

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 12th March, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;
Mr. D. Bone, City Services Manager;
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Ms. N. Lane Neighbourhood Services Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Bower.

Minutes

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

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th March.

Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared an interest in item 3 (b) Community Support Programme as they either worked for or were associated with an organisation in receipt of funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

- Councillor Canavan – Board of the Blackie River Community Group and Springfield Charitable Association;
- Councillor Ó Néill – in that he was an employee of the Cumann Culturtha Mhic Reachtain;
- Councillor Verner – in that she was an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership (Spectrum Centre); and
- Councillor M. Donnelly – Upper Springfield Development Trust.

Councillor Black declared an interest in agenda items 3 (b) Community Support Programme and 3 (g) Funding for Independently Managed Community Centres as an employee of the Grosvenor Community Centre and left the meeting during consideration of both items.

Last Meeting

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, wished the Director of Resources and Fleet well as this would be her last meeting of the People and Communities Committee prior to her leaving the Council at the end of March.

Several of the Members took the opportunity to thank the Director for her valuable contribution during her time at the Council.

Noted.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following two 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 two 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.

Quarter 3 Finance Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which summarised the Quarter 3 financial position for the People and Communities Committee, including a forecast of the year end outturn. It noted that the Quarter 3 position showed an under spend of £1.7m, including the utilities drawdown (2.2%), with the forecast year end position being an underspend of £1.4m (1.4%).

The Members were advised that the main reasons for the quarter 3 Committee under-spend related to vacant posts across a number of services, posts under review across a number of services, the receipt of additional income and the timing of grants and programmes.

A Member referred to the recent unadopted alleyways workshop and expressed concern that the Council could possibly do more to assist residents in some instances, for example, pulling bins up and down unadopted alleyways.

The Committee noted the financial update.

**Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium
Working Group Update**

The City Services Manager drew the Members' attention to the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group, during which following matters had been considered:

- City Cemetery Visitor Centre Operating Model;
- Historic Graveyards Update; and
- Future Burial Land.

A Member referred to the recommendation to procure an operator for the management of the Visitor Centre at the City Cemetery and stated that he would like this matter to be further considered by the Working Group, he also suggested that a site visit to the Visitor Centre would be useful.

Following a query from a Member regarding the ongoing restrictions to numbers attending services at the Chapel in Roselawn, the officer agreed to investigate the current capacity arrangements and to submit a report to a future meeting of the Working Group.

A Member stated that she would like to be furnished with a list of historic cemeteries within the Belfast City Council boundary and the City Services Manager undertook to liaise directly with her.

The Committee adopted the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 27th February with the agreement that further report would be submitted to the Working Group in regard to the City Cemetery Visitor Centre Operating Model and that a site visit to the City Cemetery be arranged to which both the Members of the Working Group and People and Communities Committee would be invited.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Pitch Partner Agreements

The Committee noted the quarterly progress report in relation to Partner Agreements at seven sites and that all Partners had been compliant on reporting matters and financial checks for October – December 2023.

The Committee was reminded that the Director had previously extended the current Partner Agreements for all the sites until 31st March 2024. As the Members were aware, the Council was in the process of developing a new policy regarding the management of assets within the community with a pilot currently being delivered across several sites. One of the sites included in the initial pilot was Ulidia Playing Fields and this site had been assessed using the pilot approach.

The Committee was advised that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its October 2023 meeting, had agreed to transfer the existing Partner Agreement at Ulidia to a long-term lease. It was anticipated that, following a review of the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) pilot process, several of the other sites might also be made available for consideration under new management arrangements. Until that time, and to ensure continuity of service provision, it was proposed that the existing Partner Agreements would continue until any new arrangements had been implemented.

The Committee noted the progress to date at the Partner Agreement sites and agreed to extend the existing Partner Agreements until 31st March 2025, or until new arrangements had been agreed and implemented, following completion of the Community Asset Transfer Pilots.

Community Support Programme 2024/25

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The main purpose of this report is to:

- Advise members that the Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer for 24/25 has not yet been received by Council from DfC.
- Seek members approval to issue Letters of Offer for 24/25 for Capacity Building & Revenue Grants and Generalist Advice in the absence of a Letter of Offer from DfC.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to;

- Consider the contents of the report and
- Grant approval for officers to progress funding agreements for the Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Building grants and Generalist Advice for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. 50% payments will be issued in advance upon the return of required paperwork with a second payment made pending return of satisfactory interim monitoring report covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2024 and available budget.
- Note that Council does not have any budget to support activity that is 100% funded through the CSP and that none of this activity will progress until funding becomes available through the CSP. A further report on this element will be provided at a later date.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background information

Members will be aware that the Department for Communities (DfC) provides an annual grant to Council through its Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer. This funding provides an element of the budget towards Capacity Building and Revenue for Community Building grants as well as Generalist Advice.

The CSP also provides 100% funding for other elements of activity such as Social Supermarkets and Welfare Reform Mitigations.

- 3.2** Council has yet to receive a CSP Letter of Offer for 2024/25 and therefore does not have the total budget available to provide the full grant allocation. Any reduction in the DfC allocation will impact on the overall level of the grant budget and potentially awards to the grant recipients. The CSP Letter of Offer is generally received in March - June each year, although members may recall that in 23/24, DfC funding was released on a gradual basis and the full allocation was not provided until 7 July.

3.3 Key Issues

Capacity Building and Revenue for Community Buildings Grants

Members may be aware that in March 2023, Council agreed to provide multi-annual funding covering 3 years 2023-2026 for the Capacity Building and Revenue for Community Building grants. Although the grants are multiannual, Funding Agreements are made on an annual basis.

Officers are seeking approval to make payments covering 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The total cost of the grants allocation for 2024/25 is £3,278,109

- Capacity Building £1,845,311
- Revenue for Community Buildings £1,432,798

- 3.4** The list of organisations that receive funding is outlined in appendices 1 and 2.

Council's contribution to Capacity & Revenue Grant Programmes is 78% of the overall budget thus we can guarantee the first 50% payment.

3.5 Generalist Advice Funding

Members will be aware that Council provides funding for generalist advice provision to 5 Advice Consortia covering: Central, East, North, South and West Belfast. The funding is allocated to the consortia using a funding model based on population and multiple deprivation indicators (2015). The list of advice organisations and consortium funding allocation is contained in Appendix 3.

3.6 Members will recall that they received a presentation and a copy of the report on the recent Review of Belfast City Council funded Advice Services. Officers are currently working with the advice consortia on implementing the report recommendations. A further report will be presented to committee on progress in due course.

3.7 The Belfast Advice Group (BAG), the umbrella structure for the 5 advice consortia, made a presentation to committee in February seeking an 3% increase to the funding allocation. Committee agreed to progress the request for consideration by SP&R. Any decisions on additional allocations will be reflected in the award to each consortia and payments will be made in line with normal administration arrangements.

3.8 Council's contribution to Generalist Advice is 39% of the total allocation. Members are asked to consider if they are content to approve the issue of Letters of Offer and 50% payment.

3.9 A further report will be presented to committee when we receive the Community Support Programme Letter of Offer from DfC. Members are asked to note that Council does not have any budget to support activity that is 100% funded through the CSP and that none of this activity will progress until funding becomes available through the CSP.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

Members may wish to note that last year the allocation was as below. The council budget is the same for 24/25;

Grant	CSP funding (DfC)	BCC contribution	Total
Capacity	£436,028	£1,409,283	£1,845,311
Revenue	£298,329	£1,134,469	£1,432,798
Advice	£607,928	£391,729	£999,657
Total	£1,342,285	£2,935,481	£4,277,766

3.11 Members will note that Council has the available budget to make a 50% payment to recipients of all three elements (Capacity, Revenue and Advice), however, should there be a reduction in DfC funding this would impact on the overall budget available to cover costs.

3.12 In light of this, Funding Agreements for 2024/25 Capacity Building and Revenue for Community Buildings Grants and Generalist Advice will contain a condition that the second payment may vary due to the level of funding received from DfC.

3.13 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Any reduction in the available budget has the potential to impact on service delivery which may have equality, good relations or rural needs implications for Belfast City Council.”

A Member highlighted the need to build capacity and requested that officers identify funding within existing budgets to progress a Community Infrastructure Pilot, particularly for the Balmoral area.

The Committee:

- granted approval for officers to progress funding agreements for the Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Building grants and Generalist Advice for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, with agreement for 50% payments to be issued in advance upon the return of required paperwork and a second payment to be made pending return of satisfactory interim monitoring report covering the period 1st April to 30th September 2024 and the available budget;
- noted that the Council did not have any budget to support activity that was 100% funded through the CSP and that none of this activity would progress until funding became available through the CSP and that a further report on this element would be submitted in due course; and
- agreed that officers look to identify funding within existing budgets to progress a Community Infrastructure Pilot.

Boxing Strategy Update

The Neighbourhood Services Manager drew the Members' attention to the contents of a report which provided an update on the implementation of the Belfast Boxing Strategy, for the period up to the end of December 2023 (Quarter 3). The report noted that the Irish Athletic Boxing Association Ulster Branch (IABA) had advised that it anticipated that all the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be achieved by the end of 2023/24.

The Committee was reminded that, pending the development of Council's Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy, the Committee had agreed at its March 2023 meeting to extend the current strategy and related work programme from 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024. The IABA were now seeking the Council to extend

the current strategy and related level of annual support for a further 12-month period and in support of the request had had developed a new programme action plan relating to 2024/25.

The Committee noted the progress to date of the strategy annual work plan for the current year 2023/24 and agreed to extend the Belfast Boxing Strategy and delivery of the work programme for one year from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, pending the production of the new Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy for Belfast.

Partnership Funding

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the existing Partnership Agreements that are in place to deliver services aligned to Neighbourhood Services activity. Members are asked to approve future funding to continue these partnership agreements in 24/25.

This report also advises members of a request from Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC) that Belfast City Council (BCC) applies an inflationary award to the funding that it provides to Belfast Healthy Cities for the remaining term of their funding agreement, years 24/25 and 25/26.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee;

- Agree to continue funding to each of the partners at the same level for the 24/25 financial year (£261,359)
- Note that council is not in a position to provide an inflationary award to Belfast Healthy Cities due to the precedent that this would set for other funding agreements and the lack of available budget.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Members are aware that City & Neighbourhood Services work in partnership with a number of organisations that share common strategic objectives and that some of this work is supported through annual funding agreements to deliver against agreed outcomes.

- 3.2 In 2021/22, an extensive review of the first six Partnership Agreements listed below was completed; the review concluded that the agreements provided strategic alignment, added value to the Council/City and were value for money. In line with these findings, council agreed that these partnership funding arrangements should continue at the same level to deliver services in 22/23 and 23/24.

At the start of 2023, a desktop review of the last two agreements listed below, which were not part of the original review, was also carried out. It was agreed that these 2 funded programmes should be considered as part of the overall departmental partnership arrangements and have therefore been included in this paper for consideration.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Funding</u>
Belfast Hills Partnership	£36,900
Lagan Valley Regional Park	£88,000
Outdoor Recreation NI (promotion of mountain bike trails)	£5,250
Keep NI Beautiful (Live Here Love Here and Eco Schools Project)	£55,000
Mary Peters Trust	£5,000
Bryson Energy (previously Play Resource)*	£31,209
Belfast Mela	£20,000
Belfast International Arts Festival	£20,000
TOTAL	£261,359

* Note – Play Resource Warehouse has merged with Bryson Energy.

3.3 Request from Belfast Healthy Cities for inflationary award

Belfast's membership to the WHO European Healthy Cities Network is facilitated by Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC), an independent partnership organisation. In May 2021, the City of Belfast was successful in its application to re-designate as a WHO Healthy City and participate in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network until April 2026.

On 10th January 2024, BHC contacted council officers to request that they bring a request for an increased inflation cost to the People and Communities Committee.

The request outlines that Belfast City Council has funded Belfast Healthy Cities since its establishment in 1998 and that the Board of Directors are very grateful for this financial contribution. BHC highlight that Belfast City Council reduced their funding to Belfast Healthy Cities at a special meeting in

January 2017, from £89,586 to £81,294 per annum, to below the 2009/2010 funding level. Funding has remained at this level since 2017.

Belfast Healthy Cities view that this; 'is in essence an ongoing decrease in funding – given the ongoing challenges of inflation. It would be important to relay this to the Committee, given the number of new Committee members who may not be aware of this position.'

The request from BHC also advises that the three other core funders have increased their funding this year by over 3.5 % which 'takes into account the increase in National Living Wage of 10.3%, non-pay at 3%, and the reversal of the 2022/23 increase in Employers' National Insurance of 1.25%'.

- 3.4 Members should note that Council does not have a policy to provide annual increments to multi annual funding awards. C&NS and council generally have a number of multi annual funding agreements which do not include a mechanism to provide an annual enhancement. To provide an increment to one award would have implications for all funding awards and there is no available budget to resource this. In addition, the Partnership Agreements outlined in this paper do not receive an annual increment.

Financial implications

- 3.5 The total financial allocation to these partner funding arrangements is £261,359. These budgets have been agreed as part of rate setting for 24/25.
- 3.6 A 3.5% increase to the current Belfast Healthy Cities funding award would be £2,845. Council are one of four core funders to Belfast Healthy Cities, along with the Public Health Agency (PHA), Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). Annual funding amounts to over 300k of which BCC contributes £81,294 per annum until March 26. There is no current budget to provide this increment.

Members may wish to note that through the CSP council provides £4,277,766 in annual funding to support multi annual funding awards. Members will be aware that at last month's meeting the Belfast Advice Group asked Council to consider a 3% annual increment to their funding, which would cost approximately £30,000 p.a. Applying an annual increment of 3.5% to the other multi annual awards supported through the CSP (Capacity and Revenue) would require a budget of £114, 734 p.a. The Partnership Agreements covered by this paper do not receive an annual increment. To apply a 3.5% uplift would cost £9,148 p.a

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

Council does not have a policy on implementing annual inflationary increases to funding agreements. A decision to introduce an increase for one funding agreement could set a precedent and have an impact on other funding awards.”

A Member sought clarification with regards to Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council and if it had confirmed its position on funding to the Lagan Valley Regional Park. Officers agreed to further investigate and to report back in due course.

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Consultation and Engagement Framework for Large Events

The Committee was reminded that officers had been working to create a successful model of engagement for large-scale events in the city that operated at Belfast Park venues.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager outlined that, as the Members were aware, there were many challenges to the delivery of a consistent approach to engagement due to the diverse nature of event types, participant numbers and venues. Depending on the specific venue, the Council could accommodate attendances of up to 42,000 people at a single concert, this, along with varied levels of input from neighbourhood and community development organisations in the areas immediately surrounding the venues, compounded the challenges of adopting a consistent approach.

The officer continued that, in addition to ad hoc requests, there were also events that occurred on an annual basis and the promoters responsible for these events usually applied to the Council for multiple year permissions to use the venues to enable them to secure headline acts.

The officer specifically referred to Ormeau Park. He reported that in 2022 the Parks Events and Outreach Manager in City and Neighbourhood Services, supported by colleagues in building control, had started a multi-agency approach to the pre-event resident and community engagement regarding the events being delivered in Ormeau Park.

He advised that the engagement forum included attendance from the following stakeholders:

- The event promoter and their event safety advisor;
- Community Provision;
- Building Control;
- Community Safety;
- Regulatory Services;
- PSNI;

- Elected representatives from local DEA's;
- Resident and Community organisations operating in the local are;
- Local Businesses; and
- Youth Practitioner Organisations operating in the local area.

The officer advised that the community sector organisations, resident groups and businesses had welcomed this approach, as they felt that it was the most effective way for them to work with the range of relevant agencies, to have their concerns heard, to contribute ideas and solutions and ultimately to reduce negative impacts on their neighbourhood. Post evaluation sessions were conducted following events by the engagement forums to review the success and impact of the agreed mitigations, with a 'lessons learned approach'.

Regarding the Boucher Road Playing Fields, in 2023, officers, supported by the Elected Members, had endeavoured to replicate the Ormeau Park approach for the series of August and September festivals. The engagement had led to many improvements and had been deemed successful by the residents who had attended the pre-event session.

The Committee was advised that one of the key challenges at this venue was that there was a lower level of residents, community organisations and businesses to participate in engagement events, in comparison to the Ormeau and Ravenhill areas. The only way to currently engage was to leaflet drop all the residents to try to host a session with a high number of individuals rather than a strong collective voice. It was recognised that attempting to organise effective engagement with a promoter and a large group of dissatisfied individuals would be counterproductive rather than progressive at this stage. The officer detailed that, in order to try and support new initiatives, a series of meetings had taken place with Elected Representatives from the Balmoral DEA, which had resulted in a number of agreed actions for developing and growing the capacity of a stakeholder forum specific to large events at Boucher Road.

He the provided an overview of the main actions arising from this, as follows:

- Council officers and Elected Members to meet residents in March/April and draft a list of key issues and mitigations;
- Community Services area support team to work with residents and businesses to establish a representative forum which would attend future pre-event and post-event engagement meetings;
- Council officers and Elected Members to present the issues and mitigations to the promoter of the first concert in May, with the expectation to include the key actions within the site licence between the Council and the promoter; and
- A post event evaluation session to be arranged with residents following the event.

The officer concluded by advising that it was anticipated that the work, supported by community services, to establish a stakeholder engagement forum would continue throughout the summer months with the aim of being ready to engage with promoters and other agencies for the August and September festivals. Once a representative group had been established, the stakeholder engagement forum for events at Boucher Road would involve attendance by the same agencies as those described for the Ormeau Park approach.

Several of the Members welcomed the progress made through engagement for both locations, in particular, the approach currently adopted at Ormeau Park and agreed that this approach, where possible, should be mirrored at Boucher Road.

A Member suggested that invitations to the proposed stakeholder engagement forum meetings in respect of events at Boucher should also be extended to Councillors representing the Black Mountain DEA as well as the Botanic DEA as there was often a 'fall out' from such events into those areas in close proximity and noted the need for stakeholder engagement sessions to be held both prior to and immediately following each event.

The Members also discussed other areas that could be further discussed at the stakeholder meetings which included the need to better publicise to residents when the events were being held, especially those occurring during the week. A Member also highlighted the need to have a better messaging campaign around events to promote awareness of consent and sexual assault and to highlight the support systems available for vulnerable young people and it was suggested that Events Tech staff should remain immediately following the events to help safely clear the area.

Following a suggestion from a Member, the officer agreed to investigate whether the provision of spike testing kits could be introduced at concerts by the promoters.

Several Members also sought clarity on the new Social Value Fund and how this would be administered and allocated and stressed that the money needed to benefit the local communities.

The Committee endorsed the approach currently adopted at Ormeau Park and agreed to support the continued development of the evolving approach at the Boucher Road Playing Fields, it also agreed that invitations to any stakeholder engagement forum meetings in respect of events at Boucher also be extended to Councillors representing the Black Mountain DEA and noted need for stakeholder engagement sessions to be held both prior to and immediately following each event.

Response to TEO consultation on Victims and Survivors

The Committee was reminded that The Executive Office (TEO) was currently undertaking a public consultation on a new Strategy for Victims and Survivors. The Strategy had been developed through collaborative co-design and partnership working with the Commission for Victims and Survivors and the Victims and Survivors Service, as well as with victims' and survivors' representative groups.

Through this engagement, victims and survivors had been placed at the heart of the development of the Strategy. The Strategy proposed a new Vision of "A trauma informed society that addresses the needs of victims and survivors" and sets out high level outcomes and actions under three pillars – Past, Needs and the Future. It builds on the progress made to date to ensure the needs of victims and survivors continue to be met. As part of this consultation process, the Council had been invited to respond to a questionnaire, and he drew the Members' attention to the draft response.

The Committee endorsed the contents of the proposed response to the new Strategy for Victims and Survivors, subject to the following amendments:

- under question 3 – highlight the need to expand upon the reference to reconciliation and note that reconciliation includes receiving justice as stated in the Stormont Agreement; and
- under question 4 – note the content with reference to respect but remove the references to the Flags, Identity, and Culture Commission as there was no agreement on these recommendations; and
- agreed that the Strategy be submitted to the TEO in draft form by the closing date of 13th March 2024, subject to Council ratification, and that it be circulated to Members of the Committee via e-mail prior to the April Council meeting.

Funding for Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)

The Committee was reminded that the Council had long standing arrangements in place to provide financial support to seven Council community centres that were managed independently by the community sector as well as Service Level Agreements (SLA's).

The Members noted that the SLA with Dunmurry Community Association, for Fullerton Park, related to a previous decision by the Council to provide funding, this was a result of legacy commitments arising from the review of Local Government.

As part of the rate setting process for 2020/21, the Committee had agreed that the allocation to IMCC's would be subject annually to any CPI increase which would be applied on issue of Letter of Offer. In addition, the People and Communities Committee had, in September 2022, agreed CPI increases on all future awards to IMCC's. The Members noted that, as CPI details would not be available until April/May 2024, some CPI increases would be paid separately from the grant award. A clause would be included in all funding agreements to allow for the processing of the CPI increase payment when the details were available.

The officer drew the Members' attention to the 2024/25 individual allocations to IMCC's as follows:

Independently Managed Centres	Amount
Shaftesbury Recreation Centre	£69,943.75
Grosvenor Recreation Centre	£69,943.75
Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre	£63,046.00
Denmark Street Community Centre	£24,254.02
Carrick Hill Community Centre	£38,597.29
Sally Gardens	£69,943.75
Hanwood	£69,943.75
Total	£405,672.31

Service Level Agreement	Amount
Dunmurry Community Association at Fullerton Park	Maximum Award: £6,500.00

At the request of a Member, it was also agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting detailing the proposed Terms of Reference for the appointment of an external consultant to undertake a consultation exercise on the funding of IMCCs in comparison with, for example, GLL.

Following an issue raised by a further Member, the Committee agreed that officers would investigate the amount of funding that the Denmark Centre received, given its position to the interface, and that consideration be given to adopting Dunmurry Community Association as a Community rather than a Sports facility given the role that it now undertook in the community, with an update report on these matters to be submitted in due course to Committee.

Following consideration of the remainder of the recommendations, the Committee agreed:

- to pay annual revenue awards for the 2024/25 funding period to seven IMCC's including the annual CPI increase, noting that award amounts would increase each year requiring Committee authorisation;
- to make separate payments of the CPI increase, where applicable, following confirmation of the increase in April/May 2024; and
- in compliance with the existing SLA, to pay up to the maximum award to Dunmurry Community Association at Fullerton Park on an annual basis.

Consultation Response - Reforming Producer Responsibility for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment 2023

The Members were reminded that, at the February meeting of Committee, the DEFRA Consultation and Call for Evidence (launched on 28th December 2023) on reforming the producer responsibility system for waste electrical and electronic equipment had been submitted for consideration.

The Director of Resources and Fleet reminded the Members that, whilst producer responsibility and waste policy were devolved matters, there was a UK wide approach to WEEE Extended Producer Responsibility (WEEE EPR). Accordingly, this consultation had been undertaken jointly by all four administrations. In Northern Ireland, the outcome of the consultation would inform decisions of the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

She advised that, within the consultation, the policy proposal of particular interest to Belfast City Council, was the increasing collections of waste electrical and electronic equipment from households, where producers of electronic and electrical products were to be responsible for financing kerbside collections of small household WEEE, with an obligation placed on producers to fund separate household waste collections, potentially delivered by integration with existing kerbside collection services provided by local authorities.

The Members were advised that it was anticipated that the service might take the form of a regular collection round. Views on the frequency of such a round, in order to balance impact against efficiency, had been sought as well as whether a service could be delivered via an “on demand” approach, a regular collection round or potentially a mix of approaches in different areas. A response to this and other matters had been included in the consultation response.

The Committee endorsed the draft consultation document available [here](#) and agreed that it be submitted as the Council’s final response, with the draft response having been submitted for consideration and agreed at the March meeting of Committee.

Operational Issues

Requests for Events in Parks

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, including:

- **Paws for Cause – Ormeau Park**
- **Belfast Memory Walk – Ormeau Park**
- **Parkinson’s Walk – Botanic Gardens**
- **Ulster University 5km Run Festival – Cathedral Gardens**
- **ASG & Partners Concert – C.S. Lewis Square**
- **Finaghy Cultural Festival - Wedderburn**
- **EID Festival – Botanic Gardens**
- **Darkness into Light - Ormeau Park**

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. If 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:**

- iii. The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction.
- iv. The promoter carrying out appropriate resident & community engagement
- v. 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.

3.2 Street Soccer NI – Paws for Cause – Ormeau Park – Saturday 11 May 2024

Street Soccer NI have requested the use of Ormeau Park for their Charity Dog Walk called Paws for Cause. The event is to raise money for Street Soccer NI who are a registered charity. Their charity number is 104007.

Key dates for the event are:

Set Up -10.00am– Saturday 11 May

Main Event – 11am to 1pm

De-Rig – 1.15pm

3.3 The event organiser has requested that the council will allow them to have charity buckets on site to collect donations from the public throughout the event, They also wish to have traders and vendors on site to sell some merchandise along with supplying options for visitors to purchase food.

3.4 Belfast Memory Walk – Ormeau Saturday 12 October 2024

The Alzheimer's Society has requested the use of Ormeau Park for their Belfast Memory Walk charity event. Belfast Memory Walk is a family friendly fundraising walk, which will raise money to provide help and hope to everyone affected by dementia. Everyone is welcome to take part, and registration is free. Walkers can sign up on our website, and will receive a fundraising pack and t-shirt in the post.

Key dates for the event are:

Set up – 7am to 10am
Main Event – 10am to 3pm
De-Rig 4.30pm

3.6 On the day there will be an event site, where there will be a food and drink caterer, an information stand, a merchandise stand, our Memory Tree and our stage with a Zumba warm up. There will be a long and short route around the park, meaning there will be something to suit everyone.

3.7 Donations are welcome on the day and will be collected in buckets across the stands. Their charity number is 296645.

3.8 Parkinson's Walk – Botanic Gardens Saturday 6 July 2024

Gladiator events have requested the use of Botanic Gardens to host a charity walk to raise money for Parkinson's UK. The purpose of the event is to not only to raise funds for Parkinson's UK but also to educate people on Parkinson's along with connecting those who are affected by the disease. They have requested access to the site a day prior to set up the event village.

Key dates for the event are:

Set Up – 1pm to 6pm Friday 5 July
Main Event – 10am to 4pm
De Rig – 6pm

3.9 Walk for Parkinson's. A 2 or 6 mile walk for supporters of the charity, with all proceeds going to the charity. The two mile walk needs to be fully accessible, on paved footpaths or tracks, as it is designed to be suitable for those living with Parkinson's.

3.10 Ulster University Belfast 5km Festival – Cathedral Garden Sunday 9 June 2024

Ulster University is hosting the Belfast 5km & Mile event on Sunday 9 June and have requested the use of Cathedral Gardens as a hub for the event. The race portion of the event will feature world champion Joshua Cheptegei's and is expected to bring in over 5000 attendees.

- 3.11 The Cathedral Gardens portion of the event will feature as a Pre & Post event meet and great area and will feature live music being performed by local artists along with food and drink vendors to supply food to the attendees. They also request to have an art display on show that has been created by the Ulster University students.

Key dates for the event are:

Set Up – 6am
Main Event 9am to 2pm
De-Rig – 4pm

3.12 ASG Concert – C.S. Lewis Square Friday 19 July 2024

ASG & Partners have requested the use of C.S. Lewis square to host a concert featuring Sophie Ellis – Bextor. The Event organiser is hoping to orchestrate an intimate disco house setting featuring Sophie Ellis-Bextor as the headline artist and complemented by performances from local Northern Irish DJs.

Key dates for the event are:

Set Up – Friday 19 July – 9am
Main Event - 5pm to 11pm
De-Rig Saturday 20 July – 11am

- 3.13 The event organiser has already tied in with Eastside Partnership who are in favour of the event and have offered to support it.

3.14 Finaghy Cultural Festival – Wedderburn Friday 16 August 2024

Finaghy Cultural Festival is organised by a small group of local people from the community who started out through the first lockdown back in March 2020 as a foodbank helping the elderly and vulnerable through very difficult times. They then started up a residents group volunteering and organizing events for the community.

- 3.15 They will have a bar serving alcohol so a drinks license will be in place. The committee have had meetings with their local community, police and have been awarded funding to run the event. Activities throughout the day include – live music, food vendors, amusement & fairground rides. The group also plan on having a BBQ on site. This event has taken place in previous years with no issues.

Key dates for the event are:

Set Up – 12pm – Thursday 15 August

Main Event – 4pm to 6pm – Friday 16, Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 August 2024

De-Rig – 1.30pm Monday 19 August

3.16 EID Festival – Botanic Gardens Saturday 27 July 2024

- 3.1 Belfast City Council has received a request from Zoreena Ahmed to host an EID festival in Botanic Gardens on Saturday 27 July. The event is aimed at celebrating the Muslim Community in Northern Ireland but is open to the wider public to promote diversity and integration.

- 3.17 The event will have number of food stalls providing hot and cold options with an ethnic flavour attached. There will be no charge for the event, and it will be free to attend. All children’s rides will be free to use. There will be a small cost if families wish to purchase food and other activities. The event is designed to help and support families who cannot afford days out with the events Motto being ‘How We Gather, Is How We Live’!

Key dates for the event are:

Set Up – 7am

Main Event – 12am to 6pm

De-Rig – 8pm

3.18 Darkness into Light – Ormeau Park – Saturday 11 May 2024

Belfast City Council has received a request from PIPS Suicide prevention for the use of Ormeau Park to host their annual Darkness into Light Walk. Darkness into Light walk is a pre dawn walk around the 5 kilometre track in Ormeau Park. This event is in conjunction with a sister charity Pieta House based in ROI. Each year the walk provides an opportunity for people to connect with their local community and to bring hope to people who have been impacted by suicide. PIPS Charity the organiser and beneficiary of this walk are a local charity who provide support and counselling

to people affected by mental unwellness, suicide and self-harm.

Key dates for the event are:

Set-up – Friday 10 May 2024 – 9am
Main Event – Saturday 11 May – 4.15am to 9am
De-Rig – Saturday 11 May – 9am

3.19 The event is due to take place out of hours and will use the main paths around the park for the 5km walk. No money will be collected on site as registration is completed online prior to the event. It is anticipated that there will be between 500 and 1000 people attending.

3.20 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no known financial or resource implications with these requests.

3.21 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no known implications.”

A Member highlighted that the update report was still outstanding regarding the status of the ongoing review into the framework and policy for Events and asked officers to pursue this matter with the Council’s Commercial team.

The Committee adopted the recommendations at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Shankill Juniors / Woodvale MUGA

The Committee was advised that, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting held on 21st April 2023, had approved an application to the IFA DCMS Grass Roots Funding scheme for the upgrade of the polymeric MUGA at Woodvale Park to a 7-a-side artificial pitch. The application had been successful and £120,000 had been awarded, subject to the conditions of funding. The match funding element had also been agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and would be met from a ringfenced amount already allocated by the Area Working Group from the Social Outcomes Fund for the improvement of the MUGA.

The Members were advised that the IFA DCMS funding conditions stated that where the applicant was not a soccer club, as was the case for the Council, the funding offer was conditional on the applicant demonstrating a partnership with an Irish FA affiliated local ‘partner’ football club. The SMART targets submitted as part of the application process were based on a development plan put forward by Shankill Juniors FC who satisfied the criteria.

The Committee was therefore asked to approve a formal relationship with the club as the sports development partner at the site, to secure the £120k funding. Once approved, Council officers would then work with the club to agree a development

programme which the IFA would then periodically monitor to confirm outcomes. The Members noted that staff in Property and Projects had advised that the procurement of a contractor was underway, with the aim of completing the project by early summer.

Subject to agreement, it was noted that Council officers would work to identify and allocate roles and responsibilities associated with the management of the new pitch but advised that, as a minimum requirement, the club would be expected to take a keyholding role for changing facilities and to manage the bookings for the pitch.

The Committee agreed that Shankill Juniors FC become the IFA affiliated sports outcomes delivery partner for the new pitch at Woodvale Park.

Blanchflower Stadium – Preferential Use Agreement

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of this Committee that the Preferential Use Agreement with Glentoran Football Club for the use of the second synthetic pitch at Blanchflower Playing Fields, expired on 1 December 2023.**
- 1.2 Outside the timeslots allocated to Glentoran the facility is very popular and continues to be fully booked from 6pm to 10pm Monday to Thursday by a wide range of youth and senior teams.**
- 1.3 On Friday evenings along with Saturday mornings and on Sunday the pitch is booked by South Belfast Youth League**
- 1.4 Council have been approached by several local, community based clubs who are unable to gain access to the pitch.**
- 1.5 There are a number of options for Council to consider regarding the future booking arrangements for this pitch:**

Option 1

To renew the Preferential Use Agreement with Glentoran Football Club

Option 2

To process all pitch bookings at the site following normal Belfast City Council procedures which is first come, first served.

Option 3

To work with local community based football clubs to develop an allocation model so that they all get access to the pitch on Monday to Thursday evenings. An example of a potential allocation model involving 8 clubs and the South Belfast Youth League is included at appendix 1

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to note that the Preferential Use Agreement with Glentoran Football Club for Blanchflower Playing Fields has ended

2.2 From 1 April 2024 it is suggested that Council should progress with Option 3.

Council Officers will meet with local clubs to develop an allocation model so that they all get access to the pitch on Monday to Thursday evenings (see appendix 1)

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 In March 2018 Strategic Policy and Resources Committee directed officers to undertake research into the provision of suitable and convenient pitch facilities for Glentoran FC including its Youth Academy. Committee further accepted the East Area Working Group recommendation that a proposed capital programme to install a 3G pitch with floodlighting at King George V playing fields be replaced on the capital programme with a 3G pitch at Blanchflower Playing Fields.

3.2 People and Communities Committee of March 2019 agreed to upgrade facilities at King George V Playing Fields and offer a preferential Use Agreement for 5 years to Glentoran Youth Academy.

3.3 King George V playing fields are subject to a Deed of Covenant with Fields of Trust. Local residents had written to Fields of Trust in opposition to the proposed development of the site and management of bookings. Local residents also approached council officers protesting against the proposal on a number of grounds.

- 3.4 In the meantime significant investment in football facilities had taken place in East Belfast and in particular at Blanchflower Playing Fields where Council has developed two full size floodlit synthetic football pitches at Blanchflower Playing Fields. One of the pitches being directly managed and booked by Harland and Wolff Welders Football Club and the other managed and booked by Council
- 3.5 By 2019 the decision regarding the upgrade works had not been fulfilled approved Preferential Use Agreement at King George V Glentoran FC wrote to Council seeking approval for the previously approved Preferential Use Agreement at King George V playing fields to be transferred to Blanchflower playing fields.
- 3.6 Officers negotiated with Glentoran Football Club and an agreed timetable of priority use for Glentoran Football Club was produced, indicated in the table below. The timetable of use and the teams/sections from within the club using the pitch at these times were to be reflective of Glentoran Football Clubs commitment to growing the game in an inclusive way with significant usage by groups under-represented in sports participation.

Day	Times of Use
Monday	6:00pm-7:00pm 7:00pm -8:00pm
Tuesday	6:00pm-7:00pm 7:00pm -8:00pm
Wednesday	6:00pm-7:00pm 7:00pm -8:00pm
Thursday	6:00pm-7:00pm 7:00pm -8:00pm
Friday	None
Saturday	None
Sunday	None

- 3.7 People and Communities Committee of 9 November 2021 agreed to offer a Preferential Use Agreement to Glentoran Football Club at Blanchflower Playing Fields for limited access to the site, as identified in the table above, for a period of two years. This agreement has now ended and there have been enquiries from a number of local youth teams with regards to being able to book this pitch for the slots currently allocated to Glentoran through this agreement.

3.8 **Financial & Resource Implications**

There are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

3.9 Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee noted that the Preferential Use Agreement with Glentoran Football Club for Blanchflower Playing Fields had ended with effect from 1st April 2024 and agreed that the Council should progress with Option 3.

At the request of a Member, it was further agreed that officers would look to work with local community based football clubs to develop an allocation model which was fair and equitable for all users, to ensure that all clubs would get fair access to pitches throughout the week.

Upper Ardoyne Youth Club – Expression of Interest

The Committee was reminded that the Council had previously, in 2007, entered into an Agreement for Lease with the organisation Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre (UAYC) to facilitate the construction of a Community Centre and Community Garden on land owned by the Council.

The Company had constructed the youth centre using funding provided under Urban II through the former North Belfast Partnership. The facility comprised a single storey brick building laid out to provide a partitioned meeting room, office, youth room and ancillary facilities, together with external yard space and grassed area. It was located on the Southeast boundary of Ballysillan Park at Alliance Drive.

The Committee was reminded that the UAYC had been dissolved as a company in 2013, with the building having reverted to Council ownership in 2017. The North AWG had identified community and voluntary sector use as their preference for the building and officers from Estates and City and Neighbourhood Services had, since 2018, ran several exercises to secure a tenant, however, despite interest, the building had remained vacant.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that a further opportunity had been publicised to the community and voluntary sector in December 2023, with two organisations having expressed an interest in the building, as follows:

- Wee Chicks, a provider of childcare for children aged 0 to 11. Currently operating in a building in Chichester Avenue providing places for 20 children. A move to the UAYC building would see capacity expand to 28 children; and
- Streetbeat Youth Project, a voluntary organisation working with young people aged 11- 25 in North Belfast, with a particular focus on the Greater Shankill and Ballysillan areas. The organisation currently delivered programmes in a variety of premises including a number of local schools.

The officer advised that, as both applicants satisfied the essential criteria, it was felt that any decision should be supported by considering the nature of the services to be provided from the building and the potential community benefit and she then drew the Members' attention to the information from the respective submissions that had been summarised in the report.

The Members noted that officers were recommending that the Committee consider Streetbeat Youth Project as the preferred applicant, based on their potential to deliver a wider benefit for the local community and on their potential to utilise the adjacent Ballysillan Park to maximise on diversionary activities to reduce the negative impacts of ASB on the community.

At the request of a Member, officers agreed that they would signpost Wee Chicks to other premises, where available, given the current childcare pressures and the need to build capacity in this area.

The Committee agreed:

- to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that Streetbeat Youth Project be appointed as the lessee for the vacant premises formerly known as Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre, with lease terms to be drawn up by estates officers and agreed through the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- officers to ensure that Streetbeat liaise with local youth providers, such as AYE, to ensure coordination, particularly around diversionary activities.

Request from Probation Board NI – Annadale Allotments

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To seek permission from Committee to implement a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI) to provide a maintenance support service for allotment users.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Committee is asked to approve the attached MOU and to give permission for its implementation.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Open Spaces and Streetscene officers have held meetings with PBNI to explore the possibility of working in partnership to provide maintenance services for allotment users. The pilot initiative will focus on the Annadale site. The MoU

attached at appendix A is the practical outworking of those discussions. The committee is asked to approve the MoU, which would allow officers to begin its implementation.

- 3.2 The Council has a long-established partnership in place with the PBNI through the provision of its graffiti removal service. This partnership is facilitated under a similar MoU arrangement to the one proposed herein. We are keen to build on this relationship in order to provide support to both existing and new allotment users, with the focus initially on our Annadale site.
- 3.3 Primarily the support by PBNI will be aimed at supporting those plot holders who are unable, for a variety of reasons e.g. sickness, are unable to manage their own plots at the time being. The plots will be agreed with the allotment committee and holders in advance of any works being carried out.
- 3.4 Proposed works undertaken as part of this MoU by the PBNI team will include:
 - Work to manage and maintain individual plots, where the plot holder is currently unable to manage the plot themselves due to temporary illness;
 - Work to manage and maintain those plots that have not been allocated for a long period of time due to being in a state of disrepair and therefore, unattractive to any new tenant.
 - Work to manage and maintain common areas and internal hedges (this would normally be the responsibility of the allotment holders).
- 3.5 Work will be carried out one day per week during normal working hours. The PBNI team will be supervised by their own staff at all times when on site. It is anticipated that the programme of work will begin from 1st April 2024 and will last to September 2024. Work will be carried out one pre agreed day per week within normal working hours.
- 3.6 All existing allotment users will be communicated with in advance of the initiative beginning. This will be directly through our parks outreach team, and also through the Allotment committee which is fully supportive of the initiative, and will be involved in its implementation.
- 3.7 The MoU has been vetted by BCC Legal Services

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

All costs associated with the operation of this MoU will be covered by the PBNI. This will include any equipment, PPE and / or fuel costs.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications

There are no equality or good relations implications in this report.”

Discussion ensued regarding the number of abandoned allotments at Annadale and the long waiting list of people looking allotments. Several of the Members highlighted the need for the Council to have better control and management of plots that were not being maintained or had been abandoned.

During discussion officers also agreed to investigate if larger allotments could be divided up, it was felt that this might help to assist with the waiting list issue and also might enable people to avail of smaller, more manageable plots as some of the current allotments were quite large.

The Members also were advised that a business case was currently being drawn up to establish terms of reference to appoint a consultant to review the Council's Allotments and Community Garden assets and it was agreed that, when appointed, the Consultants would also need to give consideration to Community Asset Transfers.

A Member also suggested that if the initiative with the PBNI was successful that officers would investigate if it would be possible to extend this arrangement to other Council Allotments.

The Committee:

- approved the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Probation Board of Northern Ireland (PBNI) to provide a maintenance support service for allotment users at the Annadale Allotments; and
- agreed to see if would be possible to extend this arrangement with the PBNI to other Council Allotments;

Donations to societies for contributions to Spring and Autumn Fairs

The Committee was reminded that the Council had previously authorised the payment of a £200.00 donation to Societies involved in the organisation of the Spring Fair and Autumn Fair.

The Committee approved a donation of £200.00 per annum to the following Societies:

- Northern Ireland Daffodil Group;
- Belfast and District Beekeepers' Association;

- Belfast Winemakers' Circle;
- British Cactus and Succulent Society;
- Federation of Women's Institutes of Northern Ireland;
- Irish Fuchsia and Pelargonium Society;
- North of Ireland Dahlia Society;
- Northern Ireland Bonsai Society;
- Northern Ireland Group of Flower Arrangement Societies;
- Northern Ireland Vegetable Association; and
- The Rose Society of Northern Ireland.

Request to Facilitate ongoing Greylag Goose control at Victoria Park

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider a request from George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) to continue the ongoing greylag goose control programme at Victoria Park through a 3-year legal agreement.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the report from GBBCA on Greylag Geese Management at Victoria Park,**
- ii. Consider permissions requested to enter Victoria Park to facilitate the continuation of pricking of un-hatched greylag goose eggs under licence issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA); and**
- iii. Instruct officers to work with legal services to issue a relevant licence for a period of 3 years which will be subject to annual review in advance of renewal.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members are aware that control of birds in the flight path to the airport is a requirement of the airport's Civil Aviation Authority licence.

3.2 The GBBCA bird control programme has been underway for a number of years and is underpinned by scientific surveys and research. Council previously agreed a range of measures to control greylag goose numbers within Victoria Park including habitat modifications, dissuading members of the public from feeding the birds and annual egg pricking under licence. Management interventions are monitored by GBBCA to assess their effectiveness.

- 3.3 A report provided by GBBCA (See Appendix 1) provides information on how the control programme, aimed at making the site less attractive to geese, has been effective with a steady decline in numbers. Egg control at Victoria Park over the last licences period averaged 68.3 eggs per year compared to 74.4 for the previous three year period (2018 – 2020), with a corresponding drop in monthly average count from 18.3 to 10.5. This continuing decline in numbers at the park is mirrored by a decline in runway observations Appendix 1 (Table 1 and Figure 2).
- 3.4 It reports that although there is an overall declining trend for greylag geese in the area, runway observations still record peaks during Spring and Autumn while at Victoria Park numbers have increased sharply over the last six months. The report also states that at a national level numbers of greylag geese are also increasing.
- 3.5 The report concludes that with greylag longevity c.20 years, seasonal peaks still evident from runway observations and a recent increase in greylag at Victoria Park, the recommendation to continue with egg control management is well-founded. The recent rise in numbers at Victoria Park however, introduces trend instability which along with a risk of displacement from other sites, would suggest any cessation of management effort in the short-term would be premature.
- 3.6 On this basis, GBBCA has approached council to request continued access to Victoria Park to facilitate the continuation of pricking of un-hatched greylag goose eggs under licence issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).
- 3.7 If members are content, officers will work with Legal Services to issue a relevant licence for a period of three years which will be subject to annual review in advance of renewal.
- 3.8 To support the review, GBBCA will be required to submit an annual report outlining their Wildlife Control Management Plan (WCMP) noting recommendations based on the risk assessment made in the annual Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) and incorporating any new control methods as they become available.
- 3.9 Officers will review the submitted risk assessment and insurance certificates in line with procedure. The licence will include relevant conditions to ensure that health and safety measures are implemented, and that any other necessary arrangements are put in place.

- 3.10 Members will recall that at its January 2024 meeting, members agreed to a request from GBBCA agreed to the request from George Best Belfast City Airport to permit access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate rookery management, in particular, the removal of old rook nests and nest site discouragement during January 2024. The Committee agreed that the Council write to George Best Belfast City Airport asking it to clarify if it was seeking to reduce and manage the number of rooks at Victoria Park or to ultimately eradicate them from the area.
- 3.11 GBBCA responded on 1 March 2024 (copy attached at Appendix 2) to advise that due to high strike posed to aircraft by rooks, that they have a legal responsibility to safeguard the airport and surrounding areas from flocks of birds which could pose such a risk. To attempt to prevent year on year expansion, they are using habit manipulation techniques to discourage rather than prevent breeding altogether in order that rooks and their young may in time naturally find an alternative location – these techniques are only progressed following consultation with subject matter experts and obtaining the necessary permissions, with work undertaken by qualified personnel.
- 3.12 GBBCA have offered to meet with members in Victoria Park for an overview, if interested.
- 3.13 Financial & Resource Implications
- GBBCA will be responsible for all costs associated with the request.
- 3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
- None.”

A Member highlighted that the Council had no legal powers to prevent this work due to the legal responsibilities of airports to ensure that they had a risk management programme to cover a 13km safety zone around the airport, the current measures were likely to be deemed necessary and would therefore be kept in place until they were no longer required. The Member welcomed the opportunity to visit the area to be provided with an overview of the wildlife management arrangements.

The Committee:

- noted the response from George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA), Airfield Operations Manager, to the Council regarding rook nest management at Victoria Park and in which he offered to convene a site visit with Elected Members in Victoria Park;
- agreed the request to enter Victoria Park to facilitate the continuation of pricking of un - hatched greylag goose eggs under licence issued by the Northern Ireland

Environment Agency (NIEA), noting that the Council had no legal powers to prevent these works; and

- agreed that the relevant officers would liaise with legal services to issue a relevant licence for a period of 3 years, which would be subject to annual review in advance of renewal.

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signage

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Tullymore Walk, Innisfayle Park, Helens Wood, Brians Well Close, Hamill Grove, Holmdene Gardens, Divis, Road and Owenvarragh Park.

Naming of New Street in the City

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of two new streets in the city, Black Ridge Meadows and Black Ridge Manor and, at the request of Councillor R. M Donnelly, the Committee further granted delegated authority to the City Solicitor to approve the erection of second nameplates in Irish for the development.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

XL Bully Restrictions announced by DAERA Minister

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the Committee agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would consider any impact that the introduction of XL Bully Breed restrictions might have on the dog warden service.

Request to Present – South Belfast Youth League

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Committee agreed to receive a presentation from the South Belfast Youth League regarding the difficulties that Leagues were experiencing in securing pitches to play on in their locality.

Request to Present – to discuss Giants Park

At the request of the Chairperson, the Committee agreed to extend an invitation to representatives from Lagan Valley Regional Park and the Historic Environment Division (DfC) to attend a future meeting to outline their concerns regarding the Giants Ring.

Chairperson