

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd March, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

- Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson); and
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faote,
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Hanvey, Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Smyth.
- In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City Operations;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 9th and 23rd February were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 4th March, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four 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 four 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 also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund Update

The Members were reminded that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 8th February, had agreed to reallocate £280,000 of funding which had previously been ringfenced for the Belfast 2024 Programme to the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund and agreed to refer the decision of the funding reallocation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. That decision was ratified by Council at its meeting on 4th March.

Accordingly, the Director of Property and Projects submitted a report outlining the proportional allocation of the funding for each area in line with the previously agreed funding allocation model.

The Committee:

- noted the reallocation of £280,000 into the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund; and
- approved the allocation of the funding in the context of the agreed funding allocation model and the agreed project pathway.

Belfast Stories Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the programme and progress to date; an overview of the programme activities and milestones in 2024; an update on the visitor experience and content development and on programme governance, including the role of the Belfast Stories Contracts Manager. The report also sought approval for a study visit for the Members of the Belfast Stories Working Group and approval to ring fence/set aside up to £2m of the City Deal Reserve for mobilisation costs related to the programme.

The Committee:

- noted the revised programme and progress since June 2023;
- noted the programme activities and milestones for 2024;
- noted the update on the visitor experience and content development;
- noted the project governance update and agreed to commence the procurement of a Contracts Manager via SIB;
- agreed for a study visit to be arranged for Belfast Stories Members Working Group, proposed for August 2024; and
- agreed to ring fence/set aside up to £2m of the City Deal Reserve to allow for mobilisation costs, similar to the monies set aside for the Leisure Improvement Programme.

Notification of the appointment to Operational Director of CNS (2 posts)

The Committee noted the appointments of Mr Stephen Leonard and Mr Jim Girvan to the posts of Operational Director of Community and Neighbourhood Services.

Belfast 2024 Update March 2024

(Ms E. Clarke, Belfast 2024 Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided a further update on the Belfast 2024 Programme.

The Committee:

- approved an uplift to The Walk's contract for Little Amal from £225k to £245k to deliver the Newry leg of the programme – and noted that this would be offset by Newry Mourne and Down's contribution towards costs;
- noted the developments for partnership programme with Oliver Jeffers Studio in collaboration with Nerve Centre; and
- granted delegated authority to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Belfast 2024 Programme Board, to sign off budget reallocations within the approved budget lines for Belfast 2024.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Housing Crisis

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 1st March:

“This Council recognises the need to bring forward significant quantities of high standard, affordable housing to meet the increasing demand and alleviate the current housing crisis facing people in Belfast.

This Council commits to supporting Cohousing Schemes as an innovative solution to meet the needs of people who are unable to buy within the current system or for whom traditional housing does not meet their needs. Cohousing schemes can create diverse and sustainable communities, providing high quality, affordable housing.

The Council will actively seek to identify suitable sites within its own land that could be used for Cohousing and include provision for Cohousing within any development site it brings forward that is appropriate for housing.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor Smyth.

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee noted that the Notice of Motion had been received and agreed that the request be included in any subsequent report which would be brought to Committee in relation to the Strategic Sites Assessment.

Motion - Gender Pay Gap Recording and Reporting

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 22nd February, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 1st March:

“That this Council will lead the way in Northern Ireland, adopting robust, transparent and accountable processes for gender pay gap recording and reporting.

The TUC calculated that in 2023 in the UK, the day when the average woman stops working for free compared to the average man is the 23rd of February. The average woman in paid employment effectively works for free for nearly two months of the year compared to the average man in paid employment. Average figures disguise wider disparities, for instance the gap tends to widen if a woman is a mum, or works in education, finance or insurance.

There is no legal obligation to record and report gender pay gap data in Northern Ireland. However, if we don't transparently measure pay by gender, how can we understand and address structural inequalities in our organisation?

Therefore, this Council will record and report:

- Its mean gender pay gap in hourly pay
- Its median gender pay gap in hourly pay
- The proportion of males and females in each pay quartile
- A statistical overview of progression/promotion rates for male and female staff

And will use guidance such as the UK Government Equalities Office - What Works guidance to address the gap.

After the first gender pay gap report, the Council will move to include Disability and ethnicity pay reporting.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor T. Brooks and seconded by Councillor F. McAteer.

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee noted that the Notice of Motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications, with the report to include those measures which were already in place.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Smart Belfast City Innovation programme

The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Members on a number of City Innovation projects and opportunities including details of the draft Belfast/Sejong ‘Innovation Twins’ roadmap and the associated visit by the Lord Mayor to South Korea in April.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the outline itinerary for the Lord Mayor’s Innovation Twins mission to South Korea in April which is fully funded by DSIT.**

2. Approve the signing of an 'Innovation Twins' roadmap as a basis for further direct and bi-lateral development work with the city of Sejong on a number of initiatives.
3. Approve the signing of a specific MoU with Sejong City Council to explore opportunities for net zero collaboration with the Belfast Climate Commissioner.
4. Approve a letter of support to Ulster University for its bid to establish £2.5 million Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator in Belfast including potential in-kind contribution.
5. Note that officers will work with Queen's University on a £5 million Systems Approaches to the Transition to Net Zero bid.
6. Approve Belfast City Council officer participation in the annual programme of the All Island Smart Cities Forum.
7. Note progress on the development of the City Hall immersive experience and that details on the proposed experience will be presented to Committee in the coming months.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Smart Belfast urban innovation programme encourages collaborative innovation between government (both local and regional), industry, SMEs, academia and our communities. Evidence indicates that cities with strong collaborative innovation partnerships are more adept at attracting research funding and investment; and are much better equipped to develop solutions to complex urban policy challenges. The Smart Belfast programme relies primarily on third-party funding sources and in-kind contributions from participating partners. Below are details of the current significant initiatives, a number of which require Member approval.

3.2 Republic of Korea Innovation Twins programme

The Innovation Twins programme is fully funded by DSIT and facilitated by Connected Places Catapult. It's designed to build relationships between four cities with existing urban innovation programmes (Belfast, Glasgow, Birmingham and Liverpool) and their South Korean counterparts with the aim of fostering long term collaborations that can generate trade, FDI and knowledge exchange. South Korea has one of the most successful innovation economies in the world and has ambitions to build much stronger trade and exchange relationships with Europe and north America.

3.3 Belfast City Council and its Innovation City Belfast partners, including Invest NI's team in South Korea, have been working with Sejong city officials to agree a joint roadmap that would be of benefit to both cities. A long-list of proposals for the roadmap was developed with partners over the past eighteen months which has now been shortlisted to seven initiatives which both cities want to progress. Members should note that these are all still at a formative stage, and each will require further work and agreement between both cities before they are confirmed as projects. The shortlist includes:

1. Global Innovation Network – Belfast's SME accelerator 'Catalyst' will work with Sejong Technopark and the Korean Centre for Creative Economy and Innovation to provide a platform for companies from both cities to support global collaboration, increase R&D activity, increase innovation rates and help to scale high growth driven innovation enterprises.
2. Security in Space – Queen's University ECIT team will work with Korea University to investigate post-quantum cryptography systems that will secure next-generation satellite communication systems.
3. Green City Accelerator – An MoU between Belfast City Council and Sejong City Council to develop energy and net zero projects led by our Climate Commissioner.
4. Cyber-cities – Queen's will collaborate with Korea University on a cyber-security Hackathon for students and a global cyber conference in Sejong.
5. Invest NI's Smart Cities missions – A smart city mission will take place enabling Northern Ireland companies to visit Sejong (and elsewhere in South Korea) to promote bi-lateral trade, collaboration and strengthen innovation eco-systems. A mission for Sejong companies to Belfast will also be facilitated by Invest NI and Sejong Technopark.
6. Internet of Things – Ulster University and Digital Catapult will work with Sejong to develop urban testbeds enabled by 5G, with applications in the fintech and health-tech sectors.
7. Pathway to Net Zero – Translink and Sejong partners will explore innovative technologies to support ambitions to be carbon positive by 2040.
8. In addition to these proposals, Sejong also wish to explore tourism collaboration. The city plans to open a new national museum in 2025, and officials are keen for Belfast to be represented in the museum. Officials from Sejong are travelling to Belfast in June to engage

with Titanic Belfast, Ulster Museum, Belfast Stories and Belfast 2024. While tourism as a theme sits outside of the roadmap, it is something that Sejong has placed great emphasis on, and is expected to form part of the content of the Lord Mayor's visit.

3.4 The Lord Mayor's mission to Sejong

The primary purpose of the mission is for the mayors of both cities to sign the Innovation Twins roadmap as a basis for further development. The mission, which is fully funded under the terms of the Innovation Twins programme, is planned for 25 April to 1 May. The Lord Mayor will be accompanied by the Chief Executive, the Climate Commissioner; and an Innovation Broker from the City Innovation Team.

3.5 Invitations have also been extended to Catalyst, Queen's University, Ulster University and the Digital Catapult. The visit will also be supported by Invest NI's South Korean office and officials from the Connected Places Catapult. Members should note that Connected Places Catapult funding may also be made available to accompanying organisations to support their travel to Sejong.

3.6 The official itinerary is still being finalised with Sejong officials but it will include a unique visit to the South Korea Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) and visits to a number of centres that have contributed to making South Korea a powerhouse of the global economy. These include the

Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute, the Autonomous Vehicle Big Data Control Centre, the Smart City Centre, Korea University, the Hongik Maker Land, the Sejong Centre for Creative Economy & Innovation and Sejong Technopark which works directly with South Korean SMEs to commercialise research and innovation.

3.7 Members are asked to note the outline itinerary for the Lord Mayor's Innovation Twins mission. And Members are also asked to approve the signing by the Lord Mayor of the Innovation Twins roadmap as a basis for further direct and bi-lateral development work with Sejong.

3.8 Belfast's Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator

Ulster University is preparing a major bid to the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's 'Place-based Innovation Accelerator Account' to create a Belfast-based Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator that aims to build innovation capacity amongst the local digital health care

cluster by encouraging more collaboration with university researchers, clinicians and directly with communities.

3.9 Ulster University is requesting a letter of support from Belfast City Council that would include making an in-principle commitment to the programme with in-kind staff time to the value of £100,000 over four years and to work with City Deal partners to develop a potential complementary challenge fund aimed at stimulating innovation amongst Belfast region health tech SMEs.

3.10 Members are asked to approve a letter of support from Belfast City Council, with any final decision in commitment being subject to the terms of the winning bid and approval by a future Committee.

3.11 Systems approaches to the transition to net zero

Queen's University has been engaging with the City Innovation Office on a potential £5 million bid to UKRI for a five-year research programme that will focus on opportunities and barriers to achieving net zero across urban systems such as transport, health, housing, etc.

3.12 Surrey University is lead applicant with Queen's while other partners include Oxford University, University College London, Newcastle and Birmingham. The deadline for an outline application is 26 March. If successful, applicants will then be invited to develop their bid further for final submission (at which point an update will be brought back to committee on the bid and the potential role of Belfast City Council).

3.13 All-Island Smart Cities Network

Belfast City Council was a founding member of a smart cities forum in 2017 that now includes most large town and cities on the island of Ireland. (Derry and Strabane and Newry Mourne and Down Councils are also members). The forum was set up to share and promote smart cities practice and to work on joint projects and funding bids. For example, the City Innovation Office worked with Smart Dublin on a successful €800,000 Last mile delivery challenge competition in 2019.

3.14 Membership of the Forum requires in-person attendance at a small number of workshops in Dublin usually on a quarterly basis. Members are asked to approve this travel.

3.15 City Hall immersive experience

Members should note that work continues with BT on the development of the City Hall immersive experience that will sensitively complement elements of the existing exhibition. This experimental project, which aims to open from mid-autumn as part of Belfast 2024's programme, is being developed with the City Innovation Office, Belfast 2024, and the Functions and Exhibitions team.

- 3.16 Under a collaborative agreement, BT are investing significant R&D resources into the experience while the Council is benefiting from working alongside of the UK's most creative multi-media companies specialising in heritage sectors. Members are asked to note progress on the development of the experience and that details on the proposed experience will be presented to Committee in the coming months.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.17 Unless otherwise noted below, budgets for the initiatives noted above are funded via third-party sources, with any Council contributions identified within the existing City Innovation Office and Belfast Region City Deal budgets.

- 3.18 Council travel costs for Sejong are covered by a grant received from Connected Places Catapult for the Innovation Twins programme.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.19 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Apprenticeship Programme Funding

The Director of Finance reminded the Members that, in February 2024, the Director of Human Resources had presented a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the introduction of an apprenticeship programme for the Council. That report had highlighted two potential areas where this could initially be introduced, namely, Fleet and Resources and Digital Services. The Committee had noted the content of the report and agreed that a further report be submitted on how such a programme could be financed.

That report had also highlighted the full year costs of the initial programme would be approximately £77k per annum, including salary and training costs. That equated to an ask in 2024/25 of approximately £45k. These initial apprenticeships would last for 3 years at a total cost of approximately £231k, subject to nationally agreed pay awards.

The Director of Finance explained that, as referred to in the Director of Human Resources' report, there currently was no budget for the programme, either departmentally or centrally. Normally a review of the year-end financial position would take place and if there were funds available these would be set aside in a specified reserve to fund this for 2024/25. However, it was likely that the recruitment process would need to commence before the year end position was known. So to ensure the recruitment of the programme could go ahead in a timely manner, the Director of Finance proposed the following financial options:

- 1) Agree to realign £45k from specified reserves to this scheme for 24/25;
- 2) If funds were available at year end, replenish the specified reserve; and
- 3) Incorporate the future funding requirement into the medium-term financial plan currently being devised.

As part of the medium-term financial planning, further discussions would be held with the Director of Human Resources and relevant Directors regarding the expansion of the apprenticeship programme into other areas.

The Committee agreed to funding the 2024/25 apprenticeship programme from realignment of specified reserves, with the costs for future years being incorporated into the medium-term financial plan.

It agreed also that a further report be submitted to the Committee outlining how the apprentices would be recruited.

Performance Improvement Plan 2023/24 Updated KPIs

The Strategic Director of City and Organisation Strategy submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the proposed amendments to the performance indicators to be included in the Council's 2023-24 Performance Improvement Plan following discussions and engagement with the NI Audit Office (NIAO) and Department for Communities (DfC).

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **agree to the recommended changes to the performance indicators to be included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24.**

- provide approval for officers to update and publish the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24 following final agreement with DfC and NIAO.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Part 12 of the Local Government (NI) Act requires Councils to agree improvement objectives on an annual basis and publish these in the form of a Performance Improvement Plan. In August 2023, Members agreed the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24, which contains our commitment to securing continuous improvement as well as delivery of five improvement objectives. The Act also requires us to monitor and report on progress in an annual assessment of performance.

Improvement Plan 2023-24

- 3.2 In August 2023, the SP&R Committee approved the Performance Improvement Plan for 2023-24. It was then published on the council website as required by legislation. To date, Council has provided two quarterly delivery updates to the NIAO for 2023-24 and was in the process of compiling a Quarter 3 report. However, following recent feedback, engagement and discussions with senior officials within the NIAO and the DfC, officers have been working to revise and amend a number of our performance indicators to ensure that we can report on our progress and performance more effectively going forward.
- 3.3 The Improvement Plan 2023-24 sets out the following improvement objectives:

Our services and facilities

Maintain and where appropriate improve resident satisfaction with the council and the services and facilities that we provide.

Our communities

Improve our local areas and enhance how we engage and support residents so everyone can enjoy good quality of life.

Our economy

Help small businesses, including social enterprises and co-operatives, to develop and grow, and by doing so, help create opportunities for local jobs and employment.

Our environment

Help tackle climate change, protect our environment, and improve the sustainability of Belfast.

Our city

Revitalise our city and help it to innovate in an inclusive and sustainable way.

- 3.4 **Each improvement objective is supported by a range of actions and milestones that we are required to report on quarterly. Several KPIs and targets are also attributed to help us evidence the extent to which we have achieved our objectives.**

Officers have engaged with the CMT and brought a report to Audit and Risk Panel on the 5 March, to outline and agree the approach and next steps to revising the KPIs within the current Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24, subject to SP&R approval of the changes and final agreement with the DfC and NIAO.

- 3.5 **A revised copy of the Improvement Objectives with the proposed new indicators is attached in Appendix 1 and the changes are summarised below:**

Please note:

- **Current KPIs that have been ~~scored through~~ are recommended to be removed.**
- **Current KPIs not scored through will remain.**
- **Proposed new / additional KPIs in green have been agreed by departments (data will be available for reporting and aligned to improvement objectives).**

Improvement Objective 1: Our services and facilities	
Maintain and where appropriate improve resident satisfaction with the council and the services and facilities that we provide.	
Current KPIs	Proposed new / additional KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident satisfaction with Belfast City Council • Percentage of residents who agree that council provides good customer service • Percentage of residents who agree that is easy to contact the council or access council services • Percentage of residents who agree Council provides good value for money • Percentage of residents who agree their local area is clean and attractive • Resident satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer contact service level (people answered within 120 secs) • Percentage of corporate complaints resolved within timeframe. • Number of adult and junior leisure centre monthly prepaid memberships (including swim school). • Throughput / footfall – number of people using leisure centres (individual unique customer visits).

Improvement objective 2: Our communities	
Improve our local areas and enhance how we engage and support residents so everyone can enjoy good quality of life.	
Current KPIs	Proposed new / additional KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area a place to live. • Percentage of residents who agree council shows good leadership. • Percentage of residents who agree council consults and listens to the views of local residents. • Percentage of residents who agree that their local area has good quality parks and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in new/ upgraded playgrounds. • Total BCC capital investment in neighbourhoods.

<p>green.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residents using council parks at least monthly (resident survey data). • Number of parks and green spaces with green flag accreditation. • Number of responses to consultation surveys per annum (via Your Say Belfast). • Public participation levels in participatory budgeting (PB) decision making events. • Number of residents accessing online cost-of-living support and advice or 'warm and welcome spaces'. 	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Improvement objective 3: Our economy</p> <p>Help small businesses, including social enterprises and co-operatives, to develop and grow, and by doing so, help create opportunities for local jobs and employment.</p>	
<p>Current KPIs</p>	<p>Proposed new / additional KPIs</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of jobs promoted through the 'Go For It' programme [Statutory performance indicator] • Business start-up and growth activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of business plans developed - Number of participants or businesses supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No additional indicators required / recommended

Improvement objective 4: Our environment	
<p>Help tackle climate change, protect our environment, and improve the sustainability of Belfast.</p>	
Current KPIs	Proposed new / additional KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of residents who agree that Belfast is an environmentally friendly city • One Million Trees Programme - number of trees planted per annum. • Carbon disclosure project (CDP) score • Northern Ireland environmental benchmarking survey rating. • Amount of (tonnage) of biodegradable council collected waste that is landfilled [Statutory performance indicator] • % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling (or prepared for re-use) [Statutory performance indicator] • Amount (tonnage) of council collected municipal waste arisings [Statutory performance indicator] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of the council's vehicle fleet switching fuel consumption to HVO

Improvement Objective 5: Our city	
<p>Revitalise our city and help it to innovate in an inclusive and sustainable way.</p>	
Current KPIs	Proposed new / additional KPIs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident satisfaction with Belfast as a place to live • Percentage of residents who agree the city centre is vibrant and attractive, with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total number of previously vacant city centre properties that have been awarded the Vacant to Vibrant grant and will become occupied as a result of the intervention.

<p>lots going on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Percentage of residents who agree that Belfast:<ul style="list-style-type: none">is easy to get abouthas good infrastructureNumber of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and companies directly engaged in the Smart District programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The total amount of funding (£) awarded to city centre traders to address vacancy.The total number of people engaged (traders, developers, business owners, landlords etc) in assisting with the completion of applications to the Vacant to Vibrant intervention.
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Current KPIs

Planning [Statutory performance indicators]

- Average (weeks) processing time for major planning applications
- Average (weeks) processing time for local planning applications
- Percentage of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks.

3.6 Next steps

- Subject to SP&R approval, officers will present the revised KPIs to DfC and NIAO for final agreement.
- Subject to approval by DfC and NIAO, officers will publish the revised Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24 on our website and will submit a combined Q3 and Q4 update to the SP&R Committee in June 2024. This combined Q3 and Q4 and all future reports will be based on the revised KPIs.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no finance or resource implications contained within this report.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality implications contained in this report.”

During discussion, several Members expressed the view, that whilst there was a need to have wider and more ambitious KPIs, there was also a need to retain some of the existing ones and expand on some of the newer ones and the undernoted points were made:

- Under objective 1: Our services and facilities – the following KPIs should be retained:
 - percentage of residents who agree that it is easy to contact the council or access council services; and
 - percentage of residents who agree their local area is clean and attractive.
- Improvement objective 2: our communities – there was a need to incorporate, in some form, the KPI on the percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- Under Improvement objective 1 – the need to capture the throughput/footfall – number of users of other Council owned leisure/health/community sites.

The Committee:

- agreed to the recommended changes to the performance indicators to be included in the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24, subject to the retention of suitable alternative measures for the following KPIs under Improvement Objective 1:
 - percentage of residents who agree that it is easy to contact the council or access council services;
 - percentage of residents who agree their local area is clean and attractive;
- noted that the Director would look at how to include other comments in relation to value for money; residents' satisfaction with their local area and footfall/throughput of people using other council-owned leisure/health/community sites; and
- granted approval for officers to update and re-publish the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24 following final agreement with the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Audit Office.

Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to present the draft Council performance improvement objectives for 2024- 25 and to seek Committee approval to issue these for public consultation, in line with our statutory performance duty obligations.**

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the draft performance improvement objectives for 2024-25 and, subject to any amendments, approve their issue for public consultation in line with statutory guidance. The proposed improvement objectives for 2024-25 are as follows:

Our Services
We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
Our people and communities
We will enhance the quality of life for our residents and support them to become healthier, engaged and more resilient.
Our place
We will create a more vibrant city centre and improve our neighbourhoods.
Our planet
We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.
Our economy
We will help business start-up and growth and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment
Compassionate city
We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

3.0 **Main report**

Background

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council has a statutory duty to agree performance improvement objectives and develop an annual performance improvement plan, which must be published by the 30 June each year. The performance improvement plan doesn't represent everything that the council plans to do but focuses on a small set of key improvement priorities, as informed by the evidence base and engagement feedback.
- 3.2 The new performance improvement objectives are aligned to the key themes and priorities identified within the new refresh of the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan. This provides a balanced approach to identifying improvement objectives that contribute to improving services, council functions and the quality of life for

residents/ communities. Members should also note that the council's strategic and collective partnership commitments to deliver shared city outcomes for the citizens of Belfast and the continuous improvement of internal organisational priorities will continue to be delivered and enhanced as part of the Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda.

- 3.3 We will formally consult on the performance improvement objectives using the online YourSay Belfast platform for a period of 8 weeks and will use a range of other communication methods to raise awareness and encourage participation/ reach e.g., posters located within community centres, leisure centres and libraries, social media related activity, signposting via established networks, for example Community Planning Partners (CPP) and other Council networks.
- 3.4 A copy of the draft improvement objectives and indicative actions that we propose to deliver during the coming year, have been included in Appendix 1, for illustration purposes.

Next Steps

- 3.5 Councils are legally required to consult on their improvement objectives and to publish a Council Improvement Plan by 30 June each year. Subject to approval, we will issue the performance improvement objectives for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. We will continue to work with Departments to firm up the actions, milestones, KPIs and targets, that sit below the improvement objectives. Improvement activity will be reflected within the Corporate Plan, Committee plans, business plans and strategic programmes, where relevant, ensuring that improvement is embedded within our planning and delivery processes. A final report and draft Council Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 will be brought to the SP&R Committee for ratification and publication in June 2024.

WHAT	WHEN
SP&R Agree draft Improvement Objectives 2024-25	22 March 2024
Carry out 8-week consultation process	April – May 2024
Refine improvement actions, milestones, KPIs and targets	April – May 2024
SP&R approves Council Improvement Plan for publication	June 2024

Council Performance Improvement Plan published	By 30 June 2024
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3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no Financial or Human Resource implications arising directly from this report. Improvement actions are part of business planning processes.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

During discussion a Member pointed out there were a number of programmes in which the Council was leading the way, particularly in relation to the our people and communities and the our planet improvement objectives and that there were some initiatives, such as the school streets project and the playful streets initiative, which could be included as indicative action under these objectives.

In response, the Strategic Director indicated that he would look at a means to including these.

The Committee agreed the draft performance improvement objectives for 2024-25 and, subject to the inclusion of those initiatives regarding school streets and playful streets as indicative actions and approved their issue for public consultation in line with statutory guidance.

Customer Focus Programme Update

The Strategic Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update Elected Members on the Customer Focus Programme and the Customer Hub.

1.2 For Elected Members to note the intention to use bulk text message as a communication channel for upcoming changes to waste collections over the Easter Bank Holidays.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the update and the intention to use bulk text messaging as a communication channel for changes to waste collections.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Customer Focus Programme and Customer Hub

The Customer Hub was set up as part of the Customer Focus Programme and went live in April 2021 during COVID lockdowns. Whilst the Hub has been in place for almost three years, staffing establishment levels remain the same as April 2021, despite significant increases in customer contact across all contact channels.

3.2 The Customer Hub has been able to provide improved service despite increasing volumes through the promotion and improvement of our digital channels and making these automated. This is across channels such as web forms and email, whilst delivering service levels via phone calls and in person visits. The Customer Hub handles around 70% of all calls to the Council and around 60% of all customer contacts including email and web forms.

3.3 The Customer Hub experiences significant service issues with massive increases in volumes when there is major disruption to operational services such as waste collections.

3.4 At present the range of services that have been onboarded to the Customer Hub are:

- Resources and Fleet Waste Collections
- Resources and Fleet Waste Management
- Open Spaces and Street Scene
- Complaints
- General Enquires
- Switchboard

3.5 Customer Hub Contact Volumes

The Customer Hub on average deals with of 550 phone calls per day. The Hub also processes emails and webforms of around the similar volume and would regularly handle around 1,000 – 1,200 customer contact per day. During high periods of demand, such as significant service disruption (Inclement weather, Bank Holidays etc) the Customer Hub can experience significantly more calls, which can be challenging.

3.6 Customer Hub volumes and channels of contact is provided below for Q3 2022 and Q3 2023. As you will note there is a significant increase in the volume of customer contact processed at the Customer Hub in comparison to the same quarter last year, an increase of around 5,000 more contacts

which is a 30% increase, this is across all contact channels, phone, web form, and in person visits to the Cecil Ward Building.

3.7 The graphic below depicts the increase in customer contacts from Q3 2022 to Q3 2024, a breakdown of the contact channel in the pie chart and a breakdown of the services in the bar chart.



3.8 It should be noted that telephone contact has also increased significantly from 9,000 contacts in Q3 2022 to 12,000 contacts in Q3 2023. The capability to answer such an increase in calls has been achieved through the targeted introduction of automations to web forms. This has enabled Assistants within the Hub to spend less time doing low valuable data entry to provide more valuable direct interaction with customers calling the Hub.

3.9 Cost saving and Process Efficiencies

The Customer Focus Programme actively tracks the benefits from the products produced and handed over to services as business as usual. These products have been co-created with the operational services, the programme office and with the support of services such as Digital Services or Continuous Improvement. This ensures a collective agreement on what is to be produced, when it is to be produced and that the service and producers sign the product off together. These are only signed off when ready to achieve the benefit they were created for.

It is important to note the benefits support the Belfast Agenda and that these products actively support efficiencies or cost avoidance. The introduction of automated Web forms has provided the capability for the Customer Hub to handle significantly more volume since its inception in April 2021. These improvements have allowed the staff within the Hub to focus on higher value work and more complex and time-consuming customer issues.

CURRENT PRODUCTS DELIVERED BY THE CUSTOMER FOCUS PROGRAMME

3.11 Elected Members app:

The Elected Members app was fully rolled out to all Elected Members in 2021 and to all new members on induction to Council. This is used by Elected Members to achieve the benefits of registering service requests, track these service requests, contact the officer in charge and to have visibility of the records and where requests are closed and a history of their requests.

3.12 The use of the app varies between Elected Members with some members making significant repeated use and others as and when required. This is to be expected as we are offering a 'digital first', not 'digital only' method of contacting the Hub for transactional issues.

3.13 Officers would like to explore how we could increase the uptake of the Elected Members app, since the benefits of this approach ensures that we can identify any patterns in service performance issues and improve our understanding of why service issues have arisen. Elected members are asked to note that the current average time for the Customer Hub to pass calls to services is within one hour of being received with the majority of these passed on within 30 mins

or faster. Though there will of course be occasions when this is done more quickly for high priority or urgent cases.

3.14 Report it app:

A significant proportion of the work in Phase Two of the Customer Focus Programme has been supporting service delivery within Resources and Fleet Collections. This has included the design, development and deployment and operational use of a staff Report It App. This has allowed collections teams to report on the issues live 'on the ground' affecting collection, for example, no access due to parked cars.

3.15 This has been particularly beneficial for the Customer Hub and collections managers who can view the live reporting to support decision making and provide customers with live updates on collection issues at the point of contact. This allows customers to clearly understand issues that are beyond the collection team's controls such as parked vehicles or contaminated or overfilled and damaged bins and is of major added value to the customer at the point of contact.

3.16 Previously this work would have done using manual processes, creating a considerable time lag for customer information meaning that this was of little use. Often, prior to the development of the Report It App, there would have been work that should have not been carried out for example a recollection of a contaminated bin etc.

3.17 The Next Phase of the Customer Focus Programme


The programme is taking onboard views of Chief Officers as part of the planning of its next phase, in the form of a planning workshop. This will include participants from the Customer Focus Oversight and Delivery boards along with a wider group of stakeholders. The pillars/themes of the new phase have already been agreed by the Oversight board and are displayed below for Elected Members to note.

3.18 New product ready for implementation – Bulk Text Messaging

A key infrastructure product within the Customer Hub has been to integrate the telephony system with the Corporate Dynamics CRM. As part of this, the ability to send text messages to customers was developed. This is available on a 1 to 1 basis for sending only, for example sending the link of an online form to a customer.

3.19 The functionality that supports this also supports the sending large volumes of text messages through the Notify Service via notify.gov.uk. Elected Members may have received text messages from this service, for example the Driver & Vehicle Agency send appointment reminders text message for MOT Services.

High Level Customer Focus Programme Phase 3

 Automation & Channel Shift	 Data Analytics	 Onboarding of Services	 Organisation Customer Experience	 Omni Channel
<p>Creation of a Strategy and design principles for provision and promotion of automated Digital Channels</p> <p>By Q4 2023:</p> <p>Bulky Waste Exemplar</p> <p>1st service to have no online presence, fully call based with channel shift of +40%</p> <p>Improvement in Cost to Serve</p> <p>Potential to Automate over 10,000 calls per Ann and deflect many more</p> <p>Releases Capacity for transition of other services</p> <p>Informs development of Channel Shift Strategy.</p>	<p>Development of Performance Metrics for CMT, DMT's and Operational Service</p> <p>By Q4 2023:</p> <p>Visualising service provision</p> <p>Developing potential efficiency indicators</p> <p>Utilising Information to bring insight into Service Failure</p> <p>CMT Reporting - Customer Service Performance Measurement</p> <p>In 2024:</p> <p>Data Analytics Training for services to self-serve on Analytics</p>	<p>Development and Implementation of Transition and Transformation Toolkit</p> <p>By Q2 2024:</p> <p>Cost to Serve Baseline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Channel Assessment reduction of cost to serve •SLA and Standards assessment and agreement •Assessment of Risks and issues for Services to onboard •Integration of LOB Systems replacement and integration with Customer Hub/Dynamics 	<p>Implementation and embedding of all Customer Standards at a corporate level</p> <p>In 2024</p> <p>Service Level Agreements</p> <p>Front line Customer Service Training</p> <p>Customer Satisfaction Measurement</p> <p>Introduction of Service Level Customer Satisfaction baseline monitoring</p> <p>User Experience Training</p> <p>In 2024/5:</p> <p>Customer Experience CX Maturity Model assessment</p>	<p>Development of an approach to have a Single view of Customer across all channels</p> <p>In 2024:</p> <p>This will be progressed through assessment of the following means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Customer Account/Portal, Business case, design principles and implementation pathway •Proof Of concept Webchat & Chat Bot Virtual agents internal •Provision of Service Information – deflection •Bulk Text Messaging •Creation of a business case for Transactional Social Media integration to Dynamics

3.20 Elected Members currently receive text messages from the Emergency Coordination team that are sent on a bulk basis, to all Elected members and senior officers, for communication and updates regarding an emergency response or weather warnings etc.

3.21 The Customer Hub now has the capability to send bulk text messaging - to send service disruption or service change information directly to customers' mobile phones. This functionality adds to our existing communications channels, such as our website or social media.

3.22 The Customer Hub proposes to deploy this capability for communicating changes to bin collection schedules that will occur over Easter as part of the wider communications campaign. This process will be developed and fully agreed with the Director of City Services Resources and Fleet and the Director for External Affairs, Communications and Marketing and the Customer Hub prior to being implemented. This capability has also been reviewed with the Information Governance Unit to ensure compatibility and compliance with all Data Protection Legislation and Policies.

3.23 Elected Members will also receive an email briefing via democratic services ahead of the usual communications and text messaging being sent. All usual channels will be used for customer communications confirming the arrangements for Easter with the addition of the use of text messaging service.

3.24 Financial and Resource Implications

None

3.25 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

In response to a Member’s question, the Strategic Director that the text messages would be used alongside existing channels such as city matters and social media. He indicated also that he was intending to explore the use of the Elected Member app and what improvements might be introduced in terms of support for Members.

The Committee noted;

- the update and the intention to use bulk text messaging as a communication channel for changes to waste collections; and
- that the Director would explore the use of the Elected Member app and what improvements might be introduced in terms of support for Members.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents an update on the 2024/25 Capital Programme and associated capital financing, as well as requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

Capital Programme and Capital Financing 2024/25

- note the update on Capital Financing as outlined in 3.3 below and the update on the Capital Programme for 2024/25 at 3.5 below and in Appendix 1
- agree to hold Party Group Briefings to update Members on the status of projects along with the emerging implications for future capital investment decisions and in particular the potential impact on the future district rate in line with the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan to inform the future proposed workshop on capital priorities.
- Capital Programme Movements –
 - Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter project – agree to move the project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
 - St George’s Market – New Stalls project – agree to move the project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
 - Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme project – agree to move the project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* under the Waste Plan to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
 - Belfast Blitz Fire Service Permanent Acknowledgement project – note that this project has been moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Capital Programme

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of

investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. Members will recall that the detailed Physical Programme Half Year Update was presented last month and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

3.2 Capital Programme and Capital Financing 2024/25

The Council incurs both capital expenditure and capital financing costs in the delivery of its Capital Programme:

- Capital Expenditure is the expenditure incurred in the actual delivery of contracts e.g. the actual payments to the contractor for a construction contract (see Appendix 1)
- Capital Financing is the method the council uses to fund the capital expenditure. The capital financing costs include loan repayments (principal and interest); revenue contributions (cash payments to repay or avoid taking out loans); capital receipts and external funding.

Members need to be aware that each decision they take in relation to progressing a capital project or agreeing additional money towards any one project has a consequential impact on the level of financing that is available for other capital projects and each individual decision therefore subsequently limits the capacity of the Council to progress other capital projects thereby potentially necessitating some difficult decisions for Members in terms of prioritisation.

- 3.3 The SP&R Committee has approved a capital financing budget of £22,274,022 for 2024/25. Members will be aware however that the Council has already committed financing to a range of physical projects under the Capital Programme as outlined in Appendix 1 and a number of non-recurrent projects.

Existing Capital Financing Budget		£22,274,022
<u>Less:</u> Physical Programme Commitments (capital programme and non-recurrent projects)	£17,998,911	
Existing BCC Loans	£1,484,802	

Lisburn/ Castlereagh Transferred Loans	£598,675	
<i>Balance Remaining</i>		<i>£2,191,634</i>

3.4 Members are asked to note that although the above shows that there is a financing budget balance remaining of approx. £2m it is recommended that no significant decisions are taken pending work on the new Capital Programme.

3.5 The current Capital Programme

Capital three-stage approval process

The Council has agreed a three-stage approval process which all Council Capital Programme and larger projects funded externally must go through. Each stage movement is subject to Council ratification before the project formally progresses to the next stage. Projects move through *Stage 1 – Emerging* where they are required to complete a Strategic Outline Case and then progress to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted*. Following production of an Outline Business Case, a project can move to *Stage 3 – Committed*. Following a procurement exercise, projects must then demonstrate that the project is within the affordability limits of the Council before proceeding. At each of these stages, the project is reviewed internally before coming to SP&R Committee for a decision and a committed budget. Associated revenue costs are considered at each stage. A number of years ago it was further agreed that a final investment decision and final budget would only be allocated to a project once the tender process is concluded and it was confirmed to be within the affordability limits of the Council. This process has proved to be extremely robust and central to ensuring that projects are delivered within the agreed budget envelope. A small number of schemes have historical budgets where a budget had been previously agreed/ring-fenced by Committee early in the development cycle. This is not the agreed process now under the three-stage approach where Committee is only asked to agree a budget following return of tender. This means that those pre-emptive budgets are not reflective of the current market or requirements. This does not affect many schemes and Members will be updated on a case-by-case basis as tenders are returned so these schemes are gradually being brought into line with the process.

Schemes at Stage 3 – Committed

The Capital Programme already comprises 30+ projects at Stage 3 – Committed, where procurement is underway or projects are already in contract, see Appendix 1. Stage 3 projects also include capital projects on Council assets which are fully funded by external bodies or developer contributions. Members are updated on these schemes via regular reports to Area Working Groups and SP&R Committee. Most of these schemes have confirmed budgets and associated financing, and a number are coming to a close over the next financial year.

Schemes at Stage 2 – Uncommitted or Stage 1 – Emerging

Members are asked to note that there are a range of physical projects which the Council must undertake from a health and safety, legislative and/or operational perspective in order to ensure that the Council fulfils its statutory duties and continues to run 'fit for purpose' services. These will all require capital financing. A number of these are already on the Capital Programme and include: Waste Plan – New citywide kerbside collection system and Waste Transfer Station projects, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery and Roselawn Extensions, Cremated Remains Burial Plots, Playground Improvement Programme, Waterfront Hall Chiller Units and Smoke Curtains, HWRCs and Civic Amenity Sites Containers (Skips and Compactors), Fleet Programme and IT programme. Projects at these early stages do not have final budgets agreed however estimates have been used in order to calculate the impact of these on the capital financing budget and the availability of capital financing in the future.

In addition, there are several other major enhancement projects on the Capital Programme (Stage 1 or Stage 2) with developmental work underway including: LTP – Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Belfast Stories via Belfast Region City Deal, five greenway schemes and others, see Appendix 1. Many of these schemes will be attractive to external funders and schemes are developed with this in mind.

Next steps

- 3.6 Members will appreciate that the Council's capital and wider physical programme is one of the most important programmes delivered by the Council and due to the nature of capital projects it is also one of the most visible and easily recognisable signs of the Council's civic leadership role in the city. Moving forward the Council will face a number of

key challenges in respect of the capital programme. These are:

- The available capital financing budget will come under significant pressure if all current and emerging proposed projects are to be delivered.
- The need to ensure that Investment decisions are taken within the context of strategic alignment with the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and in full consideration of what assets already exist in an area and how these are being used

3.7 Typically the Capital Programme has an expenditure horizon of around three years. CIPFA capital planning guidance recommends that local authorities take a longer-term view (8-10 years). This is intrinsically linked to the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. To facilitate this it has been agreed to hold a series of workshops for Members regarding future capital priorities linked to the medium-term financial planning process. To prepare for this it is recommended that a series of Party Group Briefings are held in the first instance to update Members on the existing Capital Programme, ascertain future priorities to determine the level of financing required, as well as exploring the implications of any future investment decisions and the potential impact on the district rate.

The outcome of this work will likely mean a wave of new proposals being added simultaneously to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* so that a suite of schemes can be brought forward for consideration, ensuring a flow that is manageable from a financing perspective. All projects will continue to follow the three-stage capital approvals process outlined above. This will require additional investment in early stage project development in 2024/25 onwards.

3.8 Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter	The erection of dual language street signs en bloc within the Gaeltacht Quarter.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
St George’s Market – New Stalls	Replacement of market stalls in St George’s Market.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme	Part of the Waste Plan. The project involves the phased expansion of the kerbside glass collection scheme to households in the outer city/ blue bin area.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Belfast Blitz Fire Service Permanent Acknowledgement	A permanent memorial to all of the Fire Services efforts during the Belfast Blitz	Moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted

3.9 Dual Language Street Signs - Gaeltacht Quarter

In October 2023, SP&R Committee agreed that Dual Language Street signs in the Gaeltacht Quarter would be taken forward en bloc and that the project would be delivered as a capital project. As per the three stage approvals process, a Strategic Outline Case has been completed and the team can now progress to Outline Business Case stage.

Members are asked to agree that ‘Dual Language Street Signs– Gaeltacht Quarter’ be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.10 St George’s Market – New Stalls

In November 2023, SP&R Committee agreed that St George’s Market – New Stalls project would be taken forward. The project is for the replacement of the 180 market stalls in St Georges Market. The current stalls are more than 18 years old and many are in a poor state of repair, presenting a health and safety risk both for staff and for traders. As per the three stage approvals process, a Strategic Outline Case has been completed and the team can now progress to Outline Business Case stage.

Members are asked to agree that ‘St George’s Market – New Stalls’ be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.11 Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme

The Expansion of Glass Collection is brought forward under the existing Waste Plan Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* on the Capital Programme. The project involves the phased expansion of the kerbside glass collection scheme to households in the outer city/ blue bin area. An application has been lodged with DAERA for 50% match funding and a decision is awaited. As per the three stage approvals process, a Strategic Outline Case has been completed and the team can now progress to Outline Business Case stage.

Members are asked to agree that ‘Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Recycling Scheme’ be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme as part of the Waste Plan to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.12 Fire Service Belfast Blitz

In March 2023, SP&R Committee agreed that the ‘Fire Service Belfast Blitz’ project be added to the Capital Programme as a *Stage 1 – Emerging* project. The project involves the installation of a permanent memorial to all of the Fire Services efforts during the Belfast Blitz. It was agreed by SP&R via the City Hall Working Group in October 2023 to move it to *Stage 2 - Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme. This will allow a more detailed brief to be worked up and to determine financial requirements for the scheme.

Discussions have previously taken place with representatives from Fire Brigade Unions, both Belfast and Dublin, and it has been suggested that a permanent piece in the form of a resin cast of a fire brigade helmet be procured and installed. It has been agreed that such acknowledgement include the Auxiliary Fire Services for their efforts during the Belfast Blitz. It has been agreed that the piece be located initially in the Rotunda of City Hall for a defined period of time and subsequently relocated to the City Hall exhibition. Officers will identify a suitable location on the Rotunda and suggest a number of options for relocation within the City Hall exhibition. There have been early conversations with NIWM (Northern Ireland War Memorials) in relation to advice and guidance. The City Hall Working Group will continue to receive updates on this project.

Members are asked to note that ‘Fire Service Belfast Blitz’ project has been moved to the Capital Programme *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* project to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.13 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial – None
Resources – Officer time to deliver as required

3.14 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) Blythefield Park - Licence Variation to NITHCo**
 - approved an extension to the Permitted Hours on lands at Blythefield Park held under licence by NITHCo.
- ii) Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) – Licence to Friends of the Field**
 - approved the grant of a Licence between the Council and Friends of the Field for use of portion of land at Botanic Gardens.
- iii) St George’s Market Unit 2 – Lease Renewal**
 - approved the renewal of a Lease at Unit 2 St George’s Market.

Area Working Groups Update

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the South Area Working Group of 19th February, North Area Working Group of 27th February, West Area Working Group of 28th February and East Area Working Group of 28th February and 7th March 2024 and adopted the following recommendations:

North Area Working Group

- Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund - the North Belfast Area Working Group recommended to the Committee that the request from the Belfast Orange Hall to use the NRF allocation to progress with a reduced scope of works be approved.

West Area Working Group

- Belfast Investment Fund - the West Belfast Area Working Group recommended to the Committee that Glencairn Community Project be moved to *Stage 3 - Committed*.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Medium Term Financial Plan Update 2024/25 – 2027/28

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present members with an update on the work underway to implement a robust approach to longer term financial planning in compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the work to be completed to agree priorities for 2025/26 to 2027/28.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 SP&R at its meeting on 19 January 2024 agreed to an update report on the development and implementation of a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

- 3.2 Integrating and aligning strategies with resources is central to financial resilience and stability as the impact of actions or decisions on one or more of these strategies will have an impact on the others. The key planning processes in the Council are:

3.3 Financial Planning - Revenue Estimates – August to January

The striking of the district rate by 15th February each year is a statutory requirement set out in the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland)2011. The financial planning process each August with the issuing of High-Level Guidance to Chief Officers, after consultation with Members. After consideration of draft estimates, each Standing Committee considers their cash limit for the following financial year as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Full Council must ratify the Council estimates before 15th February each year.

- 3.4 The revenue budgets for 2024/25 have been approved by Council in February and provide the cash limit available to each Chief Officer for delivering services. The Council’s Financial Regulations require each Chief Officer to deliver a balanced budget by the year end. Should the need for unbudgeted expenditure arise during the year, the Director of Finance will assess funding options for the proposal which should only proceed with his approval.

Corporate Planning

3.5 The four-year corporate planning cycle is timed around the electoral cycle so that a new plan is agreed for the April following the local government elections. This gives elected Members approximately nine months to work with Officers in establishing the priorities for the Council over the next four years. At its meeting on 18th August 2023, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved a report on the proposed approach and timeline for the development of the 2024 – 28 Corporate Plan and accompanying Committee and Departmental Plans for 2024-25 as follows:

- Party Group Leaders, Committee Chairs and Chief Officers Workshop – late September 2023
- Committee Planning Workshops – early October 2023
- Draft Corporate Plan/Committee Plans/Departmental Plans – (CMT 8th November 2023)
- All Member Workshop – November 2023
- Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – 24th November and 15th December
- Draft Corporate Plan and Committee Plans to Committee – January/February 2024
- Eight Week Public Consultation Period – February/March 2024
- Final Four Year Corporate and Committee Plans agreed – April – May 2024

3.6 The corporate planning process is ongoing and the revised timeline for the completion of the Corporate Plan and the accompanying Committee and Departmental Plans is:

- CMT consider the draft 2024-2028 Corporate Plan and 2024-2025 Delivery Plan and Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-2025 return suggested changes/ additions to the Strategy, Policy and Partnerships Team by 20 March 2024.
- Draft performance improvement objectives presented to SP&R Committee on 20 March 2024. - CMT agree that DMTs be invited to the extended CMT workshop on 27 March 2024 and inform SPP if they would like any additional officers invited.

- Extended CMT discussion of draft corporate plan, delivery plan and performance objectives on 27 March 2024;
- Public consultation on the draft performance improvement objectives April-May 2024
- All Member workshop with a focus on resourced delivery in 2024-2025 (to inform annual delivery plan) and performance targets (April 2024, date TBC).
- Internal engagement with departments on the development of the Performance Improvement Plan (milestones, performance indicators and targets).
- Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2028. Annual Delivery plan and Performance Improvement Plan to CMT for final sign off – early May
- Draft Corporate Plan and draft Annual Delivery Plan to SP&R Committee for agreement, subject to public consultation (24 May 2024)
- Committee Plans agreed at P&C and CG&R Committee – May 2024.
- Performance Improvement Plan 2024-2025 agreed by SP&R Committee on 21 June 2024.
- Public Consultation - June 2024
- Launch of internal communications plan – June 2024

Financial Sustainability

- 3.7 The Council relies on rate income to fund almost 80% of its services. Rate base vulnerability has been and remains a financial risk to the Council. Having an integrated MTFP showing budgetary pressures will focus on progressing income generation and investment opportunities that will lessen the reliance on rate income. In the longer term, this approach will demonstrate the Council's financial resilience which in turn will attract more investors to help achieve the ambitious long-term plans set out in the Belfast Agenda.
- 3.8 Appendix 1 provides a draft Medium Term Financial Plan Format. This provides information on the background to what is include in a MTFP. Significant work is still to be undertaken in relation to the Forward Planning and Capital Programme areas with further work on the development of these to continue over the coming months.

Next Steps

- 3.9 A planning workshop will be held with Members in April to reaffirm Council priorities over the life of the Corporate Plan.

Chief Officers will align budgets and reserves to these priorities going forward.

Chief Officers will outline new pressures where funding sources do not exist within departmental budgets.

An update on the development of the MTFP will be brought to Committee in June

Financial & Resource Implications

3.10 None

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.11 None.”

The Committee noted the work to be completed to agree priorities for 2025/26 to 2027/28.

CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Indicators 2024-25

The Director of Finance reported that the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 required the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. In doing so, the Council was required to agree a minimum revenue provision policy annually and to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which were to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the Council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 9th December 2011, the Members approved the Council’s Treasury Management Policy which was based on the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Treasury Management Policy required that a Treasury Management Strategy be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on an annual basis and that it be supported by a mid-year and year-end treasury management report. Recent changes in the CIPFA Prudential Code recommends best practice that treasury management reports are submitted on a quarterly basis.

The Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators, was included as Appendix A to the report, while the Treasury Management Strategy and treasury management indicators have been included as Appendix B.

The comparison of “Gross Debt” to “Capital Financing Requirement” (CFR) was the main indicator of prudence when considering the proposed capital investment plans of the Council. Estimated gross debt should not exceed the CFR for the current year plus two years. The Council’s estimated gross debt position was comfortably within the

CFR in the medium term. The Director of Finance therefore considered the estimated levels of gross debt as being prudent.

He explained that Table 10 (Appendix A) showed the estimated financing costs for capital expenditure as a percentage of the estimated net revenue stream for the Council, based on the medium term. These illustrated that, in the medium term, capital financing costs would represent an average of 6.27% of the Council's net running costs. On this basis the Director of Finance was satisfied that the level of capital expenditure was affordable.

The Finance Act required the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, relating to gross debt. The Prudential Code defines the affordable limit as the "Authorised Borrowing Limit" and gross borrowing must not exceed this limit. Table 8 (Appendix A) sets out the recommended "Authorised Borrowing Limit" for the Council as being £145m for 2024/25.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and the prudential and treasury management indicators included within the appendices to the report.

And agreed:

- The Authorised Borrowing Limit for the Council of £145m for 2024/25 and The Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25, which had been included as Appendix B to the report.

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in appendix 1 (table 1);
- approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in appendix 1 (table 2);
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in appendix 1 (table 3); and
- agreed that reports be submitted to a future meeting in relation to the contract on facilities management arrangements at the Mary Peters Track and the off street car parking enforcement:

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Supply of waste collection sacks	Up to 4 years	£600,000	S Grimes	This is a recurring contract for the supply of recycled plastic and paper sacks to BCC stores to support operational teams/depts.
Supply of paints and sundries	Up to 4 years	£120,000	S Grimes	This is a recurring contract for the supply of paints and sundries to BCC stores to support operational teams/depts.
NIESS benchmarking tool	Up to 1 year	£40,000	J Greer	BCC is acting on behalf of the 11 NI councils to appoint a Contractor to deliver a benchmarking tool to support the new Entrepreneurship Support Service (NIESS) funded in part by the Department of Levelling Up and Housing and Communities' Shared Prosperity Fund.
Supply, fitting and maintenance of fire extinguishers	Up to 5 years	£150,000	S Grimes	Requirement to maintain existing fire extinguishers and provide and install any required new units, as required.
Small civil engineering works	Up to 4 years	£1,200,000	S Grimes	Contract to support Depts in maintaining assets including playgrounds.
Purchase of IT equipment	Up to 1 year	£500,000	S McNicholl	New devices to facilitate hybrid working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle

Manufacture, supply and installation of signage.	Up to 3 years	£210,000	D Sales	To supply replacement signage across BCC sites.
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Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Support for Modern.gov IT System	Up to 3 years	£35,000	P Gribben	We own the Modern.gov licences and Civica who are the supplier are the only company who provide maintenance and support for modern.gov.	Civica UK Ltd	3
Oracle licences and technical support	Up to 3 years	£40,000	P Gribben	Licencing and technical support by Oracle for systems with over 1,000 users. Proprietary licences and support provide directly by Oracle only.	Oracle Digital PLC	3

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
Bobbin Café Franchise	Up to 30 months	A further 6 months (Income based contract)	N Largey	After lengthy pre-market engagement, permission is sought for an extension up to 6 months to help facilitate the re-tender exercise and ensure the Franchise represents best VFM option for the Council whilst testing the market as a Reserved Contract to social enterprises	Now Group
Operator for Travel Hub at Cathedral Gardens	Up to 18 months	Additional 3 months and additional £7000 spend	C Reynolds	Extension of further 3 months to June 24 following additional external funding being made available to support.	Sustrans Limited
Facilities management service at Mary Peters Track.	Up to 6 years	Additional 6 months and £110k spend	D Sales	Contract extension required to allow sufficient time for Council to explore alternative management options for the site and time to re-tender, if required. Note – SP&R approved a 6-month extension in Oct 23. Total modification therefore 12 months beyond original expiry date.	Athletics NI

Provision of a medical referee service contract for the Cemeteries/ Crematorium	Up to 5 years	Additional 3 months and additional £7500 spend	D Sales	A 3-month extension is required to facilitate a re-tendering exercise. Tender documents are being finalised and should be advertised to market in April 24. Delays experienced due to resourcing issues in the Department and additional work required to review and re-draft tender documents.	Dr N B Smith
Supply, fitting and maintenance of fire extinguishers	Up to 3 years	Additional 4 months and additional £7000 spend	S Grimes	A 4-month extension is required to allow more time for the Council to review its requirements and include necessary equipment upgrades to Specification in line with emerging legislation/best practice. It is expected this review will be completed in March/April 24.	1 st Klass Fire Protection

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

Reason Code	Reasons in line with Public Contract Regulations
1	No response following advertised procurement exercise
2	Creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance
3	Competition is absent for technical reasons (no reasonable substitute exists)
4	The protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights
5	Extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by BCC, the time limits for a procurement cannot be complied with.
6	Products manufactured purely for the purpose of research, experimentation, study or development
7	Additional deliveries which are intended either as a partial or extended replacement of supplies or installations where a change of supplier would result in supplies of different technical characteristics causing incompatibility or disproportionate technical difficulties in operation and maintenance
8	Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market
9	Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities
10	New works and services consisting of the repetition of similar works or services, provided that the possibility of a direct award is disclosed during the original tender process
11	Other – Reason not in line with Public Contract Regulations (PCR 2015)

People and Communities - Funding requests

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

The purpose of this report is to update Members on two proposals for funding which were agreed at the People and Communities Committee meeting held on 6th February 2024 relating to a request from the Belfast Advice Group and for summer schemes with children with additional needs.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service as detailed below; and

- Consider the request to provide funding for summer schemes for children with additional needs

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the People and Communities Committee held on 6th February 2024, it was agreed that two requests for funding would be brought forward to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval. The requests are outlined below.

3.2 Belfast Advice Group

Following a presentation from the Belfast Advice Group and the noting of a report outlining a range of information attached at Appendix 1, it was agreed that the Group's request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service to the sum of £269,063 for 2024/25 and to build in a recurring additional annual cost of living uplift of 3% to the award for generalist advice provision including 23/24 would be brought forward to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration. Given the balance in existing reserves the request for BCTS equals £78,410 for 24/25 and the uplift requires £30,000. This means a total request of £108,410 in 24/25.

3.3 Summer schemes for children with additional needs

Members also noted a report outlining a proposal for additional funding to procure specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the 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. The proposed cost to facilitate the four schemes is £80,000.

3.4 Financial & Resource Implications

As detailed above, the request to Belfast Advice Group's request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service to the sum of £269,063, and the request to fund summer schemes for children with additional needs is £80,000.

3.5 Members should note that for the 24/25 year there is no additional budget to enhance generalist advice service provision beyond the agreed level of £999,657. Therefore an additional £30,000 is required for 24/25.

- 3.6 The anticipated available budget for BCTS in 24/25 is £70,400 from DfC, but council is not yet in receipt of a Letter of Offer for 24/25. There is £120,253 in the Tribunal Service reserve, assuming that the £70,400 from DfC is allocated, an additional £78,410 is required from Council for 24/25 to fund the BCTS to the requested level.
- 3.7 The request for funding for the BCTS has been received annually since the service was established in 2012. The recently completed Review of Advice Services in Belfast presented to Members in December 2023, highlighted that a recurring award for the BCTS should be built into the budget. Officers will include a growth request as part of the 25/26 estimates process in relation to advice services to include a dedicated budget for BCTS and build in a recurring additional annual cost of living uplift to the award for generalist advice provision.
- 3.8 In relation to the request for generalist advice services, Members should also note that Council does not apply cost of living increases to other annual funding awards. The initial cost of living increase that was applied to generalist advice services by DfC in 21/22 was 7% and a 2% uplift was applied by DfC thereafter. DfC provided funding to enable maintenance of this uplifted salary payment in 22/23 and 23/24 and these awards have been/are being passed on to advice organisations. DfC have indicated that it is likely that this uplift will be maintained in the 24/25 CSP LoO, although there is no confirmation of this. However, members should note that no additional uplifts have been provided by DfC since 2021, funds are only available to maintain salaries at the 21/22 level.
- 3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

Belfast City Council's agreement for the provision of this service will seek to ensure that the service is provided on an equal basis to all communities across the city, including section 75 groups and areas of rural need.

The Review of Advice Services identified the need to develop a new funding model that more effectively targets need. This model will be developed in 24/26 and will be screened for equality and rural needs implications.

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

The Committee:

- approved the request to fund the Citywide Tribunal Service as detailed in the report but deferred consideration of an additional annual cost-of-living uplift to allow officers to ascertain the financial impact of such an uplift on other funding programmes;
- agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for the Department for Communities enquiring if he was giving consideration to including a cost-of-living uplift to the advice services as part of the current budgetary process; and
- approved the request to provide funding for summer schemes for children with additional needs.

Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 5 March 2024

The Committee noted the key issues arising at the meeting and approved and adopted the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 5th March 2024.

World Athletics Road Race

The Committee was advised that a funding request had been received from the organisers of the Antrim half marathon for the staging of 5km race and a 1 mile race in Belfast. The event would be featuring an appearance by Joshua Cheptigi, the current Olympic 5000m champion. The event will also feature elite mile races for men and women.

It was currently being supported by the Ulster University and officers were aware that the organiser had made applications for funding support from Tourism NI, but that request was still being considered.

The event would be televised and was a paid for event, with the following entry prices for participants, Adults £22, and Students £15.

The organiser had requested a contribution of £80,000 from Belfast City Council towards the organisation of the event.

The event promoter had suggested the economic impact would be in the region of £2.7m. Although the Council did not have an independent verification or test of this proposed level of return.

The Director of Economic Development informed the Members that there was currently no budget or officer resource assigned to this activity.

He explained that, given the significant workload planned for the Events Team in delivering Belfast 2024, ongoing bidding and organising for Fleadh and Euro's 2028 as well as the Council's delivered events such as Christmas, Lord Mayor's Day, and the Maritime Festival, the addition of this event would place significant unplanned work pressure on staff. As a result of this and the fact that funding for the event had not been

planned for within current departmental budgets, it was recommended that the Committee does not accede to the funding request.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 11th March 2024

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 11th March 2024, including:

Shared City Partnership Membership (Verbal Update)

- That members note the verbal update provided by the Good Relations Manager.

The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Funding Update

- The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it approves that the remaining £70,000 of Asylum Dispersal Money be used to procure four further projects to support the localised community integration and inclusion of asylum seekers in Belfast.

Segregation and the Environment Research Report

- The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that, following full Council approval, the research report is launched, published and that the recommendations within the report are progressed.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

- The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and the appendices.

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update

- The Partnership agreed to recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

Operational Issues

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 14th March.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee adopted the recommendations in respect of those applications received up to 8th March, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2024 EVENTS						
Diverse Youth NI	5 May 2024	Graduation and cultural event with food, speeches, and performance to celebrate students completing the first project phase of the Diverse Youth NI led Hi-M8 Mental Health Awareness campaign. Numbers attending – 150	C & D	No charge as voluntary organisation	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer</i>
NI Indian Nurses Organisation supported by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	12 May 2024	International Nurses' Day Celebration – cultural event with food, speeches, and performance. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	No charge as voluntary organisation	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer</i>

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
Now Group	4 June 2024	Now Graduation Ceremony - annual celebration of the work of trainees supported by the Now Group and completion of the training programme. Numbers attending – 300 - 500	D	No charge - Complimentary as Charity	No hospitality as annual event not one-off celebration	Approve No charge No hospitality
Belfast Exposed Photography Centre	6 June 2024	Now and Then – 40 years of Belfast Exposed – an evening of celebration with dinner and photography display to showcase creative art and culture. Numbers attending – 200	C & D	No charge as charity	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Ulster University School of Computing,	27 November 2024	Reception for the 16th International Conference on Ubiquitous Computing and Ambient Intelligence for guests attending their 4-day conference taking place in Ulster	A & B	No charge as charity and linked to Visit Belfast	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
		University. Numbers attending – 150 - 175				
2025 EVENTS						
Irish Association of Dermatologists	9 May 2025	Reception and dinner for the 2024 EALTA Conference 2024. for guests attending their 3-day conference. Numbers attending - 100	A &B	No charge as charity and linked to Visit Belfast	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Ulster University	12 June 2025	Gala Conference Dinner for University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD) for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place at Ulster University. Numbers attending - 250	A &B	No charge as charity and linked to Visit Belfast	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

**Minutes of the All-Party Working Group
on the City Centre**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Centre Working Group of 1st March.

Minutes of the Disability Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Disability Working Group of 13th March.

Chairperson