

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 6th February, 2024

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);  
Councillors Bell, Black, Bower, R. Brooks, Bunting,  
Canavan, Cobain, de Faoite, M. Donnelly,  
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Kelly, Magee, Maghie,  
McAteer, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Doherty.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th and 24th January were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillors Canavan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in Agenda Items 3 (a) Presentation – Belfast Advice Group and 3 (b) Funding Request from Belfast Advice Group as they were associated with organisations which were in receipt of funding from the Advice Service and they both left the meeting whilst the agenda items were being considered.

### Presentations

#### Open Botanic - Forward South Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. Briege Arthurs (Chief Executive, FSP), Maggie McKeever (Urban Regeneration Officer, FSP) and Rachel Murphy (QUB StreetSpace).

Together, the representatives provided an overview of the Open Botanic Festival advising that it was an opportunity for members of the public to see what it was like to "experience the diverse, busy thoroughfare in a totally different way".

The representative advised that the Forward South Partnership, through the Open Botanic Festival, a community led festival, was leading the discussion around changes to the streets of Belfast with fewer cars in order to give better access to pedestrians and cyclists, reduce pollution and improve health. With the aid of powerpoint they demonstrated how Street Space worked in collaboration with academia, government and local communities to analyse streets and fulfil their potential to be people-centred, accessible and inclusive public places. This included comprehensive international and regional evidence of the benefits, along with the need to challenge perceptions about reducing traffic on streets.

The Members were advised of the various challenges associated around vehicle use and busy streets. These included people experiencing feelings of danger and unsafety from traffic, from anti-social behaviour, unpleasant environments and the loss of public space, parking and access problems and public transport provision challenges forcing people to use vehicles.

The representative drew the Members' attention to the progress made by Street Space on various projects, in particular the Shaftesbury Square and Botanic Avenue Master Plan.

The Committee was then provided with an overview of the successful Open Botanic Festival 2023, as follows:

- Over 2300 participants;
- Over 20 health, community and not for profit organisations involved;
- 6 community groups involved in kiosk co-design;
- 100 adults and children participated in the Art Workshop;
- 30 Vox Pop interviews;
- 22 About Today questionnaires;
- 21 Street Surveys; and
- 22 Partner Event Evaluation Surveys.

The representatives concluded by detailing the positive impact of Open Botanic from the various participants and end users and stated that they looked forward to further enhancing and growing this experience.

Following discussion, during which the Members commended the work done by the various stakeholders, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they left the meeting.

#### **Restricted Items**

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

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

The Members were advised that content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

### **Presentation - Belfast Advice Group**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Gerry Tubritt and Ms. Maria Morgan, representing the Belfast Advice Group (BAG), to the meeting.

With the aid of PowerPoint, they provided details on the support that BAG currently provided through funding agreements to the five area consortiums to deliver generalist advice services across all geographies within the city and also through annual Council funding to support the Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS).

The Committee was reminded that the BAG had written to the Council in December seeking additional funding for generalist advice provision and seeking the Council to annually fund the BCTS, this included seeking the Council to commit to several uplifts to cover additional salary and running/overhead costs, all of which were detailed to the Members.

Following discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives and they left the meeting.

### **Funding Request from Belfast Advice Group**

The Committee agreed to refer the request seeking the Council to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service to the sum of £269,063 per annum and to build in an additional annual cost of living uplift of 3% to the award for generalist advice provision to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration.

### **Resources and Fleet Waste Update**

The Director of Resources and Fleet drew the Members' attention to a comprehensive report which provided an update on the following matters:

- Waste Performance and Recycling Rates;
- Waste Framework;
- Inner City Recycling Scheme;
- Pre-Loved toys Scheme;
- Kerbside Glass;
- Community Repaint Scheme;
- Recycling Centres Update;
- Connected Circular Economy – Shared Island Project;
- Waste Tourism;
- Tackling Multiple Black (Residual) Bins;
- In-Cab Technology;
- Operational Update – Access Issues and Collaborative Exercise; and
- Consultation and Call for Evidence for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

Detailed discussed ensued by the Members, during which the following issues were noted:

- that Bryson Recycling was not lifting bins with contaminated waste, but these were often left at the side of the street and it was agreed that officers engage with Bryson on options to address this problem;
- that an analysis of the pre-loved toys scheme was being undertaken and that a report would be submitted to committee in due course;
- that the launch of the smaller collection vehicles pilots forecast to commence in May due to the lead in times for hire of the vehicles and recruitment and a report would be brought back to the Committee prior to commencement of the pilot;
- that possible capital funding might be available via the Collaborative Change Fund that had recently been re-launched and that this might allow for the purchase of capital items such as vehicles but to note it would not extend to the revenue costs of staffing and fuel etc;
- that the introduction of pedestrian access at Alexandra Park Household Recycling Centre was currently being progressed and that Palmerston Road Recycling Centre was the next for consideration;
- that an update on the Litter Bins Tender would be submitted in due course; and
- that technical meetings with Dfl, the PSNI and Council officers were ongoing regarding running a pilot in selected streets to address blocked streets and noted that an update report on the proposal would be submitted to Committee prior to any roll out.

The Committee:

- noted that the closing date of 7th March for the DEFRA Consultation and Call for Evidence on reforming the producer responsibility system for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and that Council officers were compiling a response. The Members were asked to forward any submissions they might have for consideration to [stephensi@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:stephensi@belfastcity.gov.uk) with the draft response to be presented to Committee in advance of submission;
- agreed that an update would be submitted to a future meeting detailing the disposal policy for Council WEEE; and
- agreed to write to the DAERA Minister seeking an update on the Waste Strategy and Common Collection Guidelines;

### **Update on Macmillan 'Move More' Programme**

The Committee was provided with an update on the status of the Macmillan Cancer Support patient referral programme, along with plans for funding to ensure continuation of a cancer prehabilitation intervention service beyond 1st April 2024.

The Committee noted:

- that Macmillan Cancer Support had confirmed that funding for its cancer prehabilitation programme would end on 31st March 2024; and
- and agreed plans for the continuation of current Council and GLL funding to ensure sustainability of a cancer prehabilitation service for a period of three years until 31st March 2027.

### **Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group Update**

The Director of City Services provided the Members with an update in respect of the following matters:

- Update on the new Crematorium Development;
- Update on Bereavement Services Operations; and
- Future Burial Land; and
- Amended Working Group Meeting Time.

Following an issue raised by a Member regarding incidents of dog fouling in the City Cemetery, the Director of City Services undertook to check the status and to add the Cemetery to the list of fouling patrols.

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 24th January.

### **Committee/Strategic Issues**

#### **Reference Group on Older People Update**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that the recent meeting of the Reference Group on Older People had been held at the City Hall on 12th December, 2023.

At this meeting an update had been provided on the following areas of work:

- Social Connections;
- Social isolation Training;
- Positive Ageing Month and Volunteer Celebration Event updates;

- 2023 Age Friendly Calendars;
- Winter Planning;
- Cost of Living Support; and
- Overview of support provided by Community Centres to older people.

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes from the Reference Group on Older People held on 12th December, 2023.

**Draft response to DfC Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework Consultation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report and draft response to the Department for Communities Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework Consultation:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise members of Department for Community (DfC) consultation relating to the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework and seek members’ approval for the draft response to be submitted in advance of the deadline of 9th February 2024.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 Members are asked:**

- **To note the consultation exercise, consider the draft response that has been prepared and approve that this is submitted as a formal council response.**
- **To note that the consultation ends on Friday 9th February and approve that the draft response is issued in advance of that deadline. Any additional comments from February Council can be issued by officers to DfC after the formal end date of 9th February.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background information**

**3.1 Members may be aware that DfC is carrying out a programme of work aimed at refreshing the policy frameworks for its voluntary and community sector support. To this end, a consultation was launched by the Department on 15 November 2023. The current open consultation relates to DfC’s investment in the voluntary and community sector infrastructure support. This investment is currently made primarily through organisations operating at a regional level such as NICVA, Advice NI and Volunteer Now.**

The Department's engagement took place between March and June 2023 and involved a range of methods to inform the shape and design of new policy and funding frameworks. This included the formation of a stakeholder's reference group, open invitation workshops, roundtable discussions, targeted workshops with different subsectors such as Age, LGBTQ+, Minority Ethnic communities, Disability, Women's sector, and local government officers as well as a survey to explore headline needs and priorities.

- 3.2 Sector infrastructure organisations are defined as '... those whose main purpose includes providing support to other voluntary and community organisations: building capacity and skills within the sector through training, advice, information exchange, convening, policy work, consultancy and providing platforms and access to resources (including physical spaces).

The full consultation document, supporting materials and online questionnaire can be accessed at [Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure and Support Policy Framework - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#) The following is a summary of the main elements.

- 3.3 The draft framework identifies an overarching vision of "A confident, independent and collaborative sector which empowers and sustains local action and volunteering; a sector that represents the diversity of our communities and supports the delivery of inclusive and accessible services and programme for government outcomes through partnership, innovation and challenge". It identifies the need for a spectrum of infrastructure support across four headline areas:

- Leadership and Advocacy
- Collaboration and Partnerships
- Capacity Building (practical skills and resilience) and
- Volunteering

The infrastructure support framework is built on six core values;

- Value 1: Accountability
- Value 2: Active Participation
- Value 3: Social Justice
- Value 4: Independence
- Value 5: Collaboration
- Value 6: Sustainability

- 3.4 The framework identifies five key areas where the DfC can lead and deliver in support of sector outcomes:
1. **Creating effective partnerships: working with sector partners, with government and independent funders**
  2. **Sustained investment in sector infrastructure: commissioning an integrated framework of support geared towards a common outcomes framework**
  3. **Creating a more enabling regulatory and policy environment: delivering the agreed reforms to charity regulation and strategic policy**
  4. **Applying and championing improved funding practices: exploring, developing, applying and sharing good practice**
  5. **Improving understanding about the work and impact of the sector: collating, interpreting and sharing data and evidence**

- 3.5 Although this consultation is centred on the framework to support to regional organisations DfC also notes that it will work with local government to redesign the community development element of the Community Support Programme (CSP) and align it with the vision, outcomes and delivery priorities of the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework.

Members will be aware that Council received significant funding through the CSP. Officers received approval at last month's committee to develop a new Community Support Plan for the city and engagement with DfC will form part of that work to ensure that any emerging plan aligns with any changes to the Community Support Programme and any other relevant programmes.

#### Response to Consultation

- 3.6 The draft Belfast City Council response to this consultation is provided in Appendix 1. Members are asked to consider this document and approve its submission as the formal Belfast City consultation response.
- 3.7 The key elements to note in the response are:
- **Recognition that DfC provided a range of engagement methodologies during its information gathering stage that was appropriate and inclusive.**



- The draft Framework clearly articulates DfC's intention and sets out the infrastructure support needs, core values, vision, headline outcomes and identified areas where DfC can maximise its impact.
- Council broadly agrees that each element of the framework sets out reasonable ambitions that will underpin support to regional support organisations which are relevant to the implementation of the framework.
- The draft framework presents the DfC's intention and is high level, Council's response notes that resourcing and implementing the aspirations outlined have yet to be discussed and that this should include consideration of the CSP and how local organisations are supported. There is reference in the framework to sustainability, collaboration, partnership working and accountability. These are areas that require further consideration and explanation.
- Although focussed on regional infrastructure organisations, the council response notes that there is little reference to the relevance of these organisations in supporting smaller groups, neighbourhood community based organisations and communities of interest. The definition of support provided by Community Infrastructure Organisations(sub-regional Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-sectoral) and Volunteer Centres is useful but further detail on how these will interact with each other to provide accessible support should be considered.
- The role of Local Authorities is mentioned but is very limited. The response highlights that the role of local council in providing support to the sector, through provision of funding and investment and partnership working needs to be specified in the Framework. In particular, Community Planning needs to be specified in the Framework and its function and relationship with regional support organisations elaborated on.
- The response reiterates the need to work with local government to redesign the community development element of the Community Support Programme.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 No implications at present for Belfast City Council.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications/**

**Rural Needs Assessment**

3.9 No implications at present for Belfast City Council.

Appendix 1- Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework - Draft Framework: Draft BCC Consultation response

**Overview**

The Department is carrying out a programme of work aimed at refreshing the policy frameworks for our voluntary and community sector support. This includes agreeing with our partners on the outcomes that we should prioritise in future years. A review of sectoral needs will inform how we can better support the sector to deliver outcomes set out in any future Programme for Government.

**Engagement**

As part of this review, we engaged with a wide range of organisations in the sector, to draw together their collective experiences, understand key priorities and needs, listen to ideas and opinions, and add voice and input to help us shape future programmes for whom the refresh will deliver. We have also engaged with other departments, local government, independent funders and established a reference group comprising of a range of sectoral interests.

Our engagement approach involved a range of methods to inform the shape and design of new policy and funding frameworks and took place between March and June 2023.

**Definition**

Sector infrastructure organisations are those whose main purpose includes providing support to other voluntary and community organisations: building capacity and skills within the sector through training, advice, information exchange, convening, policy work, consultancy and providing platforms and access to resources (including physical spaces).

**Identified Needs**

The Department has surveyed VCS organisations and led an extensive programme of engagement to explore the range of needs and priorities for future infrastructure delivery. This process has confirmed the need for a spectrum of infrastructure support across four headline areas:

- Leadership and Advocacy
- Collaboration and Partnerships

- Capacity Building (practical skills and resilience) and
- Volunteering

### Core Values and Ways of Working

#### Value 1: Accountability

A shared commitment to act with high standards of integrity and professionalism. This includes being open, honest, and transparent in the interests of a shared and common agenda and demonstrating mutual respect, and accountability for our actions and in our decision making.

#### Value 2: Active Participation

A shared commitment to the active participation of all stakeholders in Northern Ireland, which seeks to address inequalities of power and ensures genuine opportunities for participation, involvement, and influence. This is rooted in the shared belief that communities and people have the right, and should be empowered to, identify their own needs and interests and the outcomes required to meet these.

#### Value 3: Social Justice

A shared commitment to human rights, equality, and anti-discrimination. This involves promoting, advancing, and protecting human rights and equality in our society, while recognising the intersectional impacts of inequality and discrimination experienced by individuals, groups, and communities.

#### Value 4: Independence

A shared understanding of the need for an independent, resilient, and sustainable voluntary and community sector to meet shared societal outcomes; recognising and supporting the sector's legal rights to give voice to civic society, to participate in, shape, comment and challenge public policy and decision making and to determine and manage its own affairs.

#### Value 5: Collaboration

A shared commitment to promoting and sustaining opportunities for relationship building, collaboration and partnership working between our sectors, and to broadening shared experience and understanding, for the benefit of the communities and people we serve.

#### Value 6: Sustainability

A shared commitment to climate justice and sustainable development, including promoting cultural, environmental, economic, and socially sustainable policies and practices.

Belfast City Council strongly agrees with the values and practices outlined as a way of supporting the relationship between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Resourcing and implementing the aspirations outlined have yet to be discussed and that this should include consideration of the CSP and how local organisations are supported. There is reference in the framework to sustainability, collaboration, partnership working and accountability. These are areas that require further consideration and explanation. The section on collaboration should include reference to local authorities as a key sector/stakeholder in this work, particularly through the Community Support Programme and Community planning structures and opportunities.

Belfast City Council strongly agrees that a future Concordat/agreement would be strengthened if a legal duty were created to require NI Executive Ministers to act in compliance with the concordat values and practices when making decisions and carrying out ministerial responsibilities.

Belfast City Council has no preference on the term used to refer to a wider range of “civil society” organisations: a very broad definition that includes everything outside the state (public sector) and the market (private sector).

### Vision

“A confident, independent and collaborative sector which empowers and sustains local action and volunteering; a sector that represents the diversity of our communities and supports the delivery of inclusive and accessible services and programme for government outcomes through partnership, innovation and challenge”

Belfast City Council strongly agrees with the intention of Vision within the context of delivering on government outcomes. Further thought will be given to how the Vision relates to our Community Planning outcomes, themes and priorities.

### Headline Outcomes

The Department has developed 4 headline outcomes to articulate what success looks like against this vision:

#### Leadership and Advocacy headline outcome

Strong leadership and effective advocacy within the sector promotes the interests of our diverse communities and enables community connection and engagement.

**Volunteering headline outcome**

Volunteering activity is enabled and supported to maximise benefits for individuals, organisations and communities.

**Core Capacity and Resilience headline outcome**

Core capacity and resilience of organisations within the sector is sustained and further developed to enable people and communities to thrive.

**Collaboration and Partnership headline outcome**

Effective collaboration and partnership enhance the impact of the sector's work.

Belfast City Council strongly agrees with the four headline outcomes. However, we recognise that the outcomes also need to reflect that the VCSE sector works within a wider system that includes local government, communities, service users, funders, partnerships and networks and that all parts of that system need to play an active part.

Council notes that it would be useful to clarify the definition of sector-led and to clarify whether work be led by the VCSE sector. If this is the case, detail on how the VCSE sector will be resourced to undertake this work and what the governance arrangements will be to ensure accountability.

**Delivering the Ambition**

DfC's recent engagement and discussion with stakeholders points to five key areas where the Department for Communities can lead and deliver in support of sector outcomes:

1. **Creating effective partnerships: working with sector partners, with government and independent funders**
2. **Sustained investment in sector infrastructure: commissioning an integrated framework of support geared towards a common outcomes framework**
3. **Creating a more enabling regulatory and policy environment: delivering the agreed reforms to charity regulation and strategic policy**
4. **Applying and championing improved funding practices: exploring, developing, applying and sharing good practice**

**5. Improving understanding about the work and impact of the sector: collating, interpreting and sharing data and evidence**

**Belfast City Council agrees with the five delivery areas.**

**Council welcomes the department's commitment to working in partnership with sector infrastructure organisations to ensure effective delivery against the agreed vision and outcomes and the creation of a regional infrastructure delivery partnership covering the whole of NI. Further consideration should be given to the role of local government and community planning in delivering support and resources to achieve sector outcomes.**

**Belfast City Council welcomes the commitment to redesign the Community Support Programme in partnership with local government and align it with the vision, outcomes and delivery priorities of the Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support Framework. We welcome the Department for Communities recognition of the distinct role of local government in supporting grassroots community development activity within council areas which will be enabled and enhanced by the provision of high quality regional and sub-regional sectoral infrastructure support.**

**Council suggests that further detail on how Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-regional), Community Infrastructure Organisations (sub-sectoral) and Volunteer Centres will interact with each other to provide accessible support to small locally based organisations should be considered.**

**We welcome the intention to provide sustained investment. A commitment to fund organisations and service provision beyond short-term funding cycles and ensure sustainability will contribute significantly to achieving the stated Vision. Council agrees with the Indicative Priorities for Investment.**

**Measuring impact and sharing data will contribute significantly to our understanding of sector, its services and needs of the users and communities. We will give further thought to the how we gather and share this information and its contribution to evidence-based decision making.**

**Statutory Assessments**

**Belfast City Council agrees with the conclusion of the equality screening exercise.**

### **Rural Needs Impact Assessment**

**Belfast City Council cannot identify any further issues that the proposed draft framework presents for rural communities at this time.”**

The Committee noted the consultation exercise and agreed that the draft response, as detailed above, be submitted as the formal Council response by the 9th February deadline, subject to Council ratification, with any additional comments received after the deadline to be submitted by Council officers.

### **Summer Schemes for Children with Additional Needs**

The Committee was reminded that a report had previously been presented to the November 2023 meeting of the People and Communities Committee which had provided an overview of 2023 leisure centre holiday recreation schemes as delivered by GLL.

During discussion of that report, a Member had highlighted that children with special needs were often not able to avail of these schemes due to their high support needs and it was subsequently agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would consider the inclusion of children with special needs in the holiday scheme programme.

The Strategic Director then provided an overview of the current provision. He reported that, through engagement with Family Support Hubs and meetings with partners, including the Education Authority (EA), officers were aware that there was a growing number of young people presenting with additional needs and that there was a lack of provision to support their participation in activities. Youth workers and community organisations reported that they were struggling with these issues and the associated impacts on their insurance, health and safety, risks and staff not being adequately trained in working with these young people.

He advised that the EA provided funding for voluntary summer scheme provision with around 450 applications from primary, post-primary, special schools and EOTAS settings. In addition, a number of organisations including Kids Together, Sólás, the Cedar Foundation, Mencap NI, NI Autism Centre, Autonomy and the NOW Group also delivered summer schemes for children and young people with additional needs. Mitchell House, Fleming Fulton and Harberton special schools also provided summer schemes.

The Director continued that, in order to contribute to addressing this gap in provision, it was proposed that a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking funding for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, one in each area of the City, at a total cost of £80,000 (maximum £20,000 per scheme), which would allow increased numbers of children to participate in summer schemes that were suitable for their needs.

He advised that, if funding was agreed, Council officers could then undertake initial engagement with the relevant organisations to scope the potential to procure provision of four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs in summer 2024.

There was unanimous support from this proposal from across the political parties. A Member highlighted that the report made the point that additional places might be offered with parent/carer support. She stated that, whilst some parents/carers might welcome this and be available to go along, she was conscious that this was a group of people who already provided intensive support and care to their children and who were also in need of a break and she stated that she felt that the Council should, where possible, be striving to offer an inclusive service, not a different one.

The Member also sought clarity on several other issues pertaining to the proposed pilot and the Director undertook to have an officer contact her directly to discuss the proposal in more detail.

The Committee:

- noted the report and agreed that a request be made to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for additional funding to procure specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the additional schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the City, with discussion to take place with the relevant Area Working Groups and the Belfast City Youth Council in advance of any locations being agreed; and
- agreed to submit an update report to a future meeting detailing the sensory play areas available throughout the City, along with the locations of these.

### **Operational Issues**

#### **Cherryvale Playing Fields – Recent Animal Welfare Cases**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the Members with a comprehensive update on two reported incidents of dog illness following a suspected ingestion of grass cuttings within Cherryvale Park and Playing Fields that had been reported to the Council on 23rd December 2023.

The officer drew the Members' attention to the details of the sequence of events leading to, and following, the dogs illness reports, as well as the actions taken by officers prior to and following the incident, in order to ensure that the park remained safe for all users.

The Members were advised that maintaining high levels of both cleanliness and safety within Council parks included having regard for all park users as well as considerations for animal welfare. The signage advising dog owners to keep their dogs on leads had been increased and whilst Council officers could make every effort to ensure that the site was safe for all users, the Council could not guarantee that all sites were free from inedible material and therefore the officer emphasised that the best way to ensure pets remained safe was to keep them on a lead.



The officer advised that, to date, the Council had received no evidence to suggest that the reported cases of illness at Cherryvale Park was related to any product used by or work practice employed by Council operatives, however, the grass cuttings from the pitch had been removed from the site as a precaution. He advised that the results of a laboratory sample from the cuttings was outstanding and he undertook to keep the Committee updated.

Several of the Members thanked the Council officers for their prompt response in investigating the incident.

A Member voiced his desire to see the inclusion of dog off lead exercise areas included in some Council parks, particularly Ormeau.

A further Member stated that, whilst she too was keen on the provision of such areas, she was keen to ensure that these would be well signposted to ensure that other users of the park were aware of them.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that an update report on potential dog exercise areas would be submitted to the Area Working Groups in due course and, at the request of a Member, it was agreed that bench marking of the required facilities against other Councils would be undertaken prior to the submission of this report.

The Committee noted:

- the actions taken by Council officers to ensure the safety of all park users of Cherryvale Park; and
- that an update on the outcome of the grass cutting test sample would be submitted to a future meeting, when available.

#### **Article 4 and 5 of Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

##### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

##### **1.1 The Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) (2011 Act) (Commencement No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**To make Members of the People and Communities Committee aware that The Waste and Contaminated Land (Amendment) (2011 Act) (Commencement No. 3) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, which came into force in January 2023, gives councils a joint responsibility with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) for certain matters under the aforementioned legislation including, but not limited to the offence of fly-tipping.**

- 1.2 No additional funding has been provided to councils by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to support the implementation of the new powers under Article 4 and 5 of the Waste and Contaminated (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. These powers are discretionary for councils to use in circumstances where they chose to do so.
- 1.3 Council officers have been involved in discussions with officers from other councils in Northern Ireland in order to agree a consistent and proportionate approach, as these matters may involve operations and offences which extend beyond Belfast City Council area.
- 1.4 The NIEA is the waste licensing authority for NI and it obtains the fees associated with legitimate waste operators. NIEA has been the sole enforcing authority under Article 4 and 5 for the previous 25 years. It is therefore unlikely that councils will seek to use their discretionary powers under Article 4 or 5 where the NIEA should be seeking to regulate the matter using its licensing powers.
- 1.5 Operational Arrangements on Fly-Tipping - Protocol Agreement between Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Belfast City Council
- 1.6 Both the NIEA and local Council have powers and responsibilities to deal with fly-tipping. The Protocol sets out the criteria for the determination of responsibility for waste crime incidents between NIEA and local Councils.
- 2.0 Recommendation
- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Note the report;
  - Agree the Fixed Penalty Rate for Article 4 offences to be set at £400;
  - Decide whether or not to offer an early payment discount;
  - If an early payment discount is to be offered agree a discounted rate of £300 the Article 4 Fixed Penalty Notice is paid within 10 days;
- 3.0 Main Report
- 3.1 New Enforcement Powers

**3.2 Article 4**

**Power to enforce against the Unauthorised or Harmful Deposit, Treatment or Disposal of Waste under the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997. Under Article 4 of the Order *a person shall not (a) deposit controlled waste, or knowingly cause or knowingly permit controlled waste to be deposited in or on any land unless a waste management licence authorising the deposit is in force and the deposit is in accordance with the licence; or (b) treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste, or knowingly cause or knowingly permit controlled waste to be treated, kept or disposed of (i) in or on any land (ii) by means of any mobile plant, except under and in accordance with a waste management licence; (c) treat, keep or dispose of controlled waste in a manner likely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to health.***

**3.3 The offence under Article 4 is commonly referred to as fly-tipping. If a fly-tipping offence, under Article 4, is detected by an Authorised Officer the Officer may give to that person, Notice offering them the opportunity of discharging any liability to conviction for the offence by payment of a Fixed Penalty Notice. The amount of the Fixed Penalty Notice cannot be less than £100 and not more than £400.**

**3.4 Our officers are currently dealing with fly-tipping offences under the Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 with a Fixed Penalty Rate of £80, reduced to £60, if paid within 10 days. However, the offence of fly-tipping has been described by the former Department of the Environment as a premeditated act involving more than a single item of waste collected together and moved to a location without any regard to its final legitimate disposal. On the contrary, littering tends to involve smaller quantities of material which are dropped or disposed of shortly after the item has become of no further use to the offender.**

**3.5 Officers from councils in NI set up a working group to try to agree a consistent and proportionate approach to the enforcement of Article 4 as this type of offence can involve movement of waste across council boundaries. It is proposed that all councils set the Fixed Penalty Rate for this offence at £400. If a council wishes to agree an early payment discount, it is proposed that this should be a discounted amount of £300 if paid within 10 days of the date of the notice.**

**Article 5**

**3.6 Article 5 of the Order imposes a “*duty of care*” on any person who imports, produces, collects, carries, treats, or**

*disposes of controlled waste or, as a broker or dealer has control of such waste, shall take all such measures applicable to them in that capacity as are reasonable in the circumstances to prevent any contravention by any other person of Article 4 of the Order.*

- 3.7 Powers available under Article 5 are much broader and are likely to involve illicit waste operations and other commercial and industrial entities. There is an extensive list of offences included in Article 5 of the Order, which would impact the volume of work and officer involvement and will require more consideration on resources needed and operability. It is more likely if Council were to exercise these discretionary powers it would be done so in partnership with relevant bodies including NIEA.
- 3.8 Article 5 powers can be used to assist with enforcement matters in relation to commercial waste. Officers are aware of the impact of additional financial burdens on the business community which is already under significant financial strain following the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis. It is anticipated that officers will use a graduated approach when dealing with potential offences under Article 5. However, there could still be situations where there are no other means of resolving an issue other than to use Article 5 powers. An offence under Article 5 has a set Fixed Penalty of £300.
- 3.9 It is proposed that Members would agree that Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997, should only be implemented when there is a significant possibility of significant harm to the environment or where conditions are prejudicial to health or when there are no other means of resolving an issue other than to use Article 5 powers.
- 3.10 We have a small team of authorised officers working in this area where the key role is detecting littering and fly tipping offences. This team already works closely with colleagues in our Open Spaces and Street scene function. These powers came into effect on 2 January 2023 and are a useful additional regulatory tool. However we will need to continue to assess and monitor the impacts on resources and budgets. Therefore depending on the impact of application of these discretionary powers it may be necessary to bring a further report back to committee. We will avail of additional training to support implementation.
- 3.11 The Operational Arrangements on Fly-Tipping - Protocol Agreement between Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Belfast City Council is attached. (See Appendix)The Protocol sets out the criteria for the determination of

responsibility for waste crime incidents between the NIEA and local councils as follows:

**Volume of waste deposited**

- 3.12 Local Councils will have responsibility for all non-hazardous waste deposits under 20 cubic metres in volume or accumulations of several small-scale fly-tipping incidents.
- 3.13 The NIEA will have responsibility for all waste deposits over 20 cubic metres in volume regardless of the waste classification.

Photo of waste emptied from a bin lorry = 18.5m<sup>3</sup>



**Classification of the waste deposited**

- 3.14 Local Councils will have responsibility for all hazardous waste of a type and volume that could be accepted at an appropriately authorised Council operated civic amenity or waste recycling centre.

The NIEA will have responsibility of all other hazardous waste of a type and volume which would not be accepted at a Council operated Recycling Centre.

Mixtures of waste containing hazardous material that cannot be safely removed will be treated as hazardous in their entirety.

It is noted there is an error in Appendix 1 of the Protocol as NIEA has not included Article 4 and 5 as powers now available to councils. This has been brought to the attention of NIEA and it is anticipated this amendment will be made to the Protocol. Members are asked to agree in principle, subject to amendment of Appendix 1, to sign the Protocol.

**Finance and Resource Implications**

- 3.15 Budget within the City Services will be utilised to train staff to enforce the new powers. NI councils hope to source this

training jointly in order to reduce the costs. There may be additional income from the service of Fixed Penalty Notices. The impacts of these new powers on budgets and resources will be monitored.

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

**3.16 None.”**

The Committee agreed that the Fixed Penalty Rate for Article 4 offences be set at £400 and that no early payment discount rate would be available.

**Events in Parks Requests**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The Committee is asked to note that Council has received several requests from event organisers to host events across several city park locations in 2024. These include:**

- Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach – Dixon Playing Fields
- Festival of Fools – Cathedral Gardens
- Belfast 24 Hour Run – Victoria Park
- Belfast Photo Festival – Botanic Gardens
- St Patricks Day Festival – Cathedral Gardens
- Lear – Victoria Park
- Afro-Fest Belfast – Crescent Park Belfast
- Annual 12th July Demonstration – BARNETTS DEMESNE

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to grant authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted and to delegate authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure the following:**

- I. Where appropriate negotiate a fee which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Councils Commercial Manager.
- II. Negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around ‘set up’ &

take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:

- The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction.
- The promoter carrying out appropriate resident and community engagement
- The promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence

2.2 Please note that the above recommendations are taken as a pre - policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

### 3.0 Main Report

#### Key Issues

3.1 If agreed, the event organiser or promoters will be required in advance of the event to submit an event management plan for approval by the Council and all relevant statutory bodies. This will include an assessment of how the event will impact upon the surrounding area and measures to mitigate these impacts.

#### Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach - Dixon Playing fields

3.2 The church has a small congregation with around 50 members who meet in Bloomfield Gospel Hall, Woodcot Avenue. As part of their community work, they have held a number of gospel outreach events in Dixon Park in recent years. This has involved the erection of a portable hall for a number of weeks. In 2023 the council granted permission for drive-in services on Sunday evenings throughout the Spring and Summer months.

3.3 In addition, the church also hosted their outreach programme Monday to Friday throughout the month of June. The organiser has informed Council that this was very well received by the local community with a number of non-members attending the services.

3.4 The organiser would like to repeat the success of the last 2 years in 2024. During the Sunday evening services a small curtain-sided van will be used as a platform for the event guest speaker with low volume battery powered portable loudspeakers being used to enable the persons speaking to be heard within the carpark. The group have also requested to carry out a Summer Bible Time outreach event that would

include children from the local area along with Polish, Slovakian and Romanian children.

3.5 The organisers have a good working relationship with the Scirocco Football Club who use the playing fields. The football club help to advertise the services on their website and on the few occasions that football training occurs during the services, there is ample room for both groups to co-exist.

3.6 The key dates for the request are:

- Sunday Evening Services
- Sunday 7 April 2024 to Sunday 29 September 2024 – 7pm to 7.30pm
- Summer Bible Time
- Monday 5 August to Thursday 8 August 2024 – 4pm to 5pm & 7pm to 8pm
- Friday 9 August 2024 – 4pm to 8pm

24 Hour Run – Victoria Park

3.7 The event organiser has requested the use of Victoria Park to host the 24-hour championship race. The race is in its 14th year having moved to Victoria Park in 2016.

3.8 The key dates for the request are:

- Friday 14th June 2023 – Set Up
- Saturday 15th June – Official Race begins at 12pm
- Sunday 16th June – Official Race ends at 1pm
- Sunday 18th June – De-rig & off site for 3pm

3.9 It is estimated that around 250 runners will take part. This event takes place throughout the night and in previous years there have been a number of noise disturbances so Council officers will work closely with the event organiser this year to ensure these disturbances are mitigated. The event is to raise money to help send the Northern Ireland Ultra team to events along with a charity yet to be selected. The event will host the 24-Hour Championship along with the 100k & 50k championship. The event organiser also hopes that it will include the Irish 24-Hour championship.

3.10 As Victoria Park has 24-hour access due to forming part of the Connswater Community Greenway there are no additional operational considerations that need addressed as part of this request.

Festival of Fools – Cathedral Gardens

3.11 Festival of Fools Ltd have requested the use of Cathedral Gardens to host their Festival of Fools event 2024.



- 3.12 Festival of Fools is a free to attend family friendly festival that will incorporate circus and outdoor arts shows. The show will incorporate international acts that will provide both circus and street entertainment.
- 3.13 The key dates for the request are:
- Saturday 4 May – Set up from 10am
  - Saturday 4 May – Main Show 12pm to 7pm
  - Sunday 5 May – Main Show 12pm to 7pm
  - Monday 6 May - Main show 12pm to 7pm
  - Monday 6 May - De Rig and Off Site

**Belfast Photo Festival – Botanic Gardens**

- 3.14 Belfast Photo Festival is a not-for-profit organisation that presents one of the leading international festivals of photography in the United Kingdom and the Visual Arts Festival of Northern Ireland. Launched in 2011, this now annual photographic event has been described as one of the “best photography festivals in the world” (Capture Magazine) and attracts upwards of 100 thousand visitors a year, celebrating some of the finest National and International contemporary photography across 30 museums, galleries and public spaces. Capturing wide appeal through popular culture, accessible themes and unexpected encounters with photography, the festival aims to instil and inspire public enjoyment and participation by utilising the most accessible artistic medium and bringing it to new audience in cool and unusual ways. The festival consists of exhibitions, talks, symposiums, workshops, screening, masterclasses, portfolio reviews and tours.
- 3.15 The primary location of the Belfast Photo Festival over the past years has been Botanic Gardens, where large audiences engage with our outdoor photographic displays each year. This is a free event, accessible to the public. It runs over the month of June and consists of a series of exhibitions mounted throughout the park. There are no registrations to any of the exhibitions mounted throughout the park. There are no registrations to any of the exhibitions in the park and charity collections made.
- 3.16 The key dates for the request are:
- Set Up – 20 May to 2 June 2024
  - Event Run Time – 1 June to 30 June 2024
  - De Rig – 1 July to 8 July 2024

**St Patricks Day Festival – Cathedral Gardens**

- 3.17 **Belfast TradFest are delivering the St. Patrick’s Day Weekend Musical Showcase programme on behalf of Belfast City Council from 15th – 17th March 2024. The main focus of activity will be the creation of a St. Patrick’s Day village around the Cathedral Quarter between 2pm – 5pm on Sunday 17th March.**
- 3.18 **The festival village will include a live outdoor music stage, family fun activities and a food village in Cathedral Gardens, an open-air acoustic music and dance stage in Saint Anne’s Square and an ongoing afternoon Céilí in The Mac.**
- 3.19 **The key dates for the request are:**
- **Set Up – Saturday 16 March 2024 – 9am**
  - **Main Event – Sunday 17 March 2024 – 2pm to 5pm**
  - **De-Rig – Sunday 17 March 2024 – 9pm**

**Lear – Victoria Park**

- 3.20 **Green Room Productions NI have requested the use of Victoria Park for both rehearsals and performances of their King Lear production. Green Room Productions NI are an Outdoor Theatre Company who create Theatre, responsive to spaces, accessible to all. The event space being requested is the covered structure in Victoria Park.**
- 3.21 **The key dates for the request are:**
- **Rehearsals – Thursday 18, Friday 19, Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 April 2024 – 9am - 7pm**
  - **Performances – Wednesday 24, Thursday 25 and Friday 26 April 2024 – 9am - 7pm**
  - **Exit Site – Friday 26 April 2024 at 7pm**
- 3.22 **The group plan on having 4 days of rehearsals starting on Thursday 18 April and finishing on Tuesday 23 April. They then wish to have three days of performances starting with two performances on Wednesday 24 followed by 4 performances on both Thursday 25 and Friday 26 April 2024. The event will be a free ticketed event with it being based on a modern adaptation of the King Lear and is aimed at the local schools surrounding Victoria Park along with the neighbouring residential areas.**

**Afro-Fest Belfast – Crescent Park**

- 3.23 Belfast City Council have received a request from Urbanmag for the use of Crescent Park for their Afro-Fest cultural event. The purpose of this event is to showcase the musical talent of people with Afro Caribbean descent in Northern Ireland and to bring together different cultures to help educate and explore the beauty of the arts and culture through Music.
- 3.24 The key dates for the request are:
- Event Set Up – Saturday 25 May – 8am
  - Main Event – Saturday 25 May 12pm to 7pm
  - De-Rig – Saturday 25 May 9pm

**Annual 12th July Demonstration – Bernetts Demesne**

- 3.25 Belfast City Council have received a request from the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast for the use of Bernetts Demesne for their Annual 12th July Demonstration. The purpose of this event is to facilitate a greater understanding of orange cultural traditions and the promotion of Orangefest events as inclusive and family friendly.
- 3.26 The key dates for the request are:
- Set up – Thursday 11 July 2024 – 6pm to 10pm
  - Main Event – Friday 12 July 2024 – 1pm to 5pm
  - De-Rig – Saturday 13 July 2024 – 8am to 12pm
- 3.27 The organiser wishes to use the event to promote Belfast in a positive light and encourage visitors to experience Orange culture throughout the year and to help improve community relations.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.28 Where appropriate the Director of Neighbourhood Services will negotiate an appropriate fee for each event, which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the City economy, in conjunction with the Councils Commercial Manager. If required the Director of Neighbourhood Services will also authorise the relevant level of the necessary bond of intent and reinstatement bond.

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

**3.29 There are no known implications.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report and agreed that an update would be sought from the Council’s Commercial Team as to the status of the ongoing review into the framework and policy for Events.

**Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot – MoU**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 5th December 2023, it had agreed to a 2-month extension to an existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club (CMC). The MOU had originally been put in place following the agreement of the Committee, at its meeting in November 2021, to facilitate a Mountain Biking Pilot Project in Cavehill Country Park. The Pilot had focused on a partnership approach to the maintenance, management, and inspection of the ‘The Middle’ - the first official mountain bike trail in Cave Hill Country Park which had formally opened for public use in October 2023.

The Members then considered a report which outlined the key findings of the evaluation, as follows:

- both the Council and CMC were content with the partnership working arrangements established to support the project;
- the MOU had been adhered to in full;
- the Middle’s Trail Management Plan had been operationally delivered through the Pilot period;
- Health and Safety records held by the Council showed that there had been no increase in reported incidences or near miss collisions between mountain bikers and pedestrians within Cave Hill Country Park (no incidences/near miss collisions at all recorded during 2-year Pilot period);
- according to a consultation exercise on the pilot project carried out via the Council’s Your Say Belfast platform visitor satisfaction had not adversely impacted by the opening of the Middle Trail. A total of 78% of respondents to the survey during the first month of the trail’s official opening, agreed that their visitor experience within the Cave Hill Country Park had ‘improved’ since its introduction. This increased to 90.1% of respondents when the survey had been repeated during the Pilot’s last month; and
- anecdotal evidence showed that there had been more use of the new Middle Trail by mountain bikers at the expense of the other existing informal trails in the Country Park.

Furthermore, it was noted that the new MOU would also permit the Council to explore the viability of including further established trails at Cave Hill Country Park with CMC through similar partnership arrangements.

The Committee noted the outcome of the Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot and agreed to a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club, to be agreed and progressed by Legal Services.

### **Dual Language Street Signage Application**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor Kelly,

That the Committee agrees not to erect a dual language sign at Cranmore Gardens.

On a vote, 5 Members voted for the proposal and 13 against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Cranmore Gardens, Stewartstown Mews, Mountainview Parade, Mountainview Gardens, Bingnian Drive, Mizen Gardens, Dermott Hill Road and Marcus Ward Street.

### **Naming of New Street**

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of two new streets in the City, Black Ridge Court and Black Ridge Grove.

### **Alleygates Phase 5 Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 This report provides an update on the Alleygate Phase V Programme and the DFC Funded Alleygate programme for the Holyland.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 The Notice of Intention for those streets meeting the threshold will be advertised for the period of 30 days on 7th February, for representations and objections. Following this a paper will be brought to Committee seeking enactment of the legislation.**

**3.2 The terms and conditions for a local inquiry have been agreed should there be substantive objections received to the Notice of Intention. Should this occur it is proposed that**

those streets objecting to the installation of Alleygates will be removed from the proposed gating order whilst the inquiry is being held, to enable the progression of those locations where no objections have been received.

- 3.3 The canvassers are being recruited for the consultation exercise and Members will be informed when letters are posted to the streets being consulted. Several community sessions will be held at centres close to or within the consultation areas. This will enable residents to have any questions clarified or receive help in completing the consultation form. Members will be informed of these as well.
- 3.4 Once the consultation is completed and there are no substantive objections it is proposed that these locations move to public notification.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that Department for Communities have funded a further Alleygating scheme within the Holylands to complement the existing gates. During the consultation a high number of objections were received to the proposal (108 returns to the Holylands consultation, 27% of the properties surveyed. Of these returns there were 61 objections to the gates). Most of these objections came from Landlords and Letting Agents, concerned with the use of the alleyways post gating.
- 3.6 Officers met with a delegation representing the objectors. The objectors are not objecting to the installation of gates but rather to any potential alleyway transformation schemes following gating. Citing 'Wildflower Alley' they raised safety issues and access problems that would occur should transformation schemes go ahead.
- 3.7 Members will be aware that Cleaner neighbourhood legislation sets out the process Council's must follow when implementing an alleygating scheme. There is no legislation that regulates Alleyway Transformation schemes and that such a scheme can take place without an alleygate being in place Members will also be aware that there are many examples of this across the city and that Belfast City Council have also introduced criteria that must be met for any Council funded schemes to proceed.
- 3.8 In response to the issues raised officers agreed to review the wording of future key holder agreements to include a number to call should gated alleyways become obstructed and to remind of the need to get the support of residents for any potential transformation scheme. Any future alleyway transformation schemes funded by Belfast City Council will require the consensus of those living in and/or owning properties that frontage the proposed area.

- 3.9 The objectors have requested the opportunity to make a representation to the People and Communities Committee to highlight their concerns. Members should note that this paper is for noting and no decision is required and that officers have already met with the objectors. Members should also note that should a substantive objection be received then a local inquiry will be set up.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.9 All associated costs are covered within existing budget estimates.

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

- 3.10 No Good Relations or Equality issues.”

Following a query, the Neighbourhood Services Manager confirmed that the Elected Members would be informed when the letters had been posted to the streets being consulted about proposed alleygates and added that, as previously requested, consultation sessions would be held at centres close to those streets to provide clarity and assistance to those residents who required it. He encouraged the Members to contact him directly should they have any further queries about the process.

The officer advised that a request had been received from objectors seeking to make a deputation to a future meeting of the Committee. The Members noted that officers had met with the objectors and their views had been taken into consideration and therefore did not accede to the request.

The Committee noted the update provided.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Signage at Ruby Murray Park –  
Councillor T. Kelly**

The Committee was advised that the signage erected at the Ruby Murray Village Green was very small and, at the request of Councillor T. Kelly, agreed to erect larger signage at the Green and that the new signage would include some information on Ruby Murray.

**Biodiversity in Council Parks and  
Open Spaces – Councillor Flynn**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks

“The Council recognises Northern Ireland is currently 12th worst in the world for biodiversity loss, with factors such as Habitat degradation, pollution and climate change playing a significant role in habitat loss.

The Council notes the range of health benefits that natural biodiverse spaces provide within our city, including a positive impact on our mental health, stress reduction, improving life expectancy and positive contributions for children's development.

The Council further notes that the Council currently owns and maintains a significant portion of green space throughout Belfast, giving an opportunity to identify and prioritise areas for enhancing biodiversity.

Officers are asked to submit a report outlining how the Council could commission a survey of parks and green spaces to create a list of priority habitats and species within them, this survey should be robust enough to inform future work of incorporating recommendations for new zoning of parks and introduction of appropriate management prescriptions into site management plans, to protect and enhance biodiversity in our parks and green spaces in accordance with the Lawton principles of "bigger, better and more joined up".

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the Committee agreed that officers would submit a report to a future meeting to consider how the Council could commission a survey of parks and green spaces to create a list of priority habitats and species within them.

At the request of Councillor Bunting, it was agreed that an area at Belvoir Drive would be included in any future survey.

Chairperson