

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th May, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain,
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson,
Garrett, Hanvey, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson, Smyth and Whyte.

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 and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Also attended: Councillor Flynn.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors de Faoite and Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 7th May, 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 reported.

Restricted Items

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

City Centre Regeneration Scheme

(Members of the Planning Committee, that is, Councillors Hanvey, Ferguson, Garrett, Maskey and Whyte, left the meeting whilst issues in relation to the Planning application as part of this item were under discussion.)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in relation to the City Centre Regeneration Scheme.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the update in relation to progressing acquisition of the Assembly Rooms, including an agreed revised inspection date for LPS in order to inform a valuation;
- II. Agreed that officers commence ‘without prejudice’ discussions with the landowners (or agents) on the potential for acquisition of a city centre property. Any acquisition would be subject to referral to this Committee (and Full Council) to include all due diligence;
- III. Agreed that officers engage external expert resource to support the proposed acquisition process;
- IV. Noted the update on correspondence with Government Departments; and
- V. Noted the scheduled Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee Meeting on Friday 28 June to consider the Regeneration Framework, city centre developments and heritage assets.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted:

- the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change portfolio and timescales going forward;
- the update on the Review of Continuous Improvement;
- the ongoing work to develop the business plan for Continuous Improvement for the current financial year; and
- that the next report to the Committee would align with the Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers.

The Committee agreed that a report on the use of contractors in Property Maintenance and a report on a Review Sister Cities be submitted to a future meeting.

Pay and Grading Review

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the revised proposed new Pay and Grading structure for staff on Belfast City Council Terms and Conditions and seeking the Committee's approval for the proposed next steps within the Industrial Relations Framework.

The Committee:

- approved the revised proposed pay and grading model and associated assimilation rules;
- approved that a formal offer on the above can be issued to Trade Unions;

Subject to TUs accepting the offer:

- approved the awarding of the proposed non-consolidated 7/12ths award;
- approved the implementation of the Pay and Grading model.

The Committee also noted:

- that the costs for the new pay and grading model was approximately £2.4m. £2m has been included in the rate setting process for Financial Year 2024/25;
- that the non-consolidated payment of approximately £320k for PO3, PO6, PO9 and PO11 proposed in the previous version of the offer was no longer required;
- the additional cost for 2024/25 will be in the region of £80k and would be paid from departmental underspends or realignment of specified reserves;
- the proposed next steps for the Pay and Grading Review.

Living With Water Programme Update

The Committee:

- noted the written response submitted to LWW on the interim review findings informed by the Committee discussions attached at Appendix 2 to the report;
- noted that a copy of the correspondence was submitted to the office of the Minister for Infrastructure requesting a meeting with Party Leaders given the significance for Belfast; and
- agreed to undertake a site visit to a NI Water Waste Water Treatment plant to understand their significance in the LWW Programme and that all Members be invited to this.

**North Foreshore - Giant's Park Belfast
Limited Leisure Led Development Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16 December 2022, it had approved a revised development proposal from GPBL for a mixed-use development over approximately 250 acres. This had amended their previous successful bid which had been approved by in August 2018, which was submitted as part of an Expressions of Interest exercise carried out by the Council. In addition, the Committee approved the Council to enter into a Master Development Agreement (MDA) for the revised scheme which would require GPBL to deliver the uses identified in their submission within a prescribed timeframe.

The Director of Property and Projects explained that the agreement and signing of the MDA was then delayed due to the complexity of the arrangements, the scale of the site, the range of proposed uses and special considerations relating to management of a former landfill site. The Committee had been asked to note this at its meeting dated 15 December 2023 with a further update to be brought when finalised. The Master Development Agreement and all supporting documents, including Guarantees, Site Investigation Licence, Collateral Warranties, Funding Agreement, Licence to Occupy, Lease, Works Deed and Side Letter have now been agreed and MDA was signed on 27 March 2024.

Accordingly, the Director submitted a report on the current status of the development.

The Committee noted the update on the leisure led commercial brief by Giant's Park Belfast Limited (GPBL) at the North Foreshore and that a launch event was scheduled for June.

The Committee agreed to receive an update presentation from GPBL on their proposals at a future meeting.

City Hall Income Generation Proposals

The Committee considered a report in relation to City Hall income generation proposals and seeking approval for the introduction of the charges set out in the first phase of the project.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed the following:

- an increase in wedding room hire costs in the City Hall;
- an increase in charges for officiating at other wedding venues;
- the introduction of a cost recovery charge for certain public tours of the City Hall; and
- granted delegated authority to the City Solicitor to negotiate room hire charges for commercial type events.

Request for the use of the City Hall Grounds

The Committee acceded to a request for use of City Hall grounds for an event on 20th – 22nd September 2024.

In response to a request from a Member, the City Solicitor undertook to investigate as to whether a fee could be charged for the use of the grounds for the event.

Invite to participate in Building Cultural Networks Convention on Cultural Expression

The Committee considered a report seeking to invite an officer to participate in the Building Cultural Network Convention - Cultural Expression: Rights, Roles and Responsibilities.

The Committee agreed to accept an invite to the Convention and for a senior officer to speak at the event on the Council's legal obligations in regard to the theme on Bonfire Celebrations: Rights, Roles and Responsibilities.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion – Plant-based Councils Initiative – referred from Standards and Business

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 30th April, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 7th May:

“Belfast City Council endorses the plant-based councils initiative.

The Council therefore;

- *Agrees to engage with the Plant Based Councils initiative and to commit to fully plant-based procurement where food is served*

throughout the council estate, prioritising seasonal local produce to support local farmers, and ensure that there are plant-based food options available at all City Council run events, as well as prioritising plant-based menu options in Council run facilities.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Flynn 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 a subsequent report be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.

The Committee agreed further that a report on the cost of the provision of refreshments at Council/Committee meetings be submitted to a future meeting.

**Report - Response received from Translink
re NOM - Bilingual Signage at Weavers Cross**

The Committee was advised that, at the Standards and Business Committee meeting held on 28th March, 2024, it was agreed to write to Translink advising them of a Notice of Motion in connection with bilingual signage at Weavers Cross.

The City Solicitor reported that a response has been received from Mr. Chris Conway, Group Chief Executive of Translink.

In his response he had advised that Translink acknowledged the motion and further acknowledged the importance placed on matters of language by all sections of the community. He had stated further that it was important that Translink reached out to engage with all relevant communities and stakeholders. Translink was currently planning a series of meetings with a range of interested parties during the coming weeks, where they would listen carefully to all viewpoints and would consider a response once that process had been completed.

Noted.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Belfast Region City Deal – update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the progress on project development and delivery across the pillars of investment.
- Note the update in relation to the Annual report and Annual Conversation.
- Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel

3.0 Main report

3.1 Significant progress has been seen now that the BRCD is fully into delivery, with the most advanced projects recruiting and upskilling staff, constructing new premises, co-designing projects with industry, procuring next generation technology and equipment and moving fully into operation in 2024, 2025 and 2026.

3.2 To date a total of 15 Outline Business Cases (OBC's) have been approved with a combined approximate project value of £660m and 10 Contracts for Funding have been signed for projects with an approximate value of £505m. To date over £5m of claims have been paid to individual projects.

3.3 Also following significant local market engagement local businesses have been awarded contracts to support delivery of the BRCD. For example Henry Brothers were recently appointed to deliver a significant contract for the Queen's University led Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) and the aim this year as outlined in BRCD's first annual report is to have awarded 15 major contracts for design, support for delivery and construction.

Progress across BRCD Pillars since previous update in January

Innovation

3.4 Innovation has seen a number of key milestones since the last update with the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) receiving Full Business Case (FBC) approval in early March and with construction works commencing on site at Global Point in Newtownabbey on 25th March. A significant recruitment drive is also underway with 21 new roles advertised including senior engineers and roles relating to sustainable manufacturing.

- 3.5 **Studio Ulster** also received FBC approval in March and is well on course to open fully for business this Autumn, leading the way in creative industries. The construction of the Studio Ulster facility at Giant's Park in North Belfast is due for completion in July. A recruitment drive is also underway for the project. The procurement process in relation to specialist virtual production equipment has also been completed.
- 3.6 **iREACH Health** received planning approval in March, full planning permission was granted for the erection of four and five storey clinical research buildings on either side of the Lisburn Road replacing the existing Russell court buildings currently at the site. The FBC has been significantly drafted and formal submission is anticipated in June ahead of construction commencing in Autumn.
- 3.7 In relation to **Momentum One Zero**, the planning application has been formally submitted and Stage 4 Detailed Designs are progressing well.
- 3.8 The **CDHT OBC2** was submitted to Government partners by Ulster University and following detailed review has now successfully received DoF Supply approval. The drafting of the Contract for Funding is now well underway, following legal consideration of Subsidy Control.

Digital

- 3.9 The **Digital Twin Centre** project led by Digital Catapult signed its Contract for Funding at the end of March and a formal launch has now taken place. The City Deal is funding £15m towards the project, with £15m of funding from Innovate UK and an additional £7.6m from industry partners. Digital Catapult are seeking rental accommodation within Belfast and a significant recruitment drive is underway.
- 3.10 The **Augment the City Challenge Fund** opened in April 2024 for applications from local SMEs who wish to explore the future role of immersive technologies in visitor experiences, with the ability to utilise and exploit the benefits of 5G technology – with learnings for Belfast Stories and all tourism & regeneration projects across the Deal. A separate report on the Smart Cities innovation programme which includes a detailed update on the fund is also on the agenda for Members consideration.
- 3.11 The **i4c Cleantech Centre** at St Patrick's Barracks, led by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, is progressing procurements for a centre operator and progressing detailed designs for the facility.

- 3.12 An OBC for the AND Innovation Hub, an innovation centre based in Holywood, focused on the creative industries and led by Ards & North Down Borough Council, which will utilise £8.9m of City Deal funding has been formally submitted to Government partners for consideration. Discussions are underway to maximise integration with Studio Ulster and South Eastern Regional College.

Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.13 As reported previously Contracts for Funding are in place for the Carrickfergus, Newry City Centre and Bangor Waterfront regeneration projects. Newry are now progressing with the procurement of contractors, Carrickfergus are developing RIBA 2 designs and Bangor Waterfront have progressed the appointment of the design teams for Ballyholme Yacht Club and Pickie Fun Park.
- 3.14 The Tourism projects have also seen significant progress since the last update in relation to Contracts for Funding.
- 3.15 The contract for funding for Mourne Mountain Gateway Project has now been approved through Newry Mourne & Down District Council governance arrangements. Approval for the OBC addendum from the Department of Finance has also been received meaning the contract can now proceed to signing, which is a significant milestone for this project. Procurement of design team is also reaching final stages of approval, with design team expected to be appointed this month.
- 3.16 The Gobbins Phase 2 contract for funding has now been signed. The design team procurement has concluded and the design team has been formally appointed.
- 3.17 Destination Royal Hillsborough has received final Council and Historic Royal Palaces approval for the Contract for Funding and will now progress to signing. Procurement of the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Historic Royal Palaces design teams have commenced with first appointments expected in the summer. Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council have continued to engage with a number of statutory bodies to progress the planning application for the public realm.
- 3.18 A detailed report on the progress to date on Belfast Stories was considered by Members in March 2024. The RIBA 1 stage has completed and development on the Stage 2 concept designs for both the visitor experience and the build has now commenced.

3.19 Subsidy Control

In line with the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act, the subsidy assessments for Mourne Gateway and Gobbins, were referred to the Competition and Markets Authority, which concluded that a well reasoned case for the subsidies had been made. The PMO continue to work closely with projects and Government Departments and take appropriate professional advice to ensure that the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act are fulfilled.

Infrastructure

3.20 Feasibility studies are being completed Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 on the extensions to Glengormley and Carryduff as requested by the last Minister. Following completion of these studies the OBC will be updated.

3.21 The OBC Addendum for Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge has now received approval from the Department for Finance. Approval is now being sought from the Minister to progress to procurement of the design and build contractor.

3.22 The minister has reaffirmed the previous decision that the preferred option for the bridge on the Newry Southern Relief Road is a non-opening 50m fixed bridge and work is proceeding to finalise Statutory Orders.

Employability and Skills (E&S)

3.23 Work has been progressing on the cross deal skills assessments in order to align the plans of partners, industry and government to meet the needs of the high-quality jobs that will be created through BRCD investments. The first assessment focusing on construction opportunities has already informed recommendations for BRCD partners and other stakeholders. Since the last update the advanced manufacturing assessment has now been completed and the Creative Industries (Virtual Production) assessment is at an advanced stage of preparation. A digital skills assessment has also commenced and work is ongoing.

3.24 The £7.5m Digital Transformation Flexible Fund is a cross-Deal project, funded by the NI Complementary Fund and offers eligible businesses and social enterprises help to fund their digital transformation project. The DTFF grants are worth between £5,000 and £20,000 and are designed to help

small and micro businesses accelerate their digital transformation ambitions. Demand has been strong as the project progresses through its second call for applications.

Annual Report 2023/24

- 3.25 As previously reported the agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires the production of an Annual Report and the requirement to meet with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation'.
- 3.26 The annual report for 2023/24 is currently being compiled by the Programme management office who have been actively engaging with partners on project specifics where required in advance of consideration of by the Executive Board in June and by partners through their own governance structures.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.27 Partners held their first Industry Engagement breakfast event, at Belfast City Hall on 29 February 2024. The session set the Deal in its wider political and economic context, offered greater visibility of the full programme of investment and outlined the significant opportunities being created for local businesses. Attended by a diverse range of heads of NI business and industry bodies, sectoral representative organisations, representatives from NI and UK Government, and elected members from the partner councils, the event offered an excellent opportunity to showcase the pillars of investment.
- 3.28 Participants learned how the Deal's long-term investments will help overcome embedded economic challenges in order to enhance the region's productivity and generate more and better job opportunities.
- 3.29 Attendees were encouraged to help engage their members and partners by amplifying key messages and opportunities in their own communications and events.
- 3.30 Further political and business engagement is planned for the months ahead and Members will be kept updated as this work progresses.

BRCDC Council Panel

- 3.31 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held on 29th May 2024, hosted by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council. At the meeting members will be provided with a programme update and presentations on the Advanced

Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), the advanced manufacturing skills assessment and the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.

3.32 The minutes from the meeting hosted by Ards & North Down Borough Council on 27 September 2023 are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

3.34 **Financial and Resource Implications**

All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets. As outlined additional resources have also been leveraged from other funding sources to extend the impact of the deal.

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

The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;

‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Smart Belfast: Immersive technology initiatives

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

“1.0 **Purpose of Report**

1.1 To update Members on a number of Immersive technology initiative currently being designed and delivered by the City Innovation Office.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. Note progress on the City Hall exhibition immersive experience and plans to present these at the next Members' City Hall and Grounds Installations Working Group.
2. Note progress on the Augment the City challenge competition for SMEs and innovators.
3. Note the delivery of the Maritime Mile Innovation Fund.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Smart Belfast urban innovation programme encourages collaboration on digital innovation projects between government (both local and regional), industry, SMEs, academia and communities. Immersive digital technology (such as virtual reality and augmented reality) is one of the digital technologies that the programme has prioritised, as it is recognised as having an important role in driving innovation in many disparate areas including planning, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, tourism and entertainment.

3.2 While immersive technologies are still at an early stage of maturity, they already generate £1.4 billion in turnover for over 2,000 companies nationally. Locally, a recent report by The Data City noted that the region has many of the characteristics necessary to establish a significant immersive ecosystem, with the sector already supporting over 200 local jobs.

3.3 Building on such potential, the City Innovation Office is taking forward three initiatives that aim to encourage greater investment in Immersive R&D by local companies, while at the same time helping to demonstrate the application of such technologies in the tourism sector. These initiatives are:

3.4 (1) City Hall exhibition immersive experience

Following Member approval, the Council and BT(NI) signed a collaborative agreement to work together on an experimental project called the 'Belfast City Hall Immersive experience'. Its aim is to explore the role of immersive tech and advanced connectivity in visitor locations such as City Hall, Belfast Stories and elsewhere, while at the same time offering a world-class visitor experience as part of the Belfast 2024 programme.

3.5 BT appointed the nationally renowned agency, Jam Creative Studios, to develop the concepts and content behind the experience. The team has worked closely with council officers over the past twelve months – particularly the

Functions & Exhibition and Belfast 2024 teams - to develop an approach that is sensitive to the themes of the existing exhibition.

- 3.6** The immersive experience will focus on three rooms on the east side of City Hall (7, 8, and 9) which make up the 'City Speech' and 'City Streets' exhibitions themes. The new experience will use this existing content as a jumping-off point for an experience that allows visitors to explore these rooms in novel ways.
- 3.7** Each room will be equipped with iPads (while also offering the option for visitors to use their own mobile devices). This will be a magical experience, guiding visitors through the rooms with immersive, augmented reality moments. Room 7 will mainly concentrate on the Belfast accent, our turns of phrase, and the unique sound of local voices. Room 8 will explore the changing physical shape of the city in the past, present and future. For example, visitors will be immersed in virtual vignettes that explore the role of the city's now-hidden rivers. We're also asking young people from all over Belfast to give us their ideas of Belfast of the future. We'll recreate their designs in 3D and add them to a virtual city model. Room 9, is a more playful room and we want to enable visitors to have some fun with interactive games and Instagram-able wall art.
- 3.8** These high-level concepts will be presented to the next meeting of the Members' City Hall and Grounds Installations Working Group. Following engagement with Members, the creative team will begin detail work on detailed-design and coding with the aim of opening to the public by mid-September.
- 3.9** **(2) Augment the City SME Challenge**
- Following Department of the Economy approval of a Belfast Region City Deal business case, the City Innovation Office opened the Augment the City challenge competition for applications in April 2024.
- 3.10** This £575,000 competition will provide R&D funding to up ten organisations (including individuals, start-ups and SMEs) to work with the team from Belfast Stories to explore the role of immersive technologies in supporting individuals to contribute their stories to future Belfast Stories collection.
- 3.11** Thirty-two organisations applied to the competition. The ten winners will commence in June 2024 working with Belfast Stories, Digital Catapult and the City Innovation Office to develop their ideas over the next eighteen months. The best

of these will be tested and show-cased in City Hall alongside the immersive experience.

3.12 (3) Maritime Mile Challenge Fund

With funding from Horizon 2020, the City Innovation Office, working with Belfast Maritime Trust, awarded £120,000 to six local creative businesses, artists and innovators to create experimental projects aimed at animating and enriching the local heritage of the Maritime Mile.

3.13 The winning projects were powered by a range of technologies including AI, 3D film, augmented reality and virtual reality. Each ran co-creation sessions with local partners and communities, gathering stories, artwork, and artefacts that shaped their individual prototypes. The projects were open to the public in April and May, encouraging increased footfall, dwell-time and local spend.

3.14 Projects included: an interactive experience with an AI 'Salmon of Knowledge' (ie, the 'Big Fish'); a joint project with the Public Records Office and local communities to develop interactive 3D/virtual reality rooms; an AI 'Voyage to the Past', that brought local historical figures to life; a project with Sailortown Regeneration Group to explore new ways to preserve heritage and local stories through interactive digital sculpture and storytelling; an immersive experience along the Yardman's Trail; and an augmented reality experience highlighting HMS Caroline's heritage.

3.15 A follow-up survey found that the participating companies were overwhelming positive about their experience and its contribution to their own R&D work. While three-quarters of local participants reported that the programme greatly enhanced their knowledge of local history.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.16 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.

3.17 Under the terms of the collaborative R&D agreement Belfast City Council are bringing managed access to the City Hall location, creative content, promotion, and access to the new small cell network in City Hall – which is funded as part of the Augment the City Challenge. BT are bringing substantial technology and development support.

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

3.18 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Culture Night

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide further information to enable consideration of an issue raised by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Cllr Aine Grogan at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10th April 2024 under the procedures available to Members for raising an issue in advance that they wish to have included on the agenda.

1.2 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th April, members requested an updated paper for consideration so that further detail of how this could be facilitated, resourced and managed could be provided.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 In considering the options, timelines and resource requirements outlined in this paper, it is recommended not to develop an event on 20th September as part of the Belfast 2024 programme. This is based on a number of factors including:

- The wide range of cultural activity already taking place as part of Belfast 2024.
- The limited officer capacity to deliver this programme.
- The limited time available for a robust public procurement process or a small grants programme.

3.0 Main Report

3.0 Background

3.1 At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10th April 2024, Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr Aine Grogan, outlined a suggestion to support cultural venues in the city to open on the evening of ‘Culture Night’ in September, within the Belfast 2024 Programme of events. The Committee agreed to refer the decision to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th April for consideration so that further detail of how this could be facilitated, resourced and

managed could be provided. At this Committee, members agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable a further report to be submitted on the cost to fund each of the three options.

Belfast 2024

- 3.2 **Belfast 2024** Belfast 2024 is a year-long celebration of home-grown culture featuring new and exciting events, theatre, music, and art developed through new co-design and partnership models with the city stakeholders, the creative sector and the citizens of Belfast.
- 3.3 The year delivers on the aims of the City Council's Cultural and Tourism strategies, Belfast Agenda, Bolder Vision and City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. As part of the Belfast 2024 programme, there is a significant number of cultural events happening in the last two weeks of September including:
- World Peace Day Block Party in Townsend St with Ulster Orchestra – 21st Sept
 - Launch of the digital playroom Wiggle Room
 - BBC Concert – Century of Stories at Waterfront – 24th Sept
 - Belfast Half Marathon – 22nd Sept
 - Shadow Dock at Thompson Dry Dock – 26 – 29th Sept
 - An Droichead Irish Language Dance Showcase
 - Drift River Installation - throughout
 - Late Night Art – 5th Sept and 3rd October

Culture Night in Belfast

- 3.4 The report presented to members at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th April outlined the history of Culture Night in Belfast. In summary:
- Culture Night in Belfast began in 2009 when a number of arts organisations came together to organise the first Belfast Culture Night in September 2010.
 - In 2012/13, the Cathedral Quarter Trust became the custodians of the event, delivering Culture Night in the city until the final event in 2019.
 - As the largest free shared cultural event in the city-centre, audiences grew to an attendance of over 100,000 for the 2019 event held across two days in September 2019.
 - The budget for Culture Night ranged from £240k in 2016 to over £328k in 2019.

- Culture Night received £12,000 annually from the councils Core Multi Annual Funding programme from 2016 to 2020, with additional resource in 2019 as part of the Bank Buildings recovery campaign through City Centre Revitalisation Funding.
- The event received the majority of its support from other statutory bodies including the Arts Council NI, The Executive Office, Department for Communities and Tourism NI alongside support from trusts and foundations and the private sector.
- On 6th April 2023, because of the withdrawal of core funding the Cathedral Quarter Trust announced that it is 'has been forced to cease day to day operational activity, including planning any cultural events'. In the absence of the Cathedral Quarter Trust, no organisation has taken on the lead organising and delivery role necessary to revive Culture Night in Belfast.

Options for a late night event in September 2024

3.0 Following the discussion at City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10th April 2024, council officers examined options on how an event on the night of Culture Night could be facilitated, resourced and managed. In order to develop any event, it is important to consider a range of factors including:

- Geographic – Is the event in one defined location (e.g. city centre, or a section of the city centre such as Cathedral Quarter) or open to the whole city
- Support mechanisms – Is financial support available for groups to apply to or are organisations asked to contribute their own resources as an audience development tool
- Thematically – Is the event focused on a particular artform or audience.
- Delivery mechanism – Is this delivered via an external facilitator or internally in council
- Marketing – Who leads on collation and promotion of the event
- Budget – What are the requirements to make the event successful

3.7 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th April, members were presented with a number of options, including requirements for engagement with the sector. It was also noted that the pressures on staff resource during Belfast 2024 are a consideration in all options. A breakdown of pre-existing commitments for June to September 2024 is detailed in Appendix One.

Option 1 – Extended Late Night Art

3.8 One option presented to members was to explore the option of supporting a special Late Night Art on 20th September. In this option, members were informed that:

- Late Night Art is a pre-existing event in the city with a defined list of galleries and participants.
- Late Night Art is an audience development initiative created and managed by the visual arts sector, with Belfast City Council playing a supporting role in helping to amplify the event.
- The event is organised independently by visual arts galleries in the city and officers would need time to consult with the organisers of the event to explore the appetite and feasibility of an additional event on 20th September.

3.9 Officers met with the Visual Arts Steering Group on 9th May to discuss the potential initiative. This steering group consists of 11 organisations and sets the direction for the wider Visual Arts Forum which consists of approximately 50 people representing individual artists, directors of arts orgs and venues, curators, Gallery Directors and studio groups. The majority of steering group members participate in Late Night Art. Feedback from this meeting includes:

3.10

- Galleries would continue to host their planned events on Thursday 5th September and Thursday 3rd October. The “First Thursday” principle is a key element in the success of Late Night Art so any event on 20th September would be additional to these pre-existing events.
- There was a general agreement that galleries would respond to financial support to deliver a special Late Night Art on 20th September.
- Support for a special one-off event could prove an opportunity to also draw attention to the Late-Night Art concept to new audiences.
- It is imperative that any extra event maintains its identity as Late Night Art, is hosted in visual arts spaces and venues and is primarily a visual arts and craft event. To veer from this principle risks diluting and impacting the brand of Late Night Art. The event would have to be carefully described to ensure that audiences were not expecting a 'culture night', rather a specific approach building on Late Night Art. There would be no other art forms included e.g. music, comedy, theatre, but there may be a participatory element where possible with craft and art

demonstrations and artists talks, as well as exhibitions and shows.

3.11 This option would require the administration of financial support to organisations who are part of the current Late-Night Art ecosystem. There are currently circa 30 organisations/ venues who participate in Late Night Art. Within these parameters, a £75,000 allocation could be broken down as:

3.12

- £60,000 allocated to programming costs – Groups to apply for up to £2000 for the cost of programming, producing and marketing their own events as part of the evening. Financial support may also need to include costs such as security. As a non-ticketed event, galleries may need to manage audience flow.
- £15,000 allocated to marketing of the event. As a pre-existing event with an established brand, this allocation would go towards physical and digital advertising of the event.

3.13 This approach would require the establishment and administration of a new small grants programme led by the Culture Development team and under delegated authority with the Director of Economic Development. Given that any resource is linked to the reporting of the year end position in June, the earliest opportunity for members to approve this approach would be at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21st June. Therefore, the administration of this programme would necessitate a very quick turnaround to develop, administer, score, award and market the potential event. A potential timeline is suggested as:

3.14

- 21st June – SP&R approval
- 1st July – Council Ratification
- 10th July – Call in Period Ends. Small grants launched and advertised
- 31st July – Application deadline closes.
- 1st to 9th August – Assessment of application
- Week beginning 12th August – Notification of awards
- Week beginning 19th August – Marketing of event begins to include the range of events in receipt of support
- Friday 20th September – Late Night Art Extra event

3.15 As a pre-existing event, there is no requirement to develop a new brand or scope as event would build upon the current Late Night Art concept. Staying within the parameters of Late Night Art will also limit the number of potential applications. However, the administration of any small grant

will require significant resource including a minimum of three officers from the Culture Development team to score and monitor the awards. As outlined in appendix one, officers are currently committed to delivery against a wide-range of initiatives during this period and delivery of a new grants programme will have a significant impact on delivery of these commitments.

Option 2 – Procure an external organisation

- 3.16 Similar to how the delivery of Culture Night is managed in Dublin, one potential model is the procurement of an external organisation to manage an open call for a series of free events in venues across the city. This contractor would act as a receiving house, collating various events from willing participants under one banner and presenting them to the public as a cohesive programme. This external organisation would be expected to lead on programming, production and marketing of the event, with support from council officers.
- 3.17 Similar to the timeline above, any resource is linked to the reporting of the year end position in June and therefore the earliest opportunity for members to approve this approach would be at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21st June. This would result in:
- 21st June – SP&R approval
 - 22nd to 10th July - Tender specification developed
 - 1st July – Council Ratification
 - 10th July – Contract advertised
 - 31st July – Tender deadline closes.
 - 1st to 15th August – Tender assessed including scoring, panel, clarifications and sign-off.
 - 16th August – Contract Awarded
 - Friday 20th September – Event takes place
- 3.18 The proposal for circa £75k could be broken down as follows:
- £25,000 – Marketing of event – Including branding, web design, hosting, print and distribution.
 - £50,000 – Contracted organisation or individual. To cover core costs of managing the call out, event staff, insurance and general administration
- 3.19 Given the required approvals and time needed for a robust public procurement process, there are significant internal time and resource challenges to this approach. Any supplier would effectively have just over 4 weeks to establish the core team, issue the call for any venue that wishes to participate, curate the programme and launch the full list of events. This timeframe also provides a very limited window to

market what is effectively a new event, thus limiting the potential reach of the event. The limited timeframe to deliver, coupled with the acute resource pressures within the cultural sector, is likely to limit the number of responses to the tender.

Option 3 – Produce an event internally through funding mechanisms

- 3.20 Another suggested approach to delivery of an event on 20th September would be to invite organisations to apply for small grants to develop and deliver events in venues throughout the city. This approach would result in Council effectively acting as curators for the night through selecting which projects receive financial support through funding. In addition,
- 3.21 Similar to other funding schemes full eligibility criteria, themes and outcomes would be required to be developed. In addition this scheme would still required additional central marketing support to promote. Similar to the timeline referenced above, a potential timeline would likely be:
- 21st June – SP&R approval
 - 1st July – Council Ratification
 - 10th July – Call in Period Ends. Call out launched
 - 31st July – Application deadline closes.
 - 1st to 14th August – Assessment of applications
 - 16th August – Notification of awards
 - Week beginning 19th August – Marketing of event begins to include the range of events in receipt of support
 - Friday 20th September – Event
- 3.22 It is likely that this approach will be the most resource intensive for Council to administer due to a range of factors, namely:
- The concept and theme for the event would need to be designed;
 - Parameters and eligibility criteria would need to be developed
 - Opening out the event to all forms of cultural venues will result in a significant increase in applications, adding additional pressure on assessment of applications.

3.23 Recommendations

In considering the options outlined above, it is recommended not to develop an event on 20th September as part of the Belfast 2024 programme. This is based on a number of factors including:

- The wide range of cultural activity already taking place as part of Belfast 2024.
- The limited officer capacity to deliver this programme.
- The limited time available for a robust public procurement process or a small grants programme.

2025 and a way forward

- 3.24** As an historically successful event in Belfast and a key part of the cultural calendar across multiple towns and cities globally, in recognition of benefits of having a sustainable and successful event in the city, Council officers have been exploring potential ways forward part of the legacy planning from Belfast 2024 for September 2025 and onwards. This work to date has included meeting with officials involved in developing and delivering Culture Night in other jurisdictions to understanding funding and delivery models.
- 3.25** The concept of Culture Night was initially developed as an audience development tool for the culture sector and this principal is the foundation of other successful Culture Nights such as Dublin. It is therefore vital that any development of a new iteration of Culture Night must begin with the Cultural and Creative Sector co design to ensure buy-in, ownership and the success of the event.
- 3.26** In order to build a sustainable Culture Night in future years, it will also be necessary to secure significant buy in and investment from previous statutory funders and supporters such as Arts Council NI, British Council, Museums NI, BBC NI, National Heritage Lottery and finally from the broader business, institutional and educational sectors.
- 3.27** Whilst Belfast City Council can act as a catalyst for the re-emergence of the event, there is significant merit in having an independent convener of these conversations. The contracting of a convener who could broker and bring together conversations and assess interest and capacity across the cities cultural and creative sector to enable BCC to forward the objectives of its Cultural Strategy.

3.28 Finance and Resource Implications

In the discussion held at CG&R a proposal for circa £75k was discussed. There is no current allocation for this initiative within unit budgets or the Belfast 2024 programme budget and either budgets would need to be reallocated or funding would be required from central budgets and/or underspends. An understanding of available funds would be linked to the reporting of the year end position in June.

3.29 If members were to approve the development of an event in September, there will be significant time and human resources required with this approach, particularly given the current workloads relating to delivery of Belfast 2024, the ambitions of the Cultural Workplan, delivery against the Music Strategy and the ongoing calendar of city and major events (as outlined in Appendix 1).

3.30 It is recommended to allocate up to £30,000 to the facilitation of an engagement programme with the wider cultural sector, key funders, partners and other interested parties in relation to culture night from September 2025 and onwards. There is no current allocation for this initiative within unit budgets or the Belfast 2024 programme budget An understanding of available funds would be linked to the reporting of the year end position in June.

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

The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.”

The Committee agreed not to develop an event on 20th September as part of the Belfast 2024 programme.

It was agreed also that an allocation of £30,000 would be considered as part of the process to allocate from year end underspends to facilitate an engagement programme with the wider cultural sector, key funders, partners and other interested parties in relation to culture night from September 2025 and onwards.

**Sustain Exchange Climate Leadership
Event – Funding Agreement**

The Director of City and Organisation Strategy submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform Committee of a proposal by the non-profit Management and Leadership Network (MLN) to host a prominent climate leadership event ‘Sustain Exchange’ with up to 300 decision-makers. To request approval for a funding agreement to be put in place between Belfast City Council and the event organiser with the value of £8,450+vat. The event will put the challenges, opportunities and absolute need for positive action associated with climate change, on the agenda for local organisations and leaders.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Support this climate leadership conference by approving a funding agreement to the value of £8450+vat be entered into with the event organiser.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

It is now beyond doubt that organisations of all shapes, sizes and sectors need to radically reduce their environmental impact both directly and indirectly through their supply chains. The extreme weather experienced across the globe over the past 12 months has further evidenced the reality that the effects of climate change are being felt now and the need for decisive action from organisations, championed by their leaders, is now. We are fast approaching the point of no return.

It is a truly transformative time for organisations as they address climate risks and identify new opportunities in the green economy. The transition is not straightforward. Organisations need help in developing planet positive practices, securing cleaner power, heat and transport solutions. They need help in navigating new markets to find more environmentally sustainable solutions in their supply chain, and they need to do it fast. There has never been a more important time to find specialist help to navigate the transition, and to educate, inform and engage by sharing the existing knowledge and exemplar experience of those at the forefront of the transition.

3.2 Purpose and format of event

The Sustain Exchange Summit will deliver on the objectives above and will connect local decision-makers with international thought leaders as well as those at the forefront of the transition locally.

The event is expected to attract some 300 local leaders (primarily business leaders but also those from the public, NDPB and third sectors) to a Belfast City Centre venue with strong public transport links to ensure the carbon footprint of the event is kept to a minimum. The Sustain Exchange project will ensure the messages, around the need and importance of positive climate action are heard, and the Council's proactivity in this area will be strongly profiled before and during the event.

3.3 Content

Previous speakers at this event have included the eminent writer, broadcaster and commentator Sir Jonathan Porritt CBE, Norman Crowley (global entrepreneur and founder of CoolPlanet) and Sit Tim Smit KBE (Founder of The Eden Project and world-renowned thought leader in sustainability). The 2024 Sustain Exchange Summit will again be delivered to a world-class standard and will feature a globally-renowned speaker as well as a carefully selected line-up of local leaders who will be challenged to share their story (exemplar), insights (expert) or support offering (stakeholder).

As exemplars these leaders will share their story and associated lessons in an engaging, informative, and entertaining manner. The speakers will encourage and empower attending organisations to consider their own climate impact and take the first (or next) steps in their quest to become 'planet positive'. Previous local speakers at this event have demonstrated how leaders from humble beginnings in Belfast have become game-changers in their respective fields. These include the likes of Dr Andrew Woods from Catagen (Sustain Exchange 2022), Eddie McGoldrick from The Electric Storage Company (Sustain Exchange 2021) and Philip Rainey from Weev (Sustain Exchange 2023). The 2024 event will once again showcase how leaders from Belfast are leading the charge when it comes to the quest to avoid what is now a 'code red for humanity'. In doing this MLN plans to galvanise existing businesses to act and to inspire the next cohort of planet positive pioneers to emerge from our city.

The event will also provide the opportunity to make the broader leadership community in NI aware of the proactive work of Belfast City Council when it comes to the climate emergency.

3.4 Management and Leadership Network Experience

The Management and Leadership Network (MLN) is a non-profit which exists to connect decision-makers in NI with the insights of thought-leaders and world-class performers. The rationale is that by enhancing our leadership competence we will, empower local organisations, strengthen our economy, enrich our society and ultimately improve lives.

MLN has worked with some of the most respected leaders on the planet and is vastly experienced in creating and delivering truly world-class events that engage, enrich and elevate attendees. As host, MLN will facilitate the event and invite all speakers to provide their slides in advance so that the idea-sharing session is delivered in a concise, visually impactful and professional manner. Belfast City Council would once again be invited to participate and profile its extensive climate work i.e the Mini Stern Report, Resilience Strategy, Climate Commission, One Million Trees etc.

3.5 Date, Venue and Contingence

The Sustain Exchange Summit will take place in October 2024. The total cost of the project will be in excess of £70k. Belfast City Council has been a key partner in the Sustain Exchange Summit since its inception in 2021 and its support has been crucial in the growth of the initiative and its impact. In order to reduce the financial cost to Belfast City Council and increase collaboration MLN will seek financial support from additional sources to include the private sector. MLN will give previous sponsors the opportunity to remain as partners. These have included Belfast-based organisations such as Danske Bank, FPM Accountant, International Synergies (circular economy specialists), Belfast Harbour and Mills Selig Solicitors. As well as demonstrating real collaboration, these partnerships have allowed MLN to reduce Belfast City Council's financial contribution from £10,000+vat in 2021 to £8,450+vat in 2024.

3.6 Partner Contribution and Profile Benefits

If Belfast City Council chooses to support the Summit, it would be profiled as an 'Event Partner' alongside several other lead event partners (examples given in 3.5). The Council brand would be prominent on all event

marketing collateral as well as 'at-event'. A Council representative would be invited to participate in the event press launch and MLN would be delighted for the Lord Mayor of Belfast to speak at the event. Council would also promote the conference through its social media and other relevant communication channels.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

£8,450+vat to support this initiative has been allocated from within the existing climate budget.

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

There are no direct equality or good relations/rural needs implications.”

The Committee agreed to support the climate leadership conference by approving a funding agreement to the value of £8450+vat being entered into with the event organiser.

Inclusive Growth - Belfast Business Promise

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To provide Members with an update on the continued progress with the Belfast Business Promise, following the celebration and launch event in City Hall on 11th April 2024.

1.2 The Committee will be aware that the Belfast Business Promise is a key commitment in the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy and embedded within the refreshed Belfast Agenda (2024-2028). The development of the Business Promise has been shaped by Elected Members through the work of the Social Policy Working Group and supported by a strong cross-council partnership approach.

1.3 As the inclusive growth charter for the city, the Belfast Business Promise is a key tool to encourage and support employers across the city to adopt and/or improve their practices and demonstrate a positive social impact through their core business activities. The level of engagement and positive response from businesses of all sizes and sectors during its first year of operation has been significant. There is now a strong and growing community of practice aligned to the ambitions of the business promise. This presents a real opportunity to build upon and share good practice and adopt a holistic approach to create a stronger, more resilient, and fairer economy and society for Belfast.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) Note the progress made during the first year of implementing the Belfast Business Promise
- (ii) Note the work underway to support the further development and continued scaling up of the Business Promise and to ensure the continued successful implementation, including:
 - the continued growth in the number of organisations engaging in the initiative, committing to be partners and supporting implementation and accreditation.
 - the Council's continued commitment and work underway to progress through the Belfast Business Promise journey to become an accredited Member and Ambassador.
 - Next steps for the programme as outlined at paragraph 3.12.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 As agreed by SP&R Committee, the Belfast Business Promise is a proactive commitment by businesses to support the city's inclusive growth mission by signing up to a number of underpinning pledges that support inclusive business practices. Organisations use the process to assess and benchmark their business practices against eight pledges and gain support from the Belfast Business Promise community/network to continually improve their inclusive practice and performance.

3.2 A cross-council team has been progressing the development and delivery of the Belfast Business Promise with an external business working group, with oversight and input from the Council's Social Policy Working Group. The Belfast Business Promise is aligned to and complements other strands of work across the Council, including the Social Value Procurement Policy & Toolkit, Social Enterprise action plan and BCC Employment Academies. Strong relationships have also been built with the Inclusive Growth Network, the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and the Scottish Business Pledge Charter teams which has enabled the sharing of good practice and shared learning opportunities.

3.3 Following a significant period of co-development and engagement, the Belfast Business Promise went live on 24th April 2023 for a six-month pilot phase. Working with 20 early adopters, the pilot phase enabled testing and

refining of the model with the business community and clearly identified a strong support for the scheme across the public, private and third sectors. The pilot phase also allowed for crucial practical testing of the operational delivery processes with improvement work on both the systems and the support provided to businesses continuing.

- 3.4 The pilot phase endorsed the holistic approach adopted by the Belfast Business Promise and the ethos of building a network of like-minded organisations to work together to create a better Belfast and a more inclusive city. It also confirmed the three core pledges that all organisations should commit to (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Belfast Business Promise pledges



- 3.5 An underpinning accreditation process has been developed in conjunction with key Council Departments, partner organisations such as the Labour Relations Agency and external advisers, including those with expertise and experience in auditing quality standards (IiP, EFQM and ISO standards). This has been tested and enhanced during the pilot phase to ensure that it aligns to other good practice standards, provides assurance around the robustness of the process and recognises the challenges organisations are facing in the current economic climate.

3.6 A review and evaluation of the pilot phase was undertaken and considered by the Social Policy Working Group in November 2023, with identified improvements progressing in relation to:

- clarifying the requirements set out in each of the pledges that organisations are expected to demonstrate.
- strengthening the requirement to encourage employers to consider inclusivity/accessibility, streamlining the processes to support the assessment and accreditation process.
- developing a communication plan and website.
- continuing to build on the work so far to develop the Promise Learning Days and create a sense of community and network for Supporters to learn from each other and share practice.

3.7 Since the pilot completed, the network of supporters has continued to grow with 46 organisations now signed-up to the scheme. A well-attended and very positive celebration/launch event had been held on 11th April 2024 in the City Hall. This event recognised the significant level of commitment to the Business Promise in the city, the growth in the network of Belfast Business Promise Supporters and the improvement journey underway across many organisations.

3.8 Some of the highlights and successes during the first year of implementation of the Belfast Business Promise include:

- 46 organisations have signed up as Supporters (see Appendix 1),
- 3 organisations secured 'Member' status (meeting 5 of the 8 pledges and committing to continue to work towards all 8 pledges) – Department for Economy, Linen Quarter BID and Belfast Harbour.
- Established a BBP Partner Network of technical advisers which provide specialist expertise to support the accreditation process and delivery of the Belfast Business Promise (See Figure 2 below)
- Delivered 7 Promise Learning Days, focusing on sharing good practice relating to each of the pledges.
- Almost half the 'early adopters' in the pilot phase reported measuring their carbon footprint for the first time.
- BBP Supporters are recommending other organisations to sign-up to the BBP.
- Showcased the Belfast Business Promise, promoting more inclusive practices and insight at key events such as the Labour Relations Agency conference,

Equality Commission’s event to mark International Day for people with Disabilities and the Inclusive Growth Network’s Good Employment Conference in Manchester.

- Shared learning and experience from the Belfast Business Promise with the Inclusive Growth Network’s Good Employment Charter group

Figure 2: Belfast Business Promise Partners



BCC Accreditation

- 3.9 As an organisation, the Council has also signed-up to the Belfast Business Promise demonstrating leadership and commitment to working with employers and encouraging others to join us in working to create an inclusive city. Detailed internal discussions are ongoing with key officers and professions to assess the Council’s position in relation to meeting the pledges and the subsequent action planning to ensure continuous improvement.
- 3.10 Members will be aware of the significant progress made in key areas such as Social Value Procurement Policy, the work of the Employability and Skills team, community engagement teams, HR, Legal, Finance etc. In addition, the Council achieving accreditation from the Real Living Wage Foundation for paying the Real Living Wage in February 2023 and the progress being made in terms of Protecting our Environment (pledge 8) have been vital steps in meeting the standards.

3.11 The internal assessment of the Councils stage of readiness across the eight pledges, identified a number of areas of development which had already been recognised with work underway in these areas. These included the development and delivery of the Council's People Strategy, which was approved by the Committee in August 2023, and the Health & Wellbeing Strategy approved in February 2023. Additionally, the Council has also signed up as a JAM (Just a Minute) Card Partner with the NOW Group to enhance its commitment to inclusivity and plans are being taken forward for the development of a staff volunteering policy to strengthen its contribution to the core pledge 'working in partnership with our communities'. The Council is committed to continuing its efforts to meet the standards set in the Belfast Business Promise and is therefore on course to achieve its aim to attain Member and Ambassador status in autumn 2024.

3.12 Next steps for the BBP

In addition to continuing to make progress on the Council's journey through the Belfast Business Promise, the following next steps will be taken forward with regular progress reports being brought to the Social Policy Working Group:

- Building the Belfast Business Promise offer and menu of provision.
- Onboarding strategic partners/technical panel specialisms.
- Developing effective MIS (Management Information Systems) / MS Forms to streamline delivery.
- Conducting an interim evaluation to support plans to sustain and scale-up.
- Encouraging progression through the accreditation tiers, increasing the awards of Member / Ambassador status to organisations.
- Developing the website to highlight the reputational benefits associated with a city charter, which is key to sustaining interest and commitment.
- Showcasing the story so far and celebrating success.

3.13 A further report on the steps being taken to embed inclusive growth will be brought to Committee in June, alongside an update on the Corporate Plan.

3.14 Financial and Resource Implications

Resources are included within Departmental budgets. In addition to the core team of 3 officers, support is also provided across a range of Council Departments and professions to support the delivery as well as the Council's aim to lead by example and progress through the accreditation tiers.

Delivery of the programme also draws on the Supporter network to share resources and expertise to assist in delivery, where possible.

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

An Equality screening and Rural Needs Assessment has been carried out, with the Belfast Business promise screened out with mitigating actions. Whilst the Belfast Business promise is a key tool to deliver on the Inclusive Growth Strategy and is not expected to have any adverse impacts on the Section 75 categories, the programme will continue to be informed by practice and review, with an interim evaluation planned for 2024/25. This will ensure that modifications and mitigations can be put in place to meet the needs of programme participants as delivery matures.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Digital Strategy

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1** Following SP&R approval, Digital Services worked with Castlerigg Consulting to develop a new Digital Strategy (Appendix 1). Castlerigg are a specialist management consultancy who help to develop digital transformation and innovation strategies for the public sector. The Digital Strategy aims to provide a framework for elected members under the remit of the Strategic Policy and Resources committee, to oversee the strategic use of digital technology as a key enabler of service improvement – over a period of 5 years – in alignment with the Council's key business priorities.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- note the contents of the report and to approve the new Digital Strategy attached.

3.0 Main report

3.1 In the past, a traditional ICT strategy looked to change, fix, or improve technology without impacting on the council's business strategy. A good strategy ensures that information and digital technology will contribute to achieving the success of the organisation, which is why we have taken time to engage extensively with Departments and CMT members to ensure that the aims of the new strategy align with the development of our new Corporate Plan and emerging Medium Term Financial plan and performance improvement priorities. The strategy can act as one of the key drivers for operational service improvement and will feed into the next phases of our efficiency and customer focus programmes. The strategy will continue to evolve as the Council's detailed delivery plans emerge, this will enable Digital technology to support our immediate and longer-term objectives.

3.2 Strategic oversight of both information and technology are essential as they underpin the majority of the Council's service improvement initiatives, new and improved business processes, and the delivery of essential operational efficiencies. Consequently, the new Digital Strategy will be extremely important to help us to make the most of increasing digital transformation opportunities and in managing the significant cyber security threats that we are currently facing. The strategy has the potential to help optimise, transform, and improve the operational services we deliver and to maximise the value of our information assets.

3.3 Delivery of the new Digital Strategy will focus on delivering the right set of policies, working practices, and supporting technologies as information technology and the management of our information:

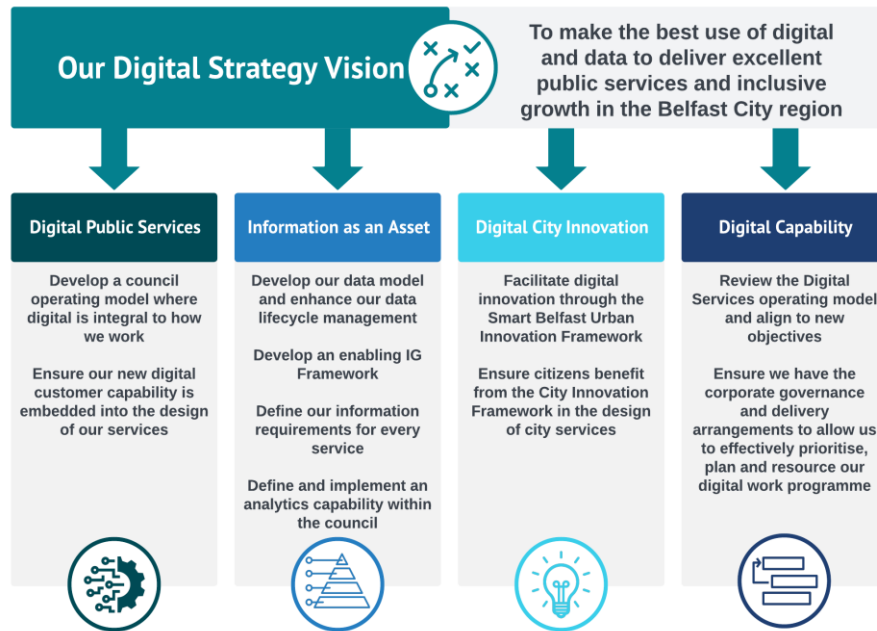
- is an essential element of good corporate governance,
- provides Members and Chief Officers with the right information to support effective decision making,
- challenges our thinking on how we deliver services and supports innovation in service design,
- sets direction in terms of investment in technology assuring alignment to corporate objectives,

- and provides the basis of accountability to Elected Members and the citizens of Belfast for the stewardship and use of IT resources.

3.4 Some of the key messages that the strategy delivers are outlined below:

- We have set a bold vision for how technology can transform Belfast City Council. We want to strengthen our digital and information capability, enhancing our ability to be an effective civic leader in a data-enabled smart city.
- Service Improvement is integral to the next chapter of the Council's development. The digital strategy recommends that we do not plan digital in isolation. The benefits of digital innovation come from being able work differently and that involves designing all aspects of our services so they work together.
- Digitally enabled service design provides an opportunity to drive our service improvement agenda. It is only when services can be fully automated end-to-end, that we will improve customer experience, remove inefficiency, and ensure our resources (finance, people, and assets) are focused on what matters to our communities.
- Our current technology architecture already gives us a robust foundation for the delivery of a different delivery model. We now need to exploit the enterprise solutions and technical architecture that are already in place or are currently in the process of being delivered.
- With demand for digital projects growing, prioritising and resourcing our digital programme of work appropriately, whilst challenging, will be key to the successful delivery of the Digital Strategy. If the digital programme is integral to our future council aspirations, then we need to ensure our digital and change teams are resourced to meet this challenge.

3.5 The 4 main pillars of the Digital Strategy are described in the image below.



3.6 Work has already started on the delivery of the strategy. Some of the key projects that are included in the digital programme of work are summarised in the table below:

| <u>Project</u> | <u>Status</u> |
|--|----------------|
| Time & Attendance (Corporately significant) | Live project |
| Online Recruitment (Corporately significant) | Live project |
| Finance system (Corporately significant) | Live project |
| Corporate Asset Management (Corporately significant) | Live project |
| Customer Focus Programme (Corporately significant) | Live project |
| Cyber Security Programme (Corporately significant) | Live project |
| Building Control (Service Improvement) | Live project |
| Grants Management system (Service Improvement) | Live project |
| NI Enterprise Support Services CRM (Regional system) | Live project |
| Network Redesign (Infrastructure improvement) | Live Project |
| In-Cab Technology (Service improvement) | Requirements |
| City Services (Service Improvement) | Process review |
| EDRMS (Corporately significant) | Pilot review |
| Intranet Replacement (Corporately significant) | Emerging |
| Climate Data Platform (Data and analytics) | Emerging |
| Inclusive Growth (Data and analytics) | Emerging |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Windows 11 upgrade (Infrastructure improvement) | Emerging |
| Legal Case Management System | Emerging |

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 Delivery of the Digital Services programme of work is managed through normal rate setting processes and through the ICT strand of the capital programme.

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

- 3.8 A new Digital Strategy will need to be screened for any equality, good relations or rural needs implications.”

The Committee approved the new Digital Strategy.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) King George V Playing Fields– Site Investigation Works**
 - noted the site investigation works at King George V playing fields and adjacent lands to inform design of the new NI Water Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station.
- ii) Black’s Road Park & Ride – Licence for installation & siting of Cycle Shelter**
 - approved entering into a Licence Agreement with the Department for Infrastructure for the installation & siting of a cycle shelter at Blacks Road Park & Ride.
- iii) Duncrue Estate – Deed of Variation**
 - approved the extension of the current term of the ground Lease at Plot 37 Duncrue Estate to a term of 125 years from 2024 and approve the variation of the rent review pattern to facilitate 5-year rent reviews from the commencement of the lease extension.
- iv) River Terrace – Disposal of lands to Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG)**
 - approved the disposal of lands (139 sq.m) at River Terrace to LORAG to facilitate the redevelopment of the Lockhouse building.

v) Cavehill Country Park - Conacre Agreement

- approved conacre licence for a 1-year term for grazing of agricultural Council lands at Cavehill Country Park.

Area Working Groups Update

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the special meeting of the South AWG of 22 April 2024.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- approve the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3);
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4); and
- approved the public advertisement of tenders (Peaceplus) as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 5) noting current conditions set out in Section 6 of the report.

It was agreed that an update on the use of consultants be submitted to a future meeting.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

| Title of Tender | Proposed Contract Duration | Est. Max Contract Value | SRO | Short description of goods / services |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Gartner for Technical Professionals | Up to 2 years | £91,200 | P Gribben | Provides in-depth technical research and guidance to help Digital Services advance the initiatives/projects that support execution of the Digital strategy |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------|------------|---|
| Delivery of Customer Focus Programme | Up to 2 years | £61,200 | J Tully | To provide tailored access to research and insights, access to analyst review of strategy and approach, diagnostics and toolkits to support the delivery of Customer Focus Programme. |
| A Bolder Vision for Belfast Strategy and Implementation Framework | Up to 1 year | £70,000 | C Reynolds | Commission of consulting services to finalise A Bolder Vision Strategy and Implementation Framework to include update of draft strategy. |

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

| Title | Duration | Est. Max Contract Value | SRO | Description | Supplier | STA Reason Code |
|---------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------|---|----------------------|-----------------|
| Elephant Transfer Service | Up to 3 months | £65,000 | D Martin | Service required for the relocation of two elderly female Asian elephants, Dhunja and Yhetto, that currently reside in Belfast Zoo, while work continues on a long-term development plan for the zoo and its animal collection. Approval was granted in August 2023 by CG&R Committee to transfer the elephants to Burgers Zoo in | Global Elephant Care | 3 |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| | | | | the Netherlands. The transfer is due to take place in July 2024. The supplier is considered the only current suitable supplier to ensure the safe and secure transfer of the two elephants. | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|

Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

| Title of Contract | Duration | Est. Max Contract Value | SRO | Description | Supplier | STA Reason Code |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|--|----------------|-----------------|
| Interpreting Services (Partly funded) | 3 years | £45,000 | S Toland | A team member is registered as deaf and is supported via the Access to Work (NI) programme for Support Worker funding from DFC which permits BCC to claim 50% of expenditure relating to interpreter services. This provides continuity of existing support. | Heather Martin | 11 |

Table 4: Modification to Contract

| Title of Contract | Original Contract Duration | Modification | SRO | Description | Supplier |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--|---------------------|
| T2135b Continuation of Consultancy Services for City Centre Residential Development Contract modification being reported retrospectively | 2 years | Additional £164,390 | C Reynolds | Additional fees required due to delay in commencement of procurement and greater input required for commercial advisory work under the existing contract specification. | Cushman & Wakefield |
| T2422 Provision of catering for services (retail and small to medium signed events) at Malone House This is a concession contract with estimated annual gross revenue of £435,000 for the contractor (based pre-Covid figures). Of which a minimum 5% commission will be payable to BCC. | 1 year | Additional 6 months | D Martin | Six-month extension of contract period to facilitate market exercise for the future operation of Malone House. This contract is a below threshold requirement under the Concession Regs and, given history of low interest in the local market to provide this service, this extension is considered a low risk. | Café Nosh |

Table 5: Peace Plus Tenders

| Title of Tender | SRO | Proposed contract duration | Est. Max Contract Value |
|---|------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Annadale Open Space - ANIMATION | Jim Girvan | Up to 2 years | £86,000.00 |
| Distillery Street Open Space - ANIMATION | Jim Girvan | Up to 2 years | £85,900.00 |
| Access to the Hills - ANIMATION | Jim Girvan | Up to 2 years | £85,600.00 |
| Sanctuary Theatre ANIMATION | Jim Girvan | Up to 2 years | £85,100.00 |
| Capacity Building - Community Empowerment Programme | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £903,577.68 |
| Health & Wellbeing Programme | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £853,000.00 |
| Youth - Inspiring Future Belfast | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £970,861.00 |
| Sports for Peace | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £711,646.00 |
| Employability - Language Up | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £447,513.00 |
| Arts in communities | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £695,744.00 |
| Interfaith and Belief Programme | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £304,564.00 |
| Community Connections - Ethnic Minorities | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £638,135.00 |
| LGBTQIA+ - Community Engagement Programme | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £391,672.00 |
| Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £493,006.00 |
| From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism (possible broken into lots) | D Sales | Up to 2 years | £949,140.00 |

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

| Reason Code | Reasons in line with Public Contact 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) |

Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update following consideration by the Social Policy Working Group 'SPWG' at its meeting in May 24 on the delivery of social value outcomes via BCC tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'

Equality and Good Relations

Draft Language Strategy Action Plan

The City Solicitor reminded the Members that the Council had conducted a consultation on the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan between 16th October 2023 and 22nd January 2024. The public and interested parties were encouraged to give feedback through an online survey available in English and Irish and were able to make submissions in writing. A range of consultation sessions and stakeholder engagement sessions were also conducted by Council officers.

The consultation resulted in a range of amendments to the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan. The revised plan had been presented to Members at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 19th April 2024.

While there was broad agreement with the revised Action Plan, Members had suggested some further amendments to the Action Plan, specifically, actions in relation to the development of a Gaeltacht Bursary Scheme and recurring annual funding for a large-scale event to mark Seachtain na Gaeilge.

The proposals in relation to Seachtain na Gaeilge also included a commitment to compiling and publishing a comprehensive programme of events for all events, not just those organised by the Council. It was also proposed that the Council would organise a comprehensive calendar of events and place particular emphasis on Irish language branding, posters, exhibitions in the City Hall and use of Irish at Council meetings during the festival.

Those proposals were likely to require additional significant resource commitments, including staffing resource. It is therefore proposed that there is a commitment to undertaking exploratory work on these proposals as part of the Action Plan. A detailed report would be submitted to the Language Strategy Working Group in relation to Seachtain na Gaeilge 2025 in the coming months.

The City Solicitor explained that the amendments suggested at the Committee meeting in April had been changed slightly for their inclusion in the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan. This was to give officers the opportunity to explore the full scope of those suggested amendments and the operational and resource issues associated with them.

The Committee approved the amended version of the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan.

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 13th May 2024

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 13th May 2024, including:

Committee Papers of 8th April meeting which was inquorate - for notation

- Members were advised by the Good Relations Manager that the meeting scheduled for 8th April had been inquorate and had therefore not been held. He drew the Members' attention to the Committee pack for that date and advised that no decisions had been required as the papers had all been update position reports. He advised the Members to contact him directly if they had any queries and agreed for Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to note the papers of 8th April 2024.

Good Relations Verbal Update

- The Good Relations Manager advised that officers were still not in receipt of a Letter of Offer from The Executive Office, however, he hoped to be able to provide a further update at the June meeting.

The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Verbal Update

- The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the verbal update provided and detailed in the minutes.

Peace IV - Secretariat Update

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

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.

Equality and Diversity: Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report Quarter 4 2023-24

The Committee was reminded that the Council had a duty to have, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

- Due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories; and
- Regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.

In addition, under section 1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

- Due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

To this end, the Council had a process to carry out equality screening and rural needs assessment of new and revised policies. This allowed any impacts related to equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs to be identified and addressed.

An equality screening and rural needs impact assessment template was completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality and Diversity Unit. On a regular basis, the Unit collates all completed templates into a screening outcome report and publishes it onto the Council's website, along with the relevant completed templates.

The Committee noted the Quarterly Screening Outcome Report which would be published on the Council's website.

Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 - DAERA Annual Monitoring Report

The Committee was reminded that the rural population of Belfast was comprised of the small settlements of Edenderry, Hannahstown and Loughview.

Section 1 (1) of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 required public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing, or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. As part of that duty, Council officers complete Rural Needs Impact Assessments.

Section 3 (1) of the Act required public authorities to:

- i) Compile information on the exercise of their functions;
- ii) Include that information in annual reports; and
- iii) Send that information to DAERA.

The Annual Return was designed to inform stakeholders and other interested parties of how the Council had had due regard to rural needs in the exercise of its functions. The Annual Return showed how the Council had met this duty for 2023-24.

Subject to Committee and Council approval, the Annual Return would be submitted to DAERA next month for inclusion in its Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report in order to meet DAERA's deadline for publication.

A copy of the Annual Return, together with a list of the completed Rural Needs Impact Assessments would be published on the Council's website as the Council does not have an annual report.

The Committee approved the Annual Monitoring Return to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for 2023-24, which provided evidence of how the Council had met certain duties under the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

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 16th May.

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 10th May, 2024 as set out below and noted that, given the decision taken earlier in the meeting in regards to room hire charges for commercial events, the City

Solicitor would be using the authority delegated to her for those events listed as under review:

| NAME OF ORGANISATION | FUNCTION DATE | FUNCTION DESCRIPTION | CRITERIA MET | ROOM CHARGE | HOSPITALITY OFFERED | CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|---|---------------------|--|----------------------------|--|
| 2024 EVENTS | | | | | | |
| Retail NI | 21 August 2024 | High Street Heroes 2024 Winner Evening to celebrate NI's amazing independent retailers over 13 categories. Numbers attending – 120 | D | Charge £300 or £825 <i>(Dependent on room chosen)</i> | No hospitality | Approve Charge £300 or £825 No Hospitality |
| Politics in Action | 12 September 2024 | Pre-Conference Dinner for guests attending their 1 day conference taking place in QUB. Numbers attending – 30 - 40 | A & B | No charge as charity | No hospitality | Approve No Charge No hospitality |
| Washington Ireland Program | 5 October 2024 | 30th Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches, and entertainment to celebrate the WIP role in past 30 years in post-conflict Northern Ireland and Ireland by bringing together leaders from a wide range of communities | C & D | <i>Under review</i> | <i>Under review</i> | Approve |

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Friday, 24th May, 2024

B
585

| NAME OF ORGANISATION | FUNCTION DATE | FUNCTION DESCRIPTION | CRITERIA MET | ROOM CHARGE | HOSPITALITY OFFERED | CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND |
|--|-----------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------|--|---|
| | | and backgrounds for outstanding leadership and skills-development programs. Numbers attending – 300 | | | | |
| Sirocco Works Football Club | 12 or 16 October 2024 | Centenary Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches, and entertainment. 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> |
| Bioscientific/ Irish Endocrine Society | 14 October 2024 | UK & Irish Endocrine Conference Dinner for guests attending their 4-day conference taking place in QUB. Numbers attending – 150 - 200 | A & B | <i>Under review</i> | <i>Under review</i> | Approve |
| British Council | 19 November 2024 | Schools COP29 debating event on Climate Change/ COP29 for 30 NI schools. Numbers attending – 150 | A & B | No charge as charity | No hospitality | Approve No Charge No hospitality |

| NAME OF ORGANISATION | FUNCTION DATE | FUNCTION DESCRIPTION | CRITERIA MET | ROOM CHARGE | HOSPITALITY OFFERED | CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2025 EVENTS | | | | | | |
| Global Career Services Summit Ltd | 10 March 2025 | Global Career Services Summit Dinner for guests attending their 4-day conference taking place in QUB. Numbers attending - 120 | A &B | <i>Under review</i> | <i>Under review</i> | Approve |
| Young Enterprise NI | 1 May 2025 | YEA NI Awards 2025 Drinks reception, dinner and Awards Ceremony to celebrate the achievements of people across NI who completed YE Programmes. Numbers attending – 300 | C | <i>Under review</i> | <i>Under review</i> | Approve |
| Stories Ireland | 5 June 2025 | Farewell Gala Dinner for Whataburger - Drinks Reception, Dinner and Entertainment for sales executives from US multi-billion dollar corporation visiting Belfast as part of incentive programme. Numbers attending - 200 | B | <i>Under review</i> | <i>Under review</i> | Approve |

| NAME OF ORGANISATION | FUNCTION DATE | FUNCTION DESCRIPTION | CRITERIA MET | ROOM CHARGE | HOSPITALITY OFFERED | CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| CO3 Chief Officers Third Sector | 13 November 2025 | CO3 40th Anniversary Gala Ball- Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches and entertainment. Numbers attending – 300 - 400 | C & D | <i>Under review</i> | <i>Under review</i> | Approve |

Minutes of the Language Strategy Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group of 16th May.

Minutes of the Disability Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Disability Working Group of 9th May.

Minutes of Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group of 13th May.

Minutes of the Social Policy Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Working Group of 14th May.

All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 3rd May.

Use of City Hall Grounds –
OrangeFest - 12 July 202

The Committee authorised the use of City Hall grounds and the Cenotaph on 12th July 2024.

Issues raised in advance by Members

Transfer of Powers - Licensing of
Bus Tour Operators in the City:
Councillor Beattie to raise

(The Committee agreed that the press and public be exclude from the meeting during consideration of this item.)

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Beattie raised the issue of the licensing of bus tour operators in the city.

The Committee agreed that the Department for Infrastructure be requested to review the legislation regarding licensing of bus tour operators and consider transferring the powers to issue licenses for Belfast tours to Belfast City Council.

It agreed also that the Department be requested to introduce regulations for a mandatory code of conduct for bus/coach tour operators.

Connection of Water Supply to Social
Homes: Councillor M. Donnelly to raise

Councillor M. Donnelly advised the Committee that he had requested that the abovementioned item be included on the agenda for the meeting, but it had not been added.

In response, the Democratic Services and Governance Manager stated that that had been the case and the item had been omitted in error. It was accordingly agreed that the matter could be discussed.

The Committee agreed that the City Solicitor explore the legal options available to the Council to address the failure of NI Water to connect water supplies to social homes.

Chairperson