language signage to be installed at Forth Meadow Community Greenway. She advised that the request has now been reviewed in line with the letter of offer and equality screening process and she presented the proposed approach and shared some proposed models for the signage. There was detailed discussion on the proposed approach and some other alternative options suggested by Members. It was also requested that the Director provides a briefing for those elected representatives within the specific areas of the greenway being discussed. The Director to consider the options discussed and arrange a briefing for Members and an update will then be brought back to Party Group Leaders in due course

Port Health Update

The Director City Services provided an update for Members in relation to the Port of Belfast operations and the ongoing engagement that is taking place with Belfast and other Councils following the publication of the UK Government published Windsor Framework. She also provided an update on the ongoing engagement that is taking place with DAERA, DEFRA and FSA. Members will be updated accordingly as this evolves.

Easter – Waste Collection Arrangements

The Director Resources and Fleet provided an update for Members on the arrangements being put in place to ensure adequate staffing resources for bin collections for the upcoming next public holidays over the Easter period. She outlined the process to date and advised that final arrangements once confirmed would be circulated in a further written update for all Members in the coming weeks and in advance of the Easter holiday period.

Statues Update

The Director Physical Programmes presented the outcome of the recent tender process on the commissioning for two City Hall Statues. She advised that the procurement process was now complete and the recommendation from the Installations City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group would be considered by March SP&R. Members noted the timeline for design, manufacture and installation and that regular updates will be considered by the working group as this progresses. The Director provided clarity on some queries raised in relation to the unveiling for these statues and other commissioned statues and also on the development of narrative for the new pieces.

Olympia Leisure Centre

The City Solicitor provided an update on the EQIA process for bilingual signage at the Olympia Leisure Centre. It was noted that a report would be brought to March SP&R Committee outlining the proposed timeline.

Staff Car Parking

The Director of City & Organisational Strategy updated the Forum on the current proposals for Raphael Street staff car park and the subsequent impact for staff and the interim measures that would be put in place for staff using the car park. He advised that discussions were ongoing with the Trade Unions and that a meeting would be held with JNCC next week in advance of communication being issued to staff.

East Belfast GAA

Councillor Long raised an issue in relation to East Belfast GAA and requested an update for Party Group Leaders. The City Solicitor to follow up.

Bonfires

Councillor Long raised a query in relation to Bonfires and asked for an update on the scheduling for a meeting which had been agreed at Council. The Director City Services provided clarity on the query raised and to follow up accordingly.

Request for Use of City Hall

The City Solicitor outlined a request that had been received for the use of City Hall in relation to the upcoming anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement which Members noted.

City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Wednesday, 22nd February, 2023

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

HYBRID MEETING IN THE CONOR ROOM

Members present: Councillor Beattie (Chairperson);
Alderman Dorrian; and
Councillor Lyons.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. K. Mullen, Project Sponsor;
Mr. M. Doherty, Project Manager;
Mr. C. Shields, Assistant Project Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor O'Hara.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th December, 2022 were taken as read and signed as correct.

City Hall Statues Update on Moderation (Verbal Update)

The Project Sponsor reminded the Members that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 28th March 2022, had agreed that the City Hall Statues – Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken be moved to Stage 3; committed on the Capital Programme; and that the necessary procurement processes be initiated, as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders and full commitment to deliver.

She advised the Working Group that, of the five artists which had been shortlisted to ITT (invitation to tender) stage, four of the artists had submitted their proposals and the moderation panel had considered the submissions against the following themes: Quality; Social Value and Price.

The Working Group were presented with maquettes and visual aids of each proposal for inspection. The Project Sponsor and Assistant Project Manager provided an

overview of the artist concepts, together with the feedback from the moderation panel and its recommendations.

During discussion, the Working Group provided feedback on each of the proposals. The Director of Physical Programme's reminded Members that the details of the proposals and outcome of the Moderation Panel was confidential, until the appointment of a selected artist had been made.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided and that the recommendations and feedback from the Moderation Panel and Working Group would be submitted to the Strategic and Policy Resources Committee for consideration.

Frederick Douglass Update

The Working Group was reminded that Endeavour Art Studio (Alan Herriot Beattie) was appointed to manufacture and install a statue of Frederick Douglass.

It was reported that the design team visited Belfast in December 2022 for a site visit and the location had been agreed as the junction of Rosemary Street/Lombard Street. Manufacture of the piece was progressing with a mould of the finished statue ready for sign off in the foundry.

In relation to the public unveiling and an associated programme of events, the Project Sponsor highlighted that Professor Christine Kinealy (subject matter expert) would be in Ireland lecturing at a conference on 21st or 22nd June, and suggested that the public unveiling could take place on Friday, 23rd June or Monday, 26th June, subject to Professor Kinealy's availability.

The Project Sponsor outlined the initial proposals for the unveiling:

- Formal unveiling by Lord Mayor of Belfast and Minister for Communities (part funder);
- Number of Frederick Douglass walking tours (facilitated by Professor Kinealy);
- Update the Frederick Douglass walking tour brochure to include the location of the new statue;
- Lecture/talk/debate at City Hall or another venue with a direct link to Frederick Douglass, with a focus on how Frederick Douglass beliefs, views, campaigns were very much relevant in today's world, for example: the links to slavery, human trafficking, women's rights, poverty and education. Should funding be available there was the potential to seek a local media person to chair the panel.

With regard to invitations for the official unveiling, the Working Group were informed that it was proposed to extend an invitation to: the US Ambassador to Northern Ireland, Joe Kennedy III of Massachusetts; The US Consulate and Consul General Paul Narain; and the Council's Sister Cities connection.

The Project Sponsor advised that regular updates would be provided to the Working Group during this process, however, due to Local Government Elections, the next Working Group was scheduled for 7th June, 2023.

During discussion, one Member suggested the option of a Lord Mayors' reception for Professor Kinealy and highlighted the international interest in the statue.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the progress with the design and manufacture of the Frederick Douglass statue; and
- Noted the public unveiling arrangements and agreed to the proposed dates and associated programme of events, as outlined in the report.

Permanent Acknowledgement to Fire Service Belfast Blitz

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting on 26th October, 2022, it had been agreed that further discussions would take place with a view to a permanent acknowledgement of all fire service efforts during the Belfast Blitz.

The Project Sponsor advised that the discussions had since taken place with representatives from the Fire Brigade Unions, both Belfast and Dublin, and it had been suggested that a permanent piece in the form of a resin cast of a fire brigade helmet be procured and installed. She highlighted that there had also been a request that such acknowledgement included the Auxiliary Fire Services for their efforts during the Belfast Blitz.

The Project Sponsor explained that the piece would be located initially in the Rotunda of the City Hall for a defined period of time and subsequently relocated to the City Hall exhibition.

The Working Group:

- Agreed to the installation of a permanent memorial to acknowledge all of the Fire Service efforts during the Belfast Blitz, as outlined; and
- Agreed that the project be included as an Emerging Project on Council's Capital Programme.

Chairperson

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Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group

Monday, 27th February, 2023

CASTLE, CAVEHILL, ZOO AND NORTH FORESHORE STEERING GROUP MINUTES HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Whyte (Chairperson); and
Councillors Hutchinson, Maskey,
McCullough, Nelson and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Ms. S. Kalke, Project Sponsor; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th February 2023 were agreed.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Access to the Hills - Presentation from ARUP

Ms. M. McNamee (ARUP) attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Ms. McNamee provided the background to the realisation of requirement to provide open space and outdoor recreation, given the indoor restrictions created by the Covid 19 pandemic. She referred to two notices of motion, which had been presented to Council in 2021, on the subject matter of providing increased access to the Belfast Hills.

To that end, she reported that specific routes had been identified and that the study undertaken had included both historical and new potential routes. As part of the delivery plan, she stated that a range of access agreements, providing access to the hills, would be required. Ms. McNamee referred to a longer-term objective of connecting the Belfast Hills to the Castlereagh Hills using the access conduit of the Lagan Valley.

In terms of the scoping exercise, Ms. McNamee reported that ARUP had commenced a stakeholder engagement programme to collect data and identify the main stakeholders and landowners relevant to the creation of a comprehensive and sustainable pathway network.

The Members were informed that, at the current stage of the engagement process, several refining workshops with active stakeholders who had been involved at stage one of the process were being organised. Ms. McNamee stated that ARUP had carried out a range of site visits in order to develop a comprehensive and detailed path audit which would assess gradients, viewpoints and identify potential constraints, including access, livestock and wildlife habitat.

As part of the refining process, the Steering Group was informed that a web-viewer software programme had been utilised to evaluate ecological and environmental constraints, including use made of publicly available web sites. Following completion of that process, the Members were informed that ARUP was able to create a list of constraints and opportunities, for the various routes, to cater for a range of ages and abilities and including constraints such as topography, traffic and land management.

Ms. McNamee reported that, as part of their pathway development proposals, ARUP had considered areas where they could achieve bio-diversity gain, including linkages to both communities and other greenways to promote active travel. The Steering Group was informed that they were currently in the process of identification and prioritisation of routes. Ms. McNamee reported that a comprehensive audit of all the various routes had been assessed, as part of a multi-criteria assessment tool, using a weighted score. She stated that this exercise had been undertaken in an endeavour to assess the routes, including the various opportunities and challenges associated with both.

The Steering Group was informed that ARUP had undertaken a high-level costing exercise, which included signage, steps and way finding. Ms. McNamee identified a range of potential routes providing the Members with a detailed map, as part of her presentation, which showed proposed linkages between the Belfast and Castlereagh Hills. It was reported that ARUP was now in the process of developing a range of concepts, for the various interventions, and was undertaking an economic appraisal in regard to a number of preferred routes.

The Members were informed that it was anticipated that a final report would be presented to the Council by the end of March 2023.

A Member raised a number of issues around access to the hills such as collaborative working, with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), to ensure adequate transportation and appropriate car parking facilities were provided at the appropriate access points to the hills in addition to alternative transport modes to provide access to the car parks. The Member enquired as to what measures could be included to minimise adverse environmental impact and restore the ecological balance to ensure net bio-diversity gain. The Member raised also the issue of using desire lines to develop and incorporate pathways into the Belfast Hills development proposals.

In response, Ms. McNamee stated that, as part of the promotion of active travel, ARUP had undertaken research on existing active travel infrastructure, as part of the MCA process, and that discussions had been undertaken with external landowners, including the National Trust. The Steering Group was informed that ARUP had been working with their ecology team to assess bio-diversity outcomes and the ecological impact associated with the Belfast Hills pathways programme. She stated that the use of desire lines to map out pathways had been used, in the past, to develop and formalise, both, pathways and mountain trails.

The Steering Group noted the information which had been provided and thanked Ms. McNamee for her detailed and informative presentation.

Date of Next Meeting

The Steering Group agreed that its next scheduled meeting would be held on Monday, 7th August at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson

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Subject:	Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE in person meeting in Maribor Slovenia, 28 th – 29 th March 2023
Date:	24 th March 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director, City & Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Alan Wardle – Project Support Officer (Climate Team)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	Members are asked to note the Council's intention to send an officer to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Group Meeting taking place on 28 th -29 th March in Maribor, Slovenia which the Council is required to attend as a project partner.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Note that, as the project lead for the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project, Alan Wardle will be attending the Project Group meeting in 28th – 29th March in Maribor, Slovenia. II. Note that all costs associated with the attendance at the event are covered within the EU Horizon 2020 UPSURGE grant funding.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will recall that in August 2020 Belfast City Council agreed to take part in the 'Upsurge Project' which focuses on testing nature-based solutions in partnership with four

	<p>other EU cities, with the aim of sharing learning and good practice. The site selected as the demonstrator for Belfast is the open ground at Lower Botanic Gardens, beside the Queen's PEC. Belfast City Council was subsequently awarded € 660,375 funding through Horizon Europe to deliver the demonstrator project which will include opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing across the city.</p>
3.2	<p>The UPSURGE project presents an innovative opportunity to develop an underused area of land within Belfast City Council's ownership, through a partnership with QUB, EU partners, and local community organisations. A project team has been established which includes Belfast City Council's Climate Team, Innovation Unit, City and Neighbourhood Services, Physical Programmes, City Regeneration, and Planning in addition to QUB representatives. The project will act as a hub, with the potential to support rewilding, enhanced local food production, stimulation of local circular economy, and will develop community education programmes in relation to climate, digital innovation, and community resilience.</p>
3.3	<p>As part of the delivery of the project, a number of Project Group Meetings are taking place at different host cities, where updates on the project will be provided, an opportunity to share learning and expertise on the effective delivery of the project is able to occur, and each of the 5 partner cities (Belfast, Breda, Budapest, Maribor, and Katowice) are asked to report on progress towards the delivery of their demonstrator project. At least one representative from each partner city is required to attend as per the funding agreement.</p>
3.4	<p>Belfast City Council has previously taken part in these meetings, with one previously taking place in Prato in October 2022. The benefits to the project from this meeting included building of relationships across project partners, learning on the various work packages, specifications and scope of works for the demonstrator development. It also created opportunities to identify risks, concerns and challenges between the 5 cities and communicate these to the other project partners so that the project can further support the cities to maximise the opportunities to deliver well on each of their demonstrator sites.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.5	<p>There are no financial implications for Belfast City Council. All travel costs can be met within the EU Horizon 2020 funding of € 660,375.</p>

3.6	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Link to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project page here .

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