

Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast
City Council**

17th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 21st June, 2024 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Routine Matters

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

2. Restricted Items

- (a) 2023-24 Year End Finance Report (Pages 1 - 22)
- (b) Area Working Groups Update June2024 East NRF (Pages 23 - 36)

3. Matters referred back from Council/Motions

- (a) Report - Response received from DfC re Remote Meetings Regulations (Pages 37 - 44)

4. Governance

- (a) Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report 2022/23 (Pages 45 - 68)
 - (b) Member Development Proposed Changes June 2024 (Pages 69 - 132)
5. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**
- (a) Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 (Pages 133 - 176)
 - (b) City Innovation update (Pages 177 - 182)
 - (c) Hardship Programme Update (Pages 183 - 204)
 - (d) Apprenticeship Report (Pages 205 - 208)
 - (e) Diversity Summit Sponsorship (Pages 209 - 212)
6. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**
- (a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 213 - 236)
 - (b) Assets Management
 - (c) Area Working Groups Update (Pages 237 - 290)
7. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**
- (a) Audit and Risk Panel Annual Report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee including Draft Annual Governance Statement (Pages 291 - 310)
 - (b) Tri-Cities Golf Event (Pages 311 - 312)
 - (c) Contracts
8. **Equality and Good Relations**
- (a) Shared City Partnership (Pages 313 - 340)
9. **Operational Issues**
- (a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum
 - (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality
 - (c) Minutes of the Meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group (Pages 341 - 346)
 - (d) Minutes of the Cost of Living Working Group 06.06.24 (Pages 347 - 350)

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6
of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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Subject:	Response received from Department for Communities re Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2024
Date:	21st June, 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports													
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>												
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 													
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 5%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>	Never		<input type="checkbox"/>
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After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>											
Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>											
Never		<input type="checkbox"/>											

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

No

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from Department for Communities.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the correspondence as set out in the report.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 19th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Communities requesting that the Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (NI) 2024 be brought forward as quickly as possible.
3.2	The Committee is advised that a response has been received from Mr. Anthony Carleton, Director Local Government and Housing Regulation, Department for Communities.
3.3	In his response he advises <i>“the Minister is committed to bringing forward these regulations, within as short a timeframe as possible, using enabling powers in the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021.</i>
	<i>These regulations will be subject to the draft affirmative procedure in the Assembly which means that, once they are finalised and laid in the Assembly, a motion to approve them must be tabled, and considered in plenary session of the Assembly.</i>
	<i>It is the intention of the Minister to have these regulations made, subject to Assembly approval, before the Assembly summer recess.”</i>
3.4	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> None associated with this report.
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Response from Department for Communities.

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From: Anthony Carleton

**Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG**

Email: Anthony.carleton@communities-ni.gov.uk

Phone:

Our ref: TOF 1403 2024

Date: 03 June 2024

Jim Hanna
Belfast City Council
City Hall Belfast
BT1 5GS

Via email:

Dear Jim,

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (REMOTE MEETINGS) REGULATIONS (NI) 2024

Thank you for your letter of 13 May 2024.

Minister Lyons has received your letter and has asked that I provide a response on his behalf.

The Minister is committed to bringing forward these regulations, within as short a timeframe as possible, using enabling powers in the Local Government (Meetings and Performance) Act (NI) 2021.

These regulations will be subject to the draft affirmative procedure in the Assembly which means that, once they are finalised and laid in the Assembly, a motion to approve them must be tabled, and considered in plenary session of the Assembly.

It is the intention of the Minister to have these regulations made, subject to Assembly approval, before the Assembly summer recess.



Yours sincerely,

Anthony Carleton
Director Local Government and Housing Regulation



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Subject:	Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report 2022/23
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Russell Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to bring the Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report 2022/23 to the attention of Members.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the Annual Report attached at Appendix 2 and the summary of the findings provided below.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>The Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards, Margaret Kelly, has written to the Council providing a copy of the Annual Report for the 2022/23 financial year and has asked that the report is brought to the attention of elected representatives.</p> <p>The Commissioner has indicated that they are pleased to note improved performance and in particular:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Key performance Indicators for both the assessment and investigation of allegations met. b. More decisions taken earlier in their case handling process. c. A reduction in the number of allegations carried forward into 2023/24. d. As of year end 23/24 any outstanding older cases now closed or in adjudication. <p>NIPSO staff undertook a number of surveys to assist with work in improving standards in public life. The surveys were issued to Councillors, Council Chief Executives and other senior council staff and those who made allegations that a councillor may have breached the code of conduct.</p> <p>Work is now underway to develop new resources and updated guidance to help improve councillors understanding their obligations as set out in the code of conduct.</p> <p>3.2 <u>Summary of Report</u></p> <p>The Commissioner has put in place a four-stage process for dealing with written allegations against a councillor to ensure a proportionate use of resources.</p> <p>Where there is insufficient evidence of a breach of the Code, cases may be closed at either the assessment or investigation stage. In cases where an investigation indicates that there may have been a breach of the Code alternatives to an adjudication are considered prior to referring a case to the Commissioner.</p> <p>The Commissioner has no role in the investigation of complaints and exercises her role separate to that of the investigation function, which is delegated to the Local Government Ethical Standards team. The separation between the investigation and adjudication functions</p>

ensures that should a case be referred to the Commissioner and she accepts it, that the issues raised as part of the investigation report are considered fairly and independently.

Only the Commissioner, after an Adjudication, can decide whether there has been a breach. This report covers both the investigation and adjudication functions.

3.3 Investigations

In 2022-23 the number of allegations raised against councillors remained broadly in line with the long-term trend. There were 45 written allegations that councillors may have breached rules within the Code of Conduct in 2022-23 compared to 42 written allegations received in 2021-22.

A total of 63 allegations were determined in year. The breakdown of the stage of closure was as follows:

- 14 were closed at the Initial Assessment Stage, which looks at whether the allegations relate to conduct covered by the Code.
- 16 were closed at the Assessment Stage which looks at whether there is evidence of conduct which, if proven, indicates a breach of the Code.
- 29 were closed at the Investigation Stage, where it was decided that there was no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code.
- 4 cases were closed by Alternative Action.
- In addition 4 cases were referred to the Commissioner with a request that she consider an Adjudication on the issues raised.
- In Belfast City Council, just 5 written allegations were received during the past 3 years.

Written Allegations Received by Council Area

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	4	6	4
Mid and East Antrim Council	12	17	6
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	0	1	2
Belfast City Council	2	0	3
Causeway Coast and Glens Council	1	2	17
Derry and Strabane Council	0	0	2
Fermanagh and Omagh Council	8	6	11
Mid Ulster Council	2	1	2
Newry, Mourne and Down Council	14	5	1
Ards and North Down Council	0	0	0
Lisburn and Castlereagh Council	2	4	0
Total	45	42	48

<p>3.4</p>	<p><u>Issues Raised</u></p> <p>The largest area of concern raised in the allegations received related to the behaviour of councillors towards others.</p> <p>A total of 26 issues were raised about councillors' behaviour. This compared to 29 issues about behaviour towards others being raised in 2021-22.</p> <p>The standards of behaviour towards others are covered in Section 4.13 of the Code, which states that councillors must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Show respect and consideration for others; (b) Not use bullying behaviour or harass any person; and (c) Not do anything which compromises, or which is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the council. <p>Politics at a local level can lead to robust debate and the Code of Conduct does not prevent this, however there is an expectation that debates are respectful and should focus on the issues and not involve comments regarding political opponents.</p> <p>Concerns raised about the behaviour of councillors include comments made both at council meetings and on social media.</p> <p>The second largest area of concern (21 complaints) raised in the allegations related to the sections of the Code of Conduct relating to obligations as a councillor. This section requires councillors to act lawfully, in accordance with the Code, and not to act in a manner which could bring their position as a councillor, or their council, into disrepute.</p> <p>Other issues of concern related to use of position (6 complaints), issues around disclosure and declaration of interests, issues related to planning, and decision making. It should be remembered that more than one person may make the same or similar complaint, and a complainant may allege that more than one area of the code has been breached.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.5 There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.6 There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications connected to this report</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Letter from the Local Government Commissioner for Standards</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report 2022-23</p>

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Northern Ireland

Local Government
Commissioner for Standards

8th May 2024

John Walsh
Belfast City Council

Dear John

Re; Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report

Please find enclosed a copy of my report for the 2022/23 financial year acting in my role as the Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards. The report can also be accessed at

[Annual Reports | NIPSO](#)

I would ask that you bring this report to the attention of elected representatives.

I am pleased to note improved performance and in particular:

- a. Key performance Indicators for both the assessment and investigation of allegations met
- b. More decisions taken earlier in our case handling process
- c. A reduction in the number of allegations carried forward into 2023/24
- d. As of year end 23/24 any outstanding older cases now closed or in adjudication.

In addition my staff undertook a number of surveys to assist with our work in improving standards in public life. The surveys were issued to Councillors, Council Chief Executives and other senior council staff and those who made allegations that a councillor may have breached the code of conduct. The surveys helped us to identify those things that we do well and the areas where we need to make improvement. Work is now underway to develop new resources and updated guidance to help improve councillors understanding their obligations as set out in the code of conduct

Yours sincerely

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Kelly".

MARGARET KELLY

Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards

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Commissioner's Report 2022-2023

Foreword from the Commissioner



The Code of Conduct for Councillors is designed to ensure public trust in local democracy through the promotion of good standards in public life. When debated and adopted by the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2014, the Code was seen as underpinning the additional powers and responsibilities given to local councillors and ensuring that a framework was provided to build public trust. As such my office was entrusted with that framework of accountability to ensure alleged breaches of the Code were independently investigated and adjudicated as appropriate. While slightly different in administration, this brought Northern Ireland in line with the other jurisdictions of the UK in both providing a clear code for local councillors and a means of public accountability for any proven breaches of that code.

The Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected from our local representatives and aims to ensure that those taking essential decisions for citizens in Northern Ireland are clear on the principles and actions which should underpin public life. The Code makes reference to the key principles of public life, the Nolan principles including leadership, selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, duty and respect. It also goes further and provides greater guidance for Councillors including their duties not to bring either themselves or their councils into disrepute, the need to give full consideration to declaration of interests and ensuring public debate remains both compliant with the law and respectful.

In my role as Commissioner I think it is important that my office engages with both councillors and senior council staff to promote an understanding of the Code and to provide support and training.

It is equally important that the public are aware of the Code and understand how to bring a complaint or allegation that it has been breached. To this end, during the last year my office undertook a number of surveys with councillors, senior council staff and complainants to understand their experience of the Code and of being subject to or bringing an allegation. I was encouraged that approximately one third of councillors responded, as well as over 40% of council senior staff and while the response from complainants was lower there was nonetheless important lessons for us. The detail of responses and issues are laid out in this report.

The Code, its relevance and impact remains a matter of importance for public life and my office has been particularly active in the current year in ensuring that newly elected local councillors understand their duties and responsibilities under it.

I understand that being subject to an allegation under the Code and to any subsequent investigation and adjudication is stressful and my office has worked hard to make this process more timely. I want to thank those councillors who have been subject to a complaint for their co-operation during the process.

I would further like to thank my staff at the Local Government Ethical Standards team for their hard work during the year as well as those who ensure the smooth running of adjudications. I would further thank both my assistant Commissioners for their dedication in ensuring that adjudications continue to run in a timely and independent manner.

Margaret Kelly
Commissioner

Introduction

As part of the reform of local government in Northern Ireland and the transfer of powers and function including planning to councils, a new standards regime including a mandatory Code of Conduct for councillors was introduced. The Code sets out standards of conduct and behaviour with the aim of ensuring confidence in local democratic decision making. The Local Government Commissioner for Standards provides guidance to assist councillors ensure they understand and comply with the Code and with the aim of improving ethical standards at local government level.

Where written allegations are made against a councillor that their conduct or behaviour has or may have breached the Code, the Commissioner has the authority to investigate and where appropriate adjudicate on those allegations.

The Commissioner has put in place a four-stage process for dealing with written allegations against a councillor to ensure a proportionate use of resources.

Where there is insufficient evidence of a breach of the Code, cases may be closed at either the assessment or investigation stage. In cases where an investigation indicates that there may have been a breach of the Code alternatives to an adjudication are considered prior to referring a case to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner has no role in the investigation of complaints and exercises her role separate to that of the investigation function, which is delegated to the Local Government Ethical Standards team. The separation between the investigation and adjudication functions ensures that should a case be referred to the Commissioner and she accepts it, that the issues raised as part of the investigation report are considered fairly and independently.

Only the Commissioner, after an Adjudication, can decide whether there has been a breach.

This report covers both the investigation and adjudication functions.

SECTION ONE

Investigations

Investigations

In 2022-23 the number of allegations raised against councillors remained broadly in line with the long-term trend. There were **45** written allegations that councillors may have breached rules within the Code of Conduct in 2022-23 compared to **42** written allegations received in 2021-22, and the five year mean of **47** allegations.

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Cases determined in 2022-23

In addition to the **45** allegations received during the year, **63** cases were carried forward from 2021-22 giving a caseload of **108** allegations. A total of **63** allegations were determined in year, leaving **45** cases carried forward into 2023-24. This continues the improvement in the number of decisions made and in removing the backlog of cases.

The Investigation team seek to ensure that decisions are taken on allegations as early as possible with consideration given to whether there is the opportunity to resolve allegations by alternative action thereby avoiding the time and expense of an adjudication. The breakdown of the stage of closure was as follows:

- **14** were closed at the Initial Assessment Stage, which looks at whether the allegations relate to conduct covered by the Code.
- **16** were closed at the Assessment Stage which looks at whether there is evidence of conduct which, if proven, indicates a breach of the Code.
- **29** were closed at the Investigation Stage, where it was decided that there was no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code.
- **4** cases were closed by Alternative Action.

In addition 4 cases were referred to the Commissioner with a request that she consider an Adjudication on the issues raised.

Caseload

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
Written complaints received in year	45	42	48	41

Closed Cases

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20
Closed at Initial Assessment stage	14	12	4	9
Closed at Assessment stage	16	11	10	13
Closed at Investigation stage	29	16	9	10
Closed by Alternative Action at investigation	4	5	0	10

Issues Raised

Similar to previous years the largest area of concern raised in the allegations received related to the behaviour of councillors towards others. A total of **26** issues were raised about councillors' behaviour. This compared to **29** issues about behaviour towards others being raised in 2021-22.

The standards of behaviour towards others are covered in Section 4.13 of the Code, which states that councillors must:

- Show respect and consideration for others;
- Not use bullying behaviour or harass any person; and
- Not do anything which compromises, or which is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the council.

Politics at a local level can lead to robust debate and the Code of Conduct does not prevent this, however there is an expectation that debates are respectful and should focus

on the issues and not involve comments regarding political opponents. Concerns raised about the behaviour of councillors include comments made both at council meetings and on social media.

The second largest area of concern (**21**) raised in the allegations related to the sections of the Code of Conduct relating to obligations as a councillor.

This section requires councillors to act lawfully, in accordance with the Code, and not to act in a manner which could bring their position as a councillor, or their council, into disrepute.

Other issues of concern related to use of position (**6**), issues around disclosure and declaration of interests, issues related to planning, and decision making.

It should be remembered that more than one person may make the same or similar complaint, and a complainant may allege that more than one area of the code has been breached.

Written Allegations Received - by Basis of Complaint

	2022-23	2021-22
Obligations as a Councillor (requirement to act lawfully and not bring council/position of councillor into disrepute)	21	22
Behaviour towards other people (requirement to show respect and consideration for others)	26	29
Use of position	6	6
Disclosure of information	1	0
Decision-making	1	3
Use of council resources	1	0
Registration of Interests	0	0
Disclosure & Declaration of Interests	1	4
Lobbying and access to councillors	0	0
Planning matters	12*	5
Total issues	69	69

*One person made the same allegation against 12 councillors who were members of the Planning Committee

Written Allegations Received by Council Area

	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council	4	6	4
Mid and East Antrim Council	12	17	6
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council	0	1	2
Belfast City Council	2	0	3
Causeway Coast and Glens Council	1	2	17
Derry and Strabane Council	0	0	2
Fermanagh and Omagh Council	8	6	11
Mid Ulster Council	2	1	2
Newry, Mourne and Down Council	14	5	1
Ards and North Down Council	0	0	0
Lisburn and Castlereagh Council	2	4	0
Total	45	42	48

Performance

The Commissioner has established two Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for the Investigation team. The first KPI establishes a target for the timeframe within which a decision should be made on whether an allegation should progress to investigation. The second target sets a timescale for completion of the investigation and reporting to the councillor on the outcome of that investigation.

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The target for the decision on whether to conduct an investigation is that within 4 weeks of a valid allegation being received to tell the person making the allegation and the relevant councillor whether it will be investigated in 85% of cases.

In 2022-23 this KPI was met in **93%** of complaints, against the target of 85%. This marked a considerable improvement from the position in 2021-22 where achievement against this target was 69%.

In the second KPI the team aim in **60%** of cases to complete the investigation within 40 weeks of the complaint being received. In 2022-23, **86%** of investigations were completed within this timeframe.



Case Summaries

Complaint about 'sectarian rant' comment not accepted for investigation

A councillor claimed that another councillor had breached the Code of Conduct by referring to his comments at a committee meeting as 'a sectarian rant.'

He said the councillor refused to retract his comments, which he believed were insulting, malicious, and defamatory.

The phrase 'sectarian rant' was made in response to the councillor's statement about the council favouring certain organisations when it came to the allocation of money.

The complaint was considered against the Code of Conduct and the Commissioner's Guidance on the Code. The latter states:

'Challenges to ideas and opinions are part of the political landscape. It is unlikely that the lawful expression of such political views would lead to a finding of a breach of the Code for failing to show respect and consideration for others.'

The assessment of the complaint also took into account whether the comments were unlawful or highly offensive, and whether the conduct complained of was likely to diminish the trust and confidence the public places in a councillor or the council.

Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights also gives enhanced protection to comments which relate to political issues. As councillors or other politicians knowingly lay themselves open to close scrutiny of their words and deeds, they are expected to possess a thicker skin and greater tolerance than ordinary members of the public.

This means that in the political context councillors are expected to tolerate a degree of provocative, emotive, or even aggressive language that would not be acceptable elsewhere.

The assessment concluded that as the phrase 'sectarian rant' was used in a public debate at a council meeting it attracted the protection of political speech. The complaint was not accepted for investigation.

Complaint settled with apology from councillor

A council employee complained that a councillor's conduct towards him during a training session was intimidating and aggressive.

He also said on a separate occasion the councillor had referred to a confidential matter about him in front of others, leaving him feeling threatened and undermined.

Page 5
It was decided that the complaint should be dealt with under the Commissioner's Alternative Action Policy, which states that complaints can be considered in this way if the Deputy Commissioner thinks it may be the most efficient, effective and proportionate means of finding a resolution. It can also be used if a councillor is likely to be found in breach of the Code but it is not likely to result in the Commissioner applying a significant sanction.

After looking at the evidence it was decided that the councillor should apologise to the man in writing for the comment made at the training session, and for breaching confidentiality at a later event.

The councillor also agreed to undertake training in relation to behaviour towards other people, and on disclosure of information.

Councillor apologises for 'liking' offensive Facebook post

A councillor alleged that another councillor had breached the Code of Conduct by 'liking' what he described as a 'vulgar, offensive and degrading' post about him on Facebook.

Screenshots of the relevant posts were provided as evidence.

The councillor explained to the investigating officer that he 'liked' the post but said this was unintentional. He said that once he became aware what he had done he 'unliked' it.

The Deputy Commissioner decided that, given the cost and resource implications of further investigation, Alternative Action was the most effective and proportionate way of resolving the complaint.

The councillor was therefore asked to apologise for liking the comment, and the case was closed.

Investigation finds no conflict of interest breach by councillor

A man complained that a councillor failed to declare a conflict of interest when voting against his planning application at the council's Planning Committee.

The man said that the councillor objected to the application because he was a party colleague of a former councillor who had also previously opposed the plans.

The allegation was assessed and forwarded for investigation.

Paragraph 6.4 of the Code states: "You must declare any significant private or personal non-pecuniary interest in a matter as soon as it becomes apparent. You must then withdraw from any council meeting (including committee or sub-committee meeting) when the matter is being discussed. It is your own personal responsibility to determine, having regard to council advice and guidance, whether you have any such interest."

The Commissioner's Guidance on the Code also states that councillors must declare an interest in non-financial issues if others might reasonably believe they would benefit from a decision on the matter.

The Investigating Officer reviewed the minutes and audio of the planning meeting as well as the documents on the Planning Portal relating to two applications on the site. It was found that while the former councillor did object to a related planning application several years earlier, he did not lodge any objection to the one which gave rise to the complaint.

The councillor whose actions were complained about failed to appear for interview to explain whether he had discussed the application with the former councillor. The Deputy Commissioner therefore reminded him of his obligations under the Code to participate in the investigation process.

However, the investigation concluded that the councillor was not aware of any issues between the former councillor and the man who made the complaint.

The case was therefore closed as there was no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code.

Surveys

We carried out three surveys during the reporting year. They aimed to help us develop our role in promoting and regulating the Code and the best ways of sharing learning from our case work.

The first survey was issued to councillors in each of the 11 local councils.

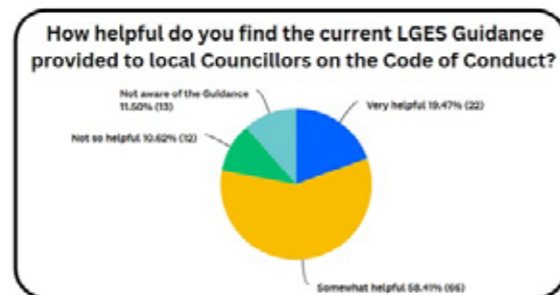
2. The second survey was sent to individuals who made an allegation about a councillor breaching the Code within the preceding 5 years.
3. The third survey was sent to council CEOs, senior council staff, and other relevant local government agencies with an interest in the Code.

Overall a third of those invited to participate in the survey (181 individuals) took the time to respond, providing us with some useful insights. The key findings from the three surveys are outlined below:

1. Councillors

148 (32%) councillors responded to the survey and all 11 councils were represented.

In terms of training and support, although over 80% of the councillors surveyed were aware of the Commissioner's Guidance, they felt that participating in information sessions was the most useful way to learn about the Code and the role of the Commissioner.



Councillors reported that going forward, refresher training sessions and sharing the learning from case work would help with their understanding of the Code. Others asked for more face-to-face interaction with the Office and increased engagement.

Not every councillor who responded had experience of the assessment and investigation process. Those who did asked for more communication throughout the process, more timely investigations, and highlighted that being the subject of a complaint can be stressful.

There were mixed responses from councillors who had experience of the early resolution process, which aims to resolve a complaint without an investigation. Some councillors said it worked satisfactorily while others would have liked a more detailed process.

Some used the survey to express their dissatisfaction with some requirements of the Code itself, although responsibility for the Code rests with the Department for Communities.

None of the councillors who responded offered comments on the adjudication process.

2. Individuals who made allegations of a breach.

15 people who made allegations about breaches of the Code responded to this survey.

There was mixed feedback about the process of making a complaint. Whilst many found it relatively straightforward, a few people did highlight difficulties with the form and asked that it be made more user-friendly.

The survey showed a low awareness of the need for investigations to be carried out in private, leading to raised expectations of the amount of information that can be provided.

3. Council CEOs and staff/other relevant agencies

The response rate for this survey was 44%, the majority of whom were council CEO's and senior council officers. In addition 3 responses were also received from other organisations in the local government sector.

Most of the organisations surveyed provided some form of support for councillors on the Code of Conduct. This included in-house training, commissioning, or hosting training from an outside organisation, in-house legal support, and access to other resources.

84% said engagement with councils and councillors was the best way of raising awareness and understanding of the Code. Others suggested training sessions on specific issues (79%), and engagement with political parties (74%).

Key findings

Overall, respondents said that the staff they had come into contact with were helpful, professional, and easy to contact. However some commented that the process was too slow and needed to be more user-friendly.

Respondents highlighted the need for more communication with those raising the allegation, along with clearer explanations of decisions and outcomes.

The Commissioner's Guidance and induction training were identified as useful resources for understanding the Code, but there was also a demand for more bespoke training on specific issues (e.g., social media, conflicts of interest and the Code itself).

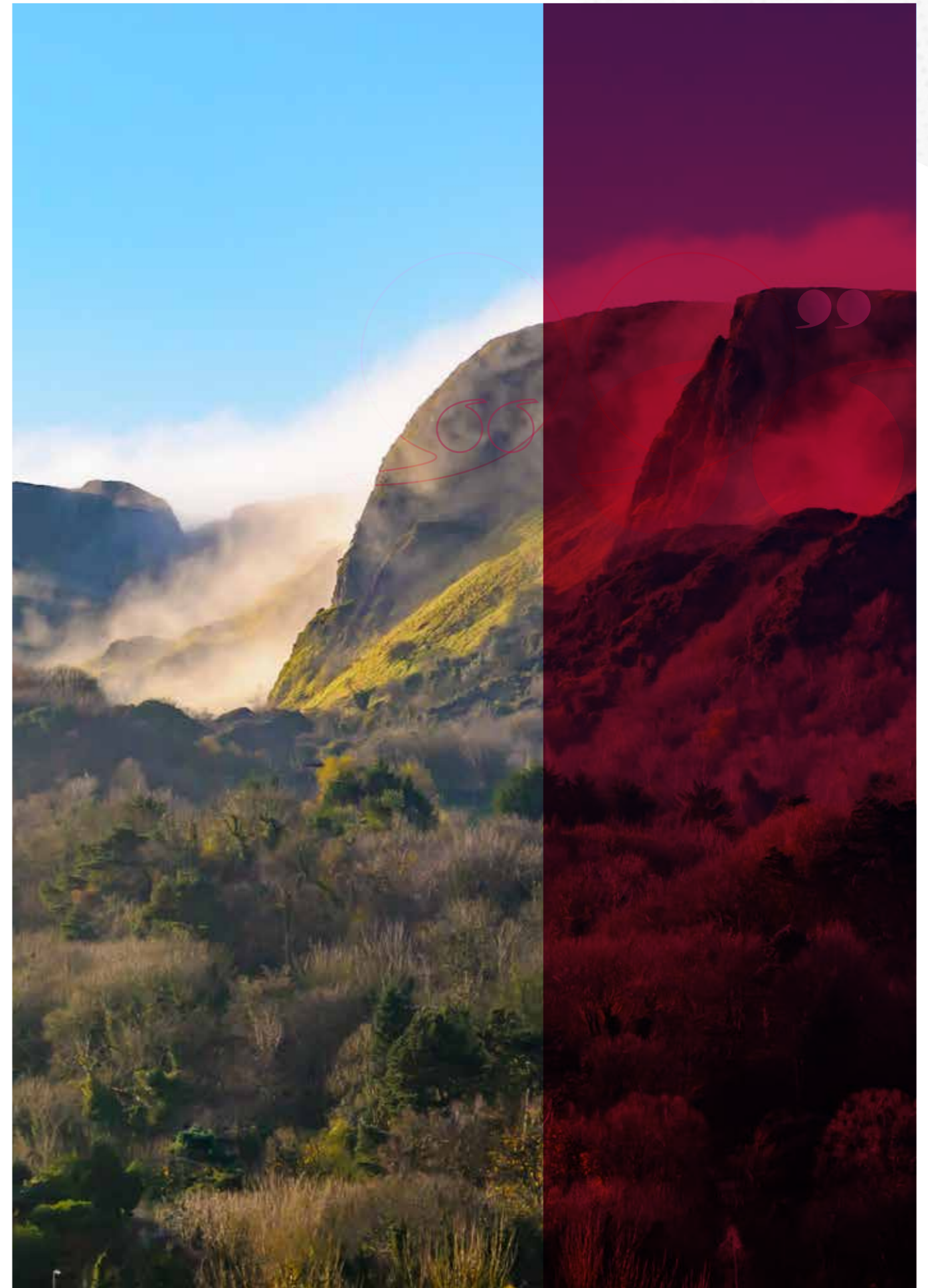
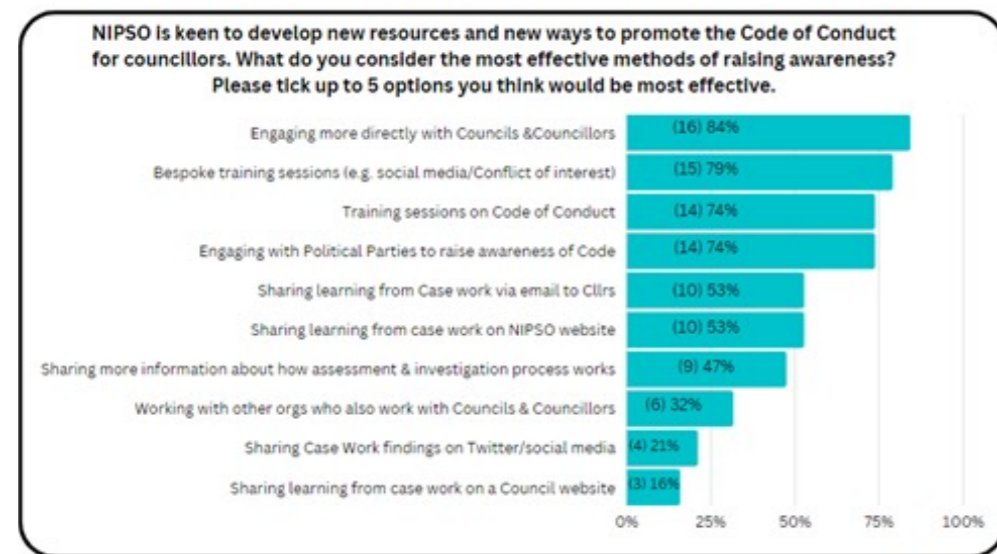
There was a clear demand for more direct engagement between the office with councils and councillors and more in-person interaction with people who make an allegation, instead of the use of email or letter.

Next Steps

The surveys were a valuable exercise in helping us to understand where we are doing things well and where we need to improve.

We are developing a range of resources to help councillors understand the Code of Conduct, including redesign of our website, a re-issued guide to the use of social media, and a refreshed Commissioner's Guide.

As part of our engagement plan we will also continue to meet with elected members and senior Council officials to promote better awareness and understanding of the Code.



SECTION TWO

Adjudications

When an investigation is completed by the Deputy Commissioner and the evidence indicates a breach of the Code of Conduct, the Deputy Commissioner can request that the Commissioner consider adjudicating on the issues. Having reviewed the referral from the Deputy Commissioner the Commissioner decides what action needs to be taken including whether she should adjudicate on the alleged breaches included in the Deputy Commissioner's report. The Commissioner can decide not to proceed with an adjudication or take other action to resolve the matter as she considers appropriate.

Adjudication Caseload

	Totals
Cases ongoing at start of year	7
Cases referred in year	0
Cases accepted in year	0
Cases ongoing at year end	3
Pre-Hearing Reviews completed	33
Adjudication decisions	4

Adjudication decisions

Decision	Total
No breach	0
Breach – No Further Action	0
Breach – Alternative action	1
Breach – Censure	0
Breach – Suspension – full or partial	2
Breach – Disqualification	1
Total decisions	4

Councillor suspended over abusive Tweets

Councillor Marc Collins (Mid and East Antrim Borough Council), was suspended from his role as a councillor for 8 months following an Adjudication Hearing held on 24 June 2022.

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Councillor Collins was found to have breached the Councillor's Code of Conduct by posting a Tweet on 18 November 2019, and a re-tweet the following day, which included reference to John Finucane, Sinn Féin's Westminster election candidate for North Belfast at the time.

Councillor Collins' Tweet claimed that Mr Finucane supported and promoted the IRA. His re-tweet was of a message promoting banners erected in the Shankill area of Belfast which contained allegations against several members of the Finucane family.

The sanction was imposed after allegations about the Tweets was received by the Local Government Ethical Standards team, and an investigation report was completed and provided to the Commissioner.

Although the Adjudication Hearing was re-scheduled twice as a result of Councillor Collins' unavailability, he did not attend.

The mitigating factors were considered in this case, including that Councillor Collins had no previous record of breaching the Code. He also wrote a letter saying that he did not intend to harm Mr Finucane or his family, and apologised for not engaging with the investigation and adjudication process.

However, the Hearing found that Councillor Collins's Tweets contributed towards a toxic atmosphere in North Belfast at the time of the General Election. They also resulted in Mr Finucane believing that his own and his family's safety were in jeopardy. It concluded that the councillor's activity went beyond the acceptable bounds of proper political debate and was unnecessary and personally abusive.

A further aggravating factor was the councillor's failure to engage in the investigation and adjudication process, which resulted in unnecessary costs to the public purse.

Having regard to previous decisions and the seriousness of the breaches, a suspension of 8 months was considered a necessary and proportionate response to the breaches found.

Councillor suspended over Facebook post

Alderman John Carson (Mid and East Antrim Borough Council), was suspended from his role as councillor for 3 months following an Adjudication Hearing held on 10 October 2022.

The Alderman was found to have breached the Councillor's Code of Conduct by making an abusive comment on Facebook in April 2021.

The comment was a reference to Ms Michelle O'Neill, Deputy Leader of Sinn Féin, and at the time the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

The sanction was imposed after a complaint was received by the Local Government Ethical Standards Directorate, and an investigation report sent to the Commissioner for consideration.

It was found that the wording used by the Alderman amounted to an unreasonable personal attack on Ms O'Neill, with a 'misogynistic' tone. It did not agree with his description that the comment related to political issues.

As such, his choice of words was found likely to diminish the trust and confidence the public placed in his position as an elected representative.

The mitigating factors in this case included a statement issued on Facebook by Alderman Carson saying, 'In hindsight I realise I have caused offence by a robust comment made

in anger. I retract the comment and apologise accordingly'. He also had no previous record of breaching the Code.

However, the apology was found to be 'half-hearted' and not a personal one to Ms O'Neill.

Having regard to previous decisions and to the need to uphold confidence in the standards regime, it was decided that suspension of 3 months was a necessary and proportionate response to the breach found.

Social media comments a breach of the Code

At an Adjudication Hearing held on 28 November 2022 former Councillor Ruth Wilson (Mid and East Antrim Borough Council) acknowledged that a comment she made on Facebook in 2018 was a breach of the Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors.

The post in question stated:

BRIDE DAY!! Pouring Rain Incessantly Dropping Everywhere', followed by a biblical quotation. In her comment, former Councillor Wilson posted: "Hopes it soaks them through to the skin".

She agreed that in making it she had breached the Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors by bringing her position as a councillor into disrepute, and by failing to treat others with respect and consideration.

The Hearing found the former councillor displayed little foresight as to her words and posts, and that she had failed in her duty to understand and comply with the Code.

However, as it was in the wider public interest to deal with this case in a proportionate manner and that on the basis of Ms Wilson agreeing to follow the Code in the future, it was agreed that no further action should be taken against the former councillor. Contributing to this decision was the fact that this was not a case which would have merited disqualification, and, as Ms Wilson was not a sitting councillor, the sanction of suspension would also not be relevant.

Former councillor disqualified for 3 years

Former Councillor Jolene Bunting was disqualified from holding the office of councillor for 3 years following an Adjudication Hearing held on 8 February 2023.

The Hearing found that Ms Bunting wrongly claimed she had been fined by Belfast City Council for a 'stunt' involving the then Deputy Leader of Britain First being filmed in ceremonial robes and sitting in the Lord Mayor's chair.

It also found that she had altered her Council payslip to make it appear as though a deduction of over £500 was for the fictional fine, when in fact it related to deductions for her use of a council mobile phone.

The complainant on the case, who had agreed to pay Ms Bunting's 'fine' in full, made two payments on separate dates amounting to £115 before realising that there was no fine.

The Hearing concluded that Ms Bunting's actions had breached the Local Government Code of Conduct and that she had brought her and her position as councillor into disrepute.

Having considered the sanctions available and taking account of the need to uphold confidence in the standards regime, a disqualification for a period of 3 years was considered to be a necessary and proportionate sanction.

Councillor suspended for 2 months

Councillor Padraig McShane (Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council) was suspended for two months following an Adjudication Hearing held on 3 March 2023.

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The suspension related to Councillor McShane's arrest in the Diamond area of Ballycastle, Co Antrim on 12 July 2016. Prior to his arrest Councillor McShane had been at a protest at Altananam Park, Ballycastle in respect of an Orange Order Parade which marched through the town on that day.

Following Councillor McShane's conviction and subsequent appeal, he was convicted of the offences of resisting police (for which he was fined £100), disorderly behaviour in a public place (for which he received a conditional discharge), and taking part in an un-notified protest meeting (for which he was fined £100).

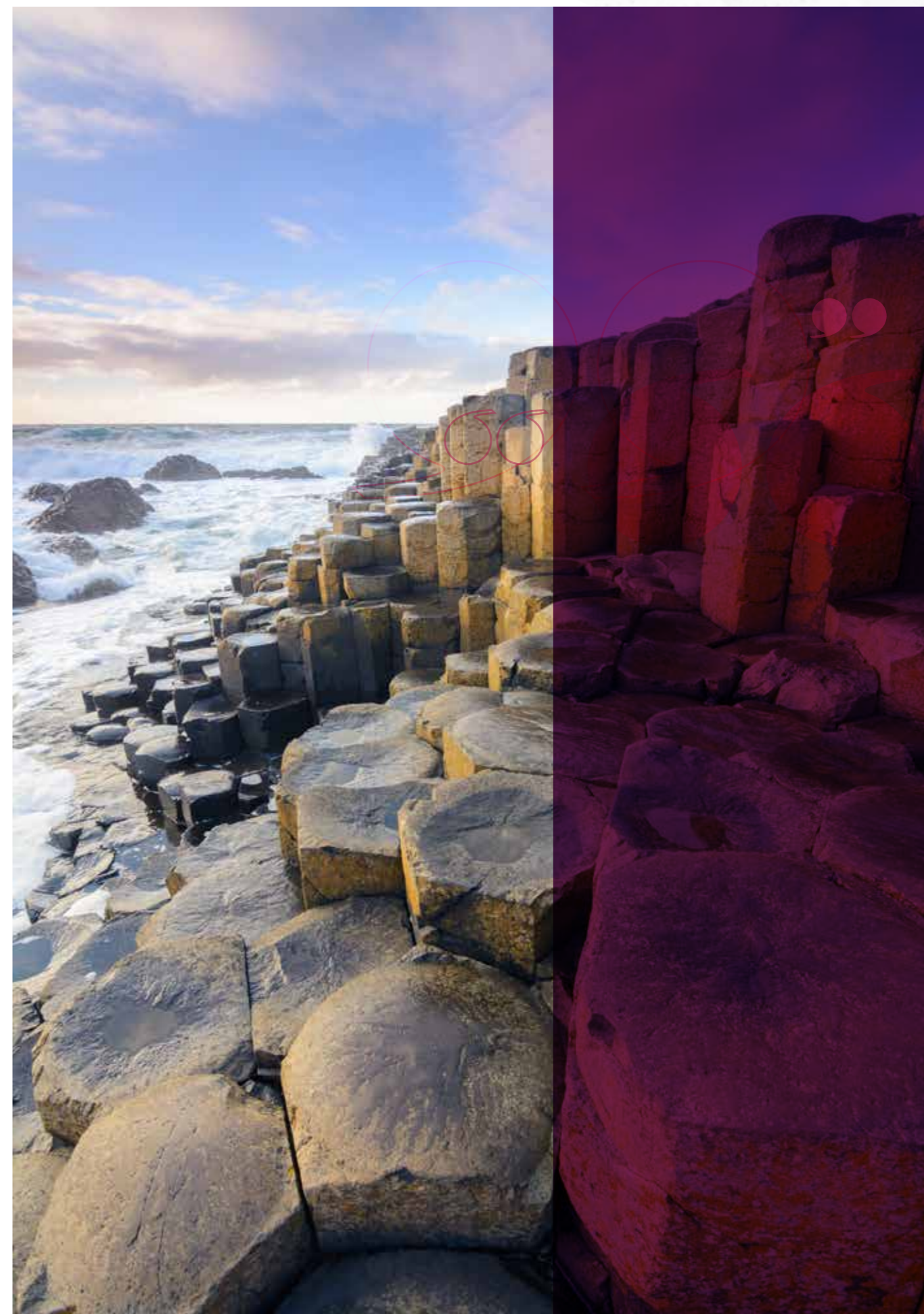
The Hearing found that a member of the public, in possession of the facts, would reasonably consider that Councillor McShane's conduct was such that it brought his position as a councillor into disrepute.

However it also found that that his actions had not brought his Council into disrepute.

In considering what sanction to apply, the Hearing noted the aggravating factors in this case, including that the councillor had been convicted of criminal offences, and that he had previously been found to have breached the Code of Conduct in November 2016.

However, the mitigating factors included Councillor McShane's co-operation with the investigation and adjudication process, and the recent role he had played in governance issues relating to the Council.

Taking account of the need to uphold confidence in the standards regime, the Hearing believed that suspension for a period of 2 months was a necessary and proportionate sanction.



Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners

Margaret Kelly – Commissioner

Margaret Kelly took up the post of Local Government Commissioner for Standards in August 2020. Margaret has worked extensively in the voluntary and community sector for over 30 years and gained a range of experience in leading and managing services, developing policy and working in partnership with the public sector.



Ian Gordon OBE QPM LL.B – Assistant Commissioner

Ian Gordon is a retired Deputy Chief Constable of Tayside Police. Seconded to HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for 3 years, he was the lead police officer on the annual statutory inspection of five UK police forces. Mr Gordon was a Convener for the Standards Commission for Scotland between 2010 and 2017 and led a focused improvement, to awareness of the Codes of Conduct, for elected members and Boards of Public Bodies.



Katrin Shaw – Assistant Commissioner

Katrin was admitted as a Solicitor in 1996 and worked as a local government lawyer before she joined the Welsh Ombudsman's office as an Investigator in 2001. Since then, Katrin has held managerial roles in the office and is now the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales's Chief Legal Adviser & Director of Investigations overseeing casework, including investigations under the ethical standards framework for local government members in Wales.



Appendix

Funding and Expenditure

The Local Government Ethical Standards (LGES) directorate is funded from a separately identified portion of the overall annual budget for the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO). The LGES budget is proactively managed by NIPSO over the course of each financial year to ensure that any emerging funding pressures are identified and addressed.

Similarly, where reduced requirements arise, under established arrangements with the Department for Communities (DfC), any such amounts are released back to DfC by NIPSO by means of a mutually agreed in-year transfer.

This is in accordance with normal in-year financial monitoring procedures, after which DfC pay the released funding back to Local Councils. Where applicable a final end of year adjustment must also be returned directly to DfC. In all cases the amounts returned are made available for redeployment within Local Government, thus ensuring that any unspent amounts are able to be utilised fully and effectively.

All £k	2022-23	2021-22
Staff costs	461	386
Other administration costs	153	148
Total expenditure	614	534



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Subject:	Elected Member Development
Date:	24 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, HR Director
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, HR Manager Fiona Gunning, Principal HR Advisor

Restricted Reports													
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>												
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 													
<p>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 5%;"></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>	Never		<input type="checkbox"/>
After Committee Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>											
After Council Decision		<input type="checkbox"/>											
Sometime in the future		<input type="checkbox"/>											
Never		<input type="checkbox"/>											

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present and seek approval of the proposed changes to the current approach to elected member development.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the implementation of the proposed changes as set out below at 3.4.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The current approach to elected member development was developed by a “task and finish” Elected Member Development Working Group and was agreed by the SP&R committee on 24 March 2017.</p>
3.2	<p>At its meeting on 22 September 2023, the committee agreed that the current approach should be reviewed via engagement with party group leaders. The Corporate HR team carried out a desk top review of the framework documents and presented the following proposed changes to Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum for further engagement and consideration within their parties.</p>
3.3	<p>In addition, all members were invited to attend a briefing on the changes on 24 April 2024.</p>
3.4	<p>Summary of proposed changes</p> <p>The proposed changes to the Member Development process are summarised as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new Elected Member Development Strategic Framework document bringing together all the processes involved. 2. Reformatted Members Role Profiles (content remains unchanged) 3. Reformatted Members Knowledge & Skills Framework now including a contents page and two new additional political skills to align with LGA/NILGA frameworks: Digital Technology and Resilience & Wellbeing 4. The revised Personal Development Planning (PDP) process proposes that carrying out a self-assessment against the Knowledge and Skills Framework and Role Profiles becomes a recommended element of the process, rather than mandatory element. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members will now automatically be invited to a PDP meeting with Corporate HR to help encourage take up of the PDP process, with review meetings also scheduled on a regular basis once the PDP has been completed. Assistance from an external facilitator remains optional. 5. New PDP Template <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal reflection section has been removed. • Now includes a summary of learning and development received to date (Corporate HR will pre-populate with any previous BCC learning and development activity)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment is aligned directly to Knowledge & Skills Framework, descriptors have been removed to shorten document (asking members to refer to full Framework and Role Profiles for full descriptor detail.) <p>6. Change to the Personal Member Development Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual amount for the PDP budget to remain at £730 however going forward members will be able to access the full four years of PDP budget (£2920) at any time over the four year Council term - or part thereof. Members should note that if a member leaves the council and has used all or part of their 4 year budget, any co-opted member will only have access to the remaining allocation of the leaving member. • It is proposed that degree type qualifications now be included as an option given that the full four-year budget allocation can be used at any time during the council term.
3.5	<p>Further detail on the proposed changes is attached at Appendix 1.</p>
3.6	<p>Feedback from members on proposed changes</p> <p>Members who provided feedback had no further comments or amendments and were happy with the proposals. The change to the budgeting process was particularly welcomed. Members also commented that these should be widely circulated to all Members to make them aware so that budgets could be used for development.</p>
3.7	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p> <p>To enable the full four-year Member Development PDP budgets of £2920 to be used at any time during the full council term, Corporate Finance will transfer any annual underspend to a specific reserve for the duration of the Council term. Members should note that budget allocations for 2023/24 not already used have been transferred, allowing members to avail of the full four budget now until the end of the council term.</p>
3.8	<p>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</p> <p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications to this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents attached
	Appendix 1 - Table of proposed changes to the Member Development processes.

Appendix 2 - Draft Strategic Framework for Elected Member Development and accompanying documents:

- A - Draft Elected Members Role Profiles
- B - Draft Members Knowledge and Skills Framework
- C - Draft Members Personal Development Planning Process Guidance Notes
- D - Draft BCC Elected Members Personal Development Planning template
- E - Draft revised Members Assistance to Study Scheme

Appendix 1

Member development processes - summary of existing agreed process and proposed changes for implementation 1 April 2024.

Item	Current agreed documentation / process	Proposed changes
1. Strategic Framework for EM Development	n/a	New Document – bringing all elements of Member Development together with strategic context
2. Elected Member Role Profiles	Agreed April 2017	Unchanged but in Word format
3. Elected Member Knowledge & Skills Framework	Agreed April 2027	Reformatted Word version, clear contents page, addition of 2 new political skills to align with LGA/NILGA frameworks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital Technology - Resilience & Wellbeing
4. Personal Development Planning Process (Members PDP) Process	<p>Agreed April 2017</p> <p>One single document including guidance on the process, the self-assessment process and the Personal Development Plan template</p> <p>Self-assessment mandatory</p> <p>Current process invites members to complete their own PDP using the supporting documentation or have an external facilitator assist.</p>	<p>The documents have been separated into two documents:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guidance notes 2. PDP template <p>New Guidance Notes</p> <p>Proposes that carrying out a self-assessment against the Knowledge and Skills Framework and Role Profiles becomes a recommended element of the process, rather than mandatory element.</p> <p>The new guidance offers support from Corporate HR to complete the PDP. Assistance from an external facilitator remains optional.</p>

		All members will be invited to a PDP meeting with Corporate HR to help encourage take up of the PDP process, with review meetings also scheduled on a regular basis once the PDP has been completed.
5. Current Personal Development Planning Process (Members PDP) Template	<p>Agreed April 2017</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes personal reflection section - Alignment to Knowledge & Skills Framework not explicit in the self assessment element 	<p>New PDP Template</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal reflection section has been removed. - Adds in summary of learning and development received to date (Corporate HR will pre-populate with any previous BCC learning and development activity) - Self-assessment is aligned directly to Knowledge & Skills Framework, descriptors removed to shorten document (asking members to refer to full Framework and Role Profiles for full descriptor detail.)
6. Assistance to Study Scheme & PDP Budget	<p>Agreed April 2017</p> <p>Current scheme refers to PDP budget of £730 per member per year which must be used in each year of council term</p> <p>Given the individual PDP budget allocation it is anticipated that the types of qualifications that could potentially be supported by the Assistance to Study Scheme include awards, certificates, and diploma type qualifications.</p>	<p>Proposed change:</p> <p><i>to allow full 4 years of PDP budget (£2920) at any time over the 4 year Council term - or part thereof, and when a Member leaves the council and has used all or part of their 4 year budget, any co-opted member will be only be able to access the remaining allocation of the leaving member.</i></p> <p>Proposed change to include degree type qualifications - propose wording change to: <i>Given the individual PDP budget allocation it is anticipated that the types of qualifications that could potentially be supported by the Assistance to Study Scheme include awards, certificates, diploma and degree type qualifications.</i></p>

Introduction

As elected representatives Councillors have two main, equally important roles to undertake.

The first of these roles is to act as a community leader, advocating, representing and supporting local people, assisting both individual constituents and local communities and ensuring their views and opinions are taken account of with regard to decisions which will impact on them both personally and as citizens of the city.

The second role is to act as a civic leader representing the interests of Belfast as a whole, taking decisions on policies and services provided by the Council, working in partnership with other organisations and agencies and the Northern Ireland Assembly to help ensure that the objectives and priorities set out in the Belfast Agenda are delivered on.

In addition, if elected as a member of an established political party, a Councillor will also have a responsibility to his or her political party.

A Councillor therefore has to balance the demands of being a community champion and a civic leader alongside the demands placed upon them as political party members.

All Councillors will therefore:

- determine the strategic direction of the Council and make decisions on Council policies and priorities.
- be involved in the Council's decision- making process, exercising objectivity, and at all times acting in accordance with the Council's constitution and standing orders.
- act as custodians of the Council's finances and ensure financial propriety and budgetary controls are maintained.
- represent the Council on outside bodies and work in collaboration with other organisations agencies for the benefit of the city.
- act as a community champion providing leadership, support and representation.
- be an advocate for individual constituents in resolving particular issues and concerns which are affecting them.
- adopt and maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics and abide at all times by the Code of Conduct for Councillors including, registering and declaring any personal pecuniary or significant non-pecuniary interests.

The primary purpose of the elected member role profiles is to assist members in understanding the role(s), duties and responsibilities which they will be expected to undertake as elected representatives, both as local representatives and as civic leaders. The role profiles, when considered in conjunction with the knowledge and skills framework, should also:

- assist and support members as they develop from first being elected through to undertaking key civic leadership roles, so they have a full understanding of what is expected from an effective elected member.
- underpin and enhance the personal development planning (PDP) process, so members are fully equipped to undertake the respective roles effectively and ensure learning and development activities which are available at a personal, party and council wide level are identified and addressed to assist them both as community advocates and as civic leaders working in a political environment; and

- ensure relevant capacity building activities and programmes are in place to support members.

Role Profile: Elected Member

Main purpose of role - To represent the views of his/her local community and the citizens of Belfast generally, both within and outside the Council.

Summary of responsibilities:

1. Decision-making and overseeing the performance of the Council:

- To participate fully in the council, committee and working group meetings, reaching and making informed and balanced decisions, and overseeing Council performance.
- To contribute to the democratic decision-making process and take ownership of decisions reached by Council.
- To oversee the implementation of the Belfast Agenda, Corporate Plan and the Belfast City Local Development Plan and monitor progress against targets.
- To promote and ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of Council services ensuring maximum benefit is achieved for ratepayers.
- To agree Council policies and oversee their effective implementation.
- To agree to the allocation of the Council's people and financial resources and ensure their efficient and effective uses for service delivery.

2. Representing and supporting communities:

- To represent and reflect clearly to the Council the views of local communities in respect of Council strategies, policies, services and procedures.
- To explain decisions of the Council to constituents and other interested parties including potential impact on them.
- To ensure planned and targeted interventions assist with achieving the objectives of the Belfast Agenda as well as constituents needs.
- To ensure that communities are aware of and are encouraged to contribute to the Statement of Community Involvement for the Belfast City Local Development Plan.
- To consult with and communicate the views of the public, partners and stakeholders to the Council.
- To represent individual constituents and local organisations by undertaking work on their behalf and serving all fairly and equally.
- To demonstrate and promote tolerance, cohesion and ensure equality and diversity are respected.

3. Representing the Council:

- To represent the views of the Council to partners and stakeholders to help achieve collaborative working.
- To represent the Council as appropriate on local and regional outside bodies.

- To act as an ambassador of the Council and ensure its reputation is upheld.
- To work in partnership with officers and other Councillors to promote Council objectives.
- To represent, support and be an advocate for the Council and its decisions at local, national and international levels.

4. Internal governance, ethics and relationships:

- To promote and support good governance of the Council and its affairs at all times.
- To comply with the Council's Constitution (including Standing Orders governing the conduct of Council business).
- To promote high standards of conduct and ethics in public life.
- To abide by the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors to ensure the highest standards of behaviour and probity.
- To develop constructive and mutually respectful relationship with officers (in line with the Local Government Employee and Councillor Working Relationship Protocol).

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake their role as an elected representative. The knowledge and skills required come under the following headings:-

A. Members' Knowledge

1. Understanding our City, Council & Customers
2. Strategic Leadership
3. Community Leadership
4. Working with Others
5. Good Governance & Due Diligence
6. Personal Impact

B. Members' Skills

1. Regulating & monitoring
2. Local Leadership
3. Scrutiny & Challenge
4. Communication Skills
5. Partnership Working
6. Political Understanding
7. Effective Use of Digital Technology
8. Resilience & Wellbeing

Party Leaders

9. Excellence in Leadership

Role Profiles: Civic Dignitaries

This role profile is in addition to the Member role profile and outlines the specialised civic leadership roles of Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and High Sheriff.

Lord Mayor

Main Purpose of role: To perform the duties and roles expected to be undertaken by the first citizen of the city.

Summary of Responsibilities:

- To preside over meetings of the Full Council fairly and impartially ensuring that business is carried out efficiently and in line with the Standing orders of the Council.
- To promote and support good governance of the Council and its affairs.
- To provide community leadership and promote active citizenship.
- To promote and support open and transparent government.
- To support, and adhere to respectful, appropriate and effective relationships with officers of the Council.
- To promote and raise awareness of the Council's main objectives and priority issues.
- To encourage and support all aspects of life in Belfast by attending civic and public events.
- To receive distinguished visitors to the city
- To act as host on behalf of the council and the citizens of Belfast at civic functions
- To act as a spokesperson to the local, national and international media
- To provide an appropriate response on behalf of Belfast at times of local, national and international catastrophe
- To support and encourage charitable and other appeals as appropriate.
- To promote Belfast's business, commercial, cultural and social life
- To promote Belfast as a place of excellence in which to do business and as a tourist destination.

Deputy Lord Mayor

Summary of Responsibilities:

- In the Lord Mayor's absence to preside over meetings of the Full Council fairly and impartially ensuring that business is carried out efficiently and in line with the Standing orders of the Council.
- To support the Lord Mayor in carrying out his/her civic responsibilities.
- To carry out engagements on behalf of the Lord Mayor, as required.
- To undertake specific roles and responsibilities as requested by the Lord Mayor.
- To support and share in general the full range of duties of the Lord Mayor.

High Sheriff

Summary of Responsibilities:

- Attend civic functions hosted by the Lord Mayor.
- Undertake specific functions on behalf of the Council.

- Attend functions in place of the Lord Mayor and/or Deputy Lord Mayor
- Provide general support to the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor.

Working together:

The three civic dignitaries, Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and High Sheriff, will work closely together on projects and initiatives that enhance the profile of the city.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake the role of a civic dignitary.

The Knowledge and skills required are listed on page 3 above.

Role Profile: Party Leader

(This role profile is in addition to the Member role profile and outlines the specialised civic leadership role of Party Leader).

Main purpose of role - To lead the party, build consensus, and ensure the party acts in a cohesive and unified fashion.

1. Ensure all party members are consulted and communicated with equally.
2. Chair party meetings to ensure Council and committee business is discussed and consensual party positions are adopted which will help further the Council's strategic priorities, aid informed decision-making and collaborative working.
3. Engage with other party leaders on the Council and work collaboratively to ensure decisions are taken which will benefit all citizens of the city.

Summary of responsibilities:

- Act as conduit at party, council and Executive level.
- Be accountable for decisions and recommendations made by the party.
- Participate in the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum and act as a conduit for communication with party members on issues discussed at the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum.
- Take responsibility for appointing party members to committees and outside bodies in line with the party allocation under D'hondt.
- Provide support and guidance for party members and take responsibility for the arrangements for mentoring of new members.
- Appoint the Deputy Party Leader and other party office bearers as appropriate.
- Maintain an overview of party members' constituency roles and activities as well as emerging community issues which may influence Council decisions.
- Be the principal spokesperson for the party with regard to Council business.
- Ensure effective corporate governance is practised including working with other parties on the Council to achieve potential cross-party co-operation.
- Encourage party members to participate in any relevant learning and development opportunities.

The Deputy Party Leader will:

Assist the party Leader in specific duties as required.

Fulfil the duties of the party leader in their absence.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake the role of Party Leader. See page 3 above.

Role Profile: Committee Chairperson

This role profile is in addition to the Member role profile and outlines the specialised civic leadership role of Committee Chairperson.

Main purpose of role - To chair and manage the business of the committee effectively and efficiently and in accordance with its terms of reference and the standing orders of the Council.

Summary of responsibilities:

Lead the committee in the area of responsibility of that committee, and champion on behalf of the Council by:

- Chairing meetings and ensuring procedures, rules and protocols are followed.
- Working with relevant officers to:
 - Ensure appropriate planning of committee activities.
 - Receive all appropriate advice to inform effective committee decisions.
 - Liaising with officers on the content of the agenda.
 - Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with other members, including the chairs of other committees of the Council and working groups established under the authority of the committee.
 - Ensuring all contributions from members, officers and where appropriate, members of the public, are made in accordance with the agreed procedure.
 - Guiding the committee to reach decisions, based on the information presented to it.
 - Presenting the minutes of the committee to Council for ratification.
 - Demonstrating fair and open decision-making by, or on behalf of, the committee.
 - Encouraging open and informed debate ensuring respectful and appropriate behaviour is demonstrated by members at all times.
 - Developing a constructive and mutually respectful relationship with officers.
 - Representing the Council in dealing with the public, media and other bodies in respect of the business of the committee.
 - Encouraging the highest standards of behaviour and probity.
 - Encouraging committee members to participate in any relevant learning and development opportunities.

The Deputy Chairperson will:

Assist and work with the chairperson in delivering his/her responsibilities to the Council.

Deputise for the chairperson in his/her absence from committee meetings undertaking all of the duties and responsibilities of the chairperson.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate. See page 3 above.

Role Profile: Planning Committee Chairperson

(This role profile is in addition to the Member role and outlines the specialised civic leadership role of Planning Committee Chairperson).

Main purpose of role - to chair and manage the business of the committee effectively and efficiently and in accordance with its terms of reference.

Summary of responsibilities:

- To liaise with officers on the content of the agenda and also on the content of presentations at committee to ensure that members are presented with details enabling a full and accurate understanding of any item under discussion.
- To chair meetings of the committee impartially and in such a way as to facilitate open discussion and obtain valid decisions from all members.
- To build effective working relationships with senior officers involved in the Planning function.
- To receive and respond to professional advice and recommendations in the planning decision-making process.
- To assist members and liaise with officers in respect of site meetings to view planning applications prior to or following committee meetings.
- To manage site meetings alongside senior officers to ensure that all relevant facets of the application are considered and understood by members and that further requested information or clarification is provided in a timely manner.
- To manage deputations to the committee to ensure that contributions by the public and other interested parties are facilitated and controlled in accordance with the agreed protocol.
- To assist members and liaise with officers in the consideration of any new planning applications received by the Council to ensure that members understand the process and implications of any proposed action.
- To act as a spokesperson for the committee and liaise with community groups, partners, outside bodies and the public on matters that fall within the remit of the committee.
- To liaise with officers to co-ordinate committee responses to consultations on local planning policies, planning strategies, the Statement of Community involvement and any other development plan documents in adjoining authorities.
- To liaise with officers and members with regard to formulating responses to consultations in relation to regionally significant or major applications to be determined by the Department for Infrastructure.
- To liaise with officers regarding any planning legislative changes and ensure that members are advised immediately of such changes and are aware of the implications to current and future planning applications.
- To encourage the highest standards of behaviour and probity and reinforce to members their obligations as contained in the Councillors' Code of Conduct with Regard to Planning Matters.
- To encourage committee members to participate in any relevant learning and development opportunities particularly, training focussing on procedures and legislation relevant to the work of the committee.

The Deputy Chairperson will:

Assist and work with the chairperson in delivering his/her responsibilities to the Council.

Deputise for the chairperson in his/ her absence from committee meetings undertaking all of the duties and responsibilities of the chairman.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake their role as the chairperson/ deputy chairperson of a regulatory committee.

In addition to those skills the chairperson/ deputy chairperson of the Planning Committee will be required to have knowledge of the legislation regulating the work of the Committee.

Role Profile: Licensing Committee Chairperson

This role profile is in addition to the Member role profile and outlines the specialised role of Licensing Committee Chairperson

Main Purpose of Role - To chair and manage the business of the committee effectively and efficiently and in accordance with its terms of reference.

Summary of responsibilities:

- To liaise with officers on the content of the agenda and forward work plan.
- To chair meetings of the committee impartially and in such a way as to facilitate open discussion and obtain valid decisions from all members.
- To build effective working relationships with senior officers involved in the Licensing function.
- To liaise with officers responsible for monitoring licensing legislative changes and ensure that members are advised immediately of such changes and aware of the implications to current and future licensing applications.
- To liaise with the PSNI, statutory consultees, and other notice parties in order that the committee can have positive dialogue and make informed decisions on licensing matters.
- To manage deputations to the committee to ensure that contributions by the public and other interested parties are facilitated and controlled in accordance with the agreed protocol.
- To ensure that the committee has access to professional legal advice as and when appropriate.
- To demonstrate fair and open decision- making by, or on behalf of, the committee.
- To encourage committee members to participate in any relevant learning and development opportunities particularly, training focussing on procedures and legislation relevant to the work of the committee.

The Deputy Chairperson will:

- Assist and work with the chairperson in delivering his/her responsibilities to the Council.
- Deputise for the chairperson in his/ her absence from committee meetings undertaking all of the duties and responsibilities of the chairperson.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake their role as the chairperson/ deputy chairperson of a regulatory committee.

In addition to those skills the chairperson/ deputy chairperson of the Licensing Committee will be required to have knowledge of the legislation regulating the work of the Committee.

Role Profile: Audit and Risk Panel Chairperson

This role profile is in addition to the Member role profile and outlines the specialised civic leadership role of Audit and Risk Panel Chairperson.

Main purpose of role - To chair and manage the business of the panel effectively and efficiently and in accordance with its terms of reference.

Summary of responsibilities:

- To liaise with officers on the content of the agenda and forward work plan.
- To chair meetings of the panel impartially and in such a way as to facilitate open discussion and obtain valid decisions from all members.
- To build effective working relationships with senior officers responsible for corporate finance, audit, governance and risk services, including provision for private meetings with Panel Members and the Head of Audit, Governance & Risk Services on at least an annual basis.
- To liaise with external auditors and officials from the NIAO as required, including provision for private meetings with Panel Members and the NIAO on at least an annual basis.
- To review and assess the risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements of the Council.
- To review the draft financial statements prepared by the Council.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the Council's Assurance Framework.
- To review and monitor employee costs and absence rates.
- To oversee corporate health and safety performance.
- To consider actions arising from the NIAO Annual Audit Letter and ensure the actions are implemented.
- To take part in the recruitment and selection process for the external independent member of the panel and the Head of Audit, Governance & Risk Services
- To demonstrate fair and open decision- making by or on behalf of the panel.
- To encourage panel members to participate in any relevant learning and development opportunities particularly, training focussing on audit, governance and risk issues.

- To provide an annual report to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee setting out how the Panel has fulfilled its role, providing an annual assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management and internal control environment.
- To review, on an annual basis, the effectiveness of the Audit & Risk Panel and the internal audit service

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake their role as an elected representative.

In addition to those skills the Chairperson/ Deputy Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Panel will be required to have knowledge of finance and audit regulations and the principles of fraud awareness.

Role Profile: Member of Area Working Group

This role profile is in addition to the Member' role profile and outlines the specialised civic leadership role of Member of Area Working Group.

Main purpose of role

To represent the views of his/her local community to identify local priorities and support all aspects of Council led interventions which contribute to effective 'place shaping' and locality planning, resulting in making recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on investment decisions for local areas.

Summary of responsibilities -

- Decision-making and overseeing the performance of the Council:
- To consider area-based issues as referred by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- To consider the potential for area planning in respect of community planning.
- To offer advice and guidance to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and officers in the development and implementation of local projects.
- To interact with all standing committees of the council.
- To oversee the implementation of area-based interventions and monitor progress against targets and timescales.
- To produce an annual report on performance
- To give due consideration to council's local service delivery issues.
- To promote efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of services ensuring maximum benefit is achieved for ratepayers.
- To make investment decisions for local areas ensuring the efficient and effective use of funding allocation for agreed projects.

Representing and supporting communities:

- To represent and reflect clearly to the Area Working Group, the views of local communities in respect of area-based initiatives.

- To explain decisions of the Council to local communities as they relate to 'place shaping' including benefits to be gained and potential impact on them.
- To ensure planned and targeted interventions assist with achieving the objectives of the Belfast Agenda and Local Development Plan as well as community needs.
- To participate in and facilitate community engagement and communications activities with a wide range of groups in investment in local areas.
- To use Area Working Groups as a consultation forum with local community groups.
- To consider the local dimension of key strategic projects such as leisure transformation.
- To consider and explore other initiatives happening in local areas such as Urban Villages, Building Successful Communities, Social Investment Fund etc to maximise benefits for local communities.

Internal governance, ethics and relationships:

- To exercise due diligence and ensure financial propriety is maintained in respect of all decisions which are taken by the Area Working Group.
- To take ownership of decisions reached by the Area Working Group.
- To use Area Working Group workshop sessions as 'creative spaces and opportunities for capacity building, designing interventions and problem solving.
- To maintain a focus on member and officer development with a view to achieving the objectives of the Area Working Group.
- To explore the organisational consequences of area working and building capacity.
- To demonstrate and promote tolerance, cohesion and ensure equality and diversity are respected through balanced investment decision-making.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake their role as a member of an Area Working Group.

Role Profile: Member Champion

This role profile is in addition to the Member role profile and outlines the specialised civic leadership role of Member Champion.

What are Member Champions?

Member Champions provide a voice for traditionally underrepresented groups, or issues which need to be kept at the forefront of council business although they may not be the responsibility of any individual committee.

Member Champions are elected members who in addition to their other council responsibilities make sure that the issue or group that they are championing are taken into account when council policy is being developed and decisions are made. Members can act as champions in areas such as equality and diversity, older people, young people, member development, and anti-poverty.

It is important that members and officers work together to agree roles and actions for the area being championed and that there are mechanisms for members to report on their activities.

The Role Profile

It is difficult to create a role description that fits with the different roles expected of champions. The following is a generic profile that can be adapted depending on the issue/group being championed.

Main purpose of role

To provide political legitimacy to advocate and lobby for policies and, where appropriate, resources and funding to support, advance and promote the issue or group that is being championed.

Summary of responsibilities:

- To maximise the impact and influence the Council can have in working with stakeholders, outside bodies and statutory organisations to address the specific issues of the group/actively promote the issue.
- To ensure that the group/issue is taken account of when developing Council policy and procedures.
- To promote the group/issue being championed within the Council's corporate and service priorities.
- To maintain an awareness of all matters connected with the group/issue being championed.
- To contribute to the continuous improvement of services and functions related to the group/issue and share identified best practice as appropriate.
- To engage on a cross-party basis with members in matters related to the group/issue.
- To liaise with external bodies/agencies which have responsibility for the group/issue.
- To work with officers to promote awareness of and assist in developing relevant members and officers in relation to the group/issue.
- To raise the profile of the group/issue in the community.
- To engage with citizens and community groups in matters related to the group/issue.
- To lead and support local initiatives related to the group/issue.

Knowledge and Skills

The Knowledge and Skills Framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and qualities an effective elected member should demonstrate.

Members should refer to the Knowledge and Skills Framework to identify the key areas which they may potentially need to develop, enhance and maintain in order to effectively undertake their role as a Member Champion.

In addition to those skills, a Member Champion will be required to have an in-depth knowledge of the issue or group being championed.

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Belfast City Council

Elected Members Knowledge and Skills Framework

Councillors by their very nature have strong leadership instincts and they must continuously develop those skills to ensure that they are able to meet the challenges, opportunities and risks that come with the Belfast Agenda.

The landscape is far more complex than it was a decade ago and local government has a democratic right to provide leadership across a geographic area, not confined to local government services, but a right to influence every aspect of services provided locally.

Developing new leadership skills to meet this challenge is vital and it is through shared learning that Councillors can and will maximise the opportunity to provide genuine local leadership. The aim of this Elected Members' Knowledge and Skills framework is to provide a foundation for the support and development we offer to our elected members by providing a mechanism that allows members to assess their own knowledge and skills against the framework to ensure they are fulfilling their role effectively and inform our member development planning process.

“We believe that great leaders make great places”

(The Local Government Association)



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Members can assess their skill levels from section B by completing their Personal Development Plan self-assessment and create a development plan to increase any skill levels required.

A. Knowledge

1. Understanding our city, our council and our customers - understanding the city of Belfast, the political nature of our organisation and the member role in addressing the needs of constituents and customers within the city.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>The various roles undertaken by an elected member.</p> <p>The issues affecting our city and neighbourhoods and particularly within his/her own district electoral area (DEA).</p> <p>The demographic profile of Belfast and the associated socio and economic issues to be addressed.</p> <p>Elected member role in relation to local government finance and budgetary controls.</p> <p>The Belfast Agenda and the wider council agenda in the city context.</p> <p>The priority areas and objectives for service delivery as outlined in the Corporate Plan.</p>	<p>Customer focus</p> <p>Political understanding</p> <p>Research</p> <p>Effective communication</p> <p>Diplomacy</p> <p>Influencing</p> <p>Decision-making</p> <p>Interpersonal</p>	<p>In what ways do I role model the council's values and principles of public life?</p> <p>In what ways do I actively represent party group views and values through decisions and my actions?</p> <p>How do I ensure that I work effectively with party colleagues, member colleagues and officers to achieve a one council approach?</p> <p>In what ways do I work across party boundaries without comprising political values?</p> <p>In what ways do I develop own political understanding of and sensitivity to the local and national political landscape?</p> <p>How do I ensure I am aware of issues which may impact or affect change, services or decisions?</p>



1(cont'd) Understanding our city, our council and our customers - understanding the city of Belfast, the political nature of our organisation; and the member role in addressing the needs of constituents and customers within the city.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>Core processes such as business and financial planning, risk management, health and safety and human resources.</p> <p>The council's decision-making processes.</p> <p>The council's community planning role and how this links to the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>The structure and work of the council, including the remit and plans of the council's committees.</p> <p>The process for identifying and prioritising physical development initiatives including the stage approval process relating to capital investment.</p> <p>Senior officer roles and responsibilities and key contact points.</p> <p>The council culture and values and how these impact on decision-making.</p>		<p>Do I regularly and successfully anticipate future needs to continue to deliver excellent customer service, value for money and efficiencies?</p> <p>In what ways do I invest time in building and maintaining an understanding of the reality, pressures, challenges and opportunities facing communities and constituents?</p> <p>In what ways do I advocate contributions from the community in shaping our ambitions for the city?</p> <p>How do I incorporate constituent feedback into council plans and service delivery where necessary?</p>



2. Strategic leadership - strong, fair and trusted leadership focusing on developing ambitions for the city for better outcomes for those who live in, work in and visit the city.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>The issues to be addressed within the city particularly as detailed in the Belfast Agenda.</p> <p>Knowledge of council aspirations, priorities, objectives, plans and processes.</p> <p>The importance of engaging on a cross-sectoral basis and how this can best be utilised to maximise benefits for citizens.</p> <p>How to work across party political boundaries to influence the Programme for Government and position Belfast as pivotal to the economic success of the region.</p>	<p>Strategic thinking and planning</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Effective communication</p> <p>Innovation and creative thinking</p>	<p>Do I act as the public face of the council, championing its needs and ambitions to key stakeholders?</p> <p>Do I demonstrate strong political and personal leadership to achieve outcomes for the city?</p> <p>In what ways do I role model appropriate behaviour, ethical practice and the implementation of the democratic process?</p> <p>How do I influence the council's future aspirations and strategic focus for the benefit of the city?</p> <p>What steps do I take to develop and promote the council's role in partnership with others?</p> <p>Am I personally committed to building, shaping and influencing a powerful strategy to implement the Belfast Agenda?</p> <p>Am I visible in my community, regularly attending relevant groups and meetings of outside bodies?</p>



2 (cont'd) Strategic leadership - strong, fair and trusted leadership focusing on developing ambitions for the city for better outcomes for those who live in, work in and visit the city.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
		<p>Am I visible as a political leader within my DEA, my local community and across the city?</p> <p>Do I look for and maximise potential opportunities which will contribute to the success of our council and the city?</p> <p>How do I ensure I contribute to effective and meaningful consultation and engagement with members and officers in establishing corporate ambitions and priorities?</p> <p>How do I ensure members collective agreed ambitions for the city are realised?</p> <p>In what ways do I demonstrate resilience and integrity when facing challenges?</p> <p>Do I visibly display passion and belief for the Belfast Agenda acting as a credible champion and role model?</p>

3. Community leadership - engages enthusiastically and empathetically with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern; mediates fairly and constructively, encouraging trust by representing their district electoral area and the city as a whole.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>What is required to gain the confidence and trust of communities in order to act as a community leader and deliver tangible results.</p> <p>The current issues faced by their local community and how they can contribute to multi-agency strategies and action plans to address the problems being experienced.</p> <p>Equality and diversity issues including responsibilities under legislation.</p> <p>How to deal effectively with the complex and diverse range of issues faced by individual constituents.</p> <p>How the NI Assembly's Programme for Government and national government developments will affect individual citizens and communities.</p>	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>Interpersonal skills</p> <p>Effective communication</p> <p>Listening skills</p> <p>Assertiveness</p> <p>Leadership</p> <p>Networking</p> <p>Public speaking</p> <p>Negotiating</p> <p>Influencing</p> <p>Negotiation</p> <p>Facilitation</p> <p>Problem-solving</p>	<p>How do I display civic leadership and demonstrate a proactive approach in developing local initiatives?</p> <p>In what ways do I communicate and engage proactively with community, canvas opinion and seek new ways of representing others?</p> <p>Am I approachable, empathetic and understanding when dealing with constituents?</p> <p>In what ways do I effectively communicate political values through canvassing, electoral campaigning and engaging the public in general?</p> <p>How do I ensure I act ethically at all times?</p>



3 (cont'd). Community leadership - engages enthusiastically and empathetically with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern; mediates fairly and constructively, encouraging trust by representing their district electoral area and the city as a whole.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
		How do I evaluate and address the impact of new developments or shifts in the political environment? Do I campaign with enthusiasm, courage and persistence on behalf of others? Do I provide regular feedback, keep people informed and manage expectations?



4. Working with others - Working together with officers, partners and other stakeholders to deliver excellent service delivery and ensure Belfast city is a successful place where people love to live, work and visit and which attracts investment and talent.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>The requirements of the Member-Officer Working Relationship Protocol.</p> <p>The priorities of stakeholders and how these can be aligned to council priorities to deliver benefits for the city.</p> <p>The roles of officers, members and different partners and agencies.</p> <p>How the benefits of collaborative working assists Belfast citizens.</p> <p>The relevant equality and diversity legislation and the importance of advancing the equality agenda.</p> <p>The importance of recognising and embracing the differences between people for the benefit of the council, its employees and stakeholders.</p>	<p>Team working</p> <p>Effective communication</p> <p>Decision-making</p> <p>Partnership working</p>	<p>How do I support a harmonious working environment and a culture of mutual respect?</p> <p>Am I tolerant when others express their views, even when different from my own?</p> <p>Do I assess the impact of my own behaviour on my colleagues and others I interact with?</p> <p>Do I adopt a consultative approach to ensure less well represented groups can contribute to and inform service delivery?</p> <p>Do I have a clear understanding of the distinct yet complementary role of members and officers?</p> <p>How do I successfully build professional and constructive relationships with officers and member colleagues?</p> <p>How do I ensure these relationships are based on open communication, collaborative working, trust and respect?</p>



4 (cont'd). Working with others - Working together with officers, partners and other stakeholders to deliver excellent service delivery and ensure Belfast city is a successful place where people love to live, work and visit and which attracts investment and talent.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
		<p>In what ways do I work effectively with council officers to deliver corporate priorities?</p> <p>Do I work across party boundaries without compromising political values?</p> <p>Do I know when to empower others to take responsibility but also when to provide support?</p> <p>In what ways do I make others feel valued, trusted and included, especially those from different communities and backgrounds?</p> <p>What steps do I take to develop and promote the council's role in partnership with others?</p> <p>To what extent do I demonstrate a commitment to equality through representing all groups equally and impartially?</p> <p>How do I develop and maintain constructive relationships with other politicians and council members, the press, partner organisations whilst dealing with issues of sensitivity and public interest?</p> <p>In what ways do I develop cohesion within the party and contribute to constructive communication between the Party and the council?</p>

5. Good governance and due diligence - Understands and performs the role by following/adhering to standing orders and protocols; evaluates arguments and makes decisions that balances public needs and local policy; acts ethically, consistently and with integrity when communicating values or representing group views in decisions and actions; and ensures progress by monitoring and intervening where appropriate.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>The detail of the council's constitution and the council's governance arrangements, including the standing orders.</p> <p>How the council manages its money including the rate setting process.</p> <p>The requirements of the Councillor's Code of Conduct and planning guidance.</p> <p>The relevant legislation and regulations which determine how the council performs its role.</p> <p>Audit, governance and risk management processes.</p> <p>Performance management and performance Indicators.</p>	<p>Political understanding</p> <p>Analytical</p> <p>Providing constructive feedback</p> <p>Scrutiny and challenge</p> <p>Decision-making</p> <p>Chairing meetings</p> <p>Fraud awareness</p>	<p>Do I adhere to the LG Code of Conduct for Councillors when undertaking my role as an elected representative?</p> <p>Do I evaluate arguments according to evidence, making informed and impartial judgements?</p> <p>Do I chair meetings effectively, following protocol, ensuring business is conducted effectively & efficiently?</p> <p>Do I follow governance arrangement processes, balancing public needs & aspirations with corporate priorities?</p> <p>In what ways do I monitor performance & intervene appropriately to ensure progress?</p> <p>Am I able to quickly analyse & assimilate complex information & data, taking account of the wider strategic context?</p> <p>Am I inquisitive, asking for explanations and check for implementation of agreed actions and recommendations?</p> <p>Am I objective, rigorous and resolute in challenging process, decisions and people?</p>

6. Personal impact - Is self-aware, acts proactively, is responsible for own actions with a focus on continued learning and development and communicates effectively.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
<p>The council's media relations protocol.</p> <p>The council's member personal development planning process.</p> <p>How to access developmental opportunities which will enhance and improve their skills and capabilities.</p> <p>How to best use information and technology to maximise communication and improve personal efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Emotional intelligence</p> <p>Dealing effectively with the media</p> <p>Effective Chairing</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>Communicating with Impact</p> <p>Dealing with the Media including use of social media</p> <p>Effective time management</p> <p>IT</p> <p>Personal organisation</p>	<p>In what ways does my communication approach generate commitment and enthusiasm to the council's strategic vision?</p> <p>Do I listen sensitively, check for understanding and adapt my communication style as necessary?</p> <p>What meaningful contribution do I make as a political leader during interactions and dealings with the media to deliver key council messages?</p> <p>In what ways do I seek to improve my own performance?</p> <p>In what ways do I contribute to developing others and share best practice?</p> <p>Do I engage in the member personal development planning process and associated learning and development activities?</p> <p>What learning have I applied from participation in learning and development activities?</p>



6 (cont'd). Personal impact - Is self-aware, acts proactively, is responsible for own actions with a focus on continued learning and development and communicates effectively.

An effective elected member knows and understands:	An effective elected member demonstrates the following skills:	An effective elected member considers:
		<p>How do I ensure I present arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily understood way?</p> <p>How effective am I in juggling numerous, potentially conflicting, professional and personal responsibilities to maintain a good work-life balance?</p> <p>How do I build relationships with local media and create opportunities for communicating key decisions, activities and achievements?</p> <p>Do I speak clearly and confidently in public, using accessible language, avoiding jargon or 'Council speak'?</p> <p>Do I use appropriate language to communicate key points verbally and in writing (including via letters, reports, interviews and presentations)?</p> <p>How self-aware am I of the impact of my behaviour and way of working on others?</p> <p>Am I a participative team-member by providing input and constructive feedback in meetings and group discussions?</p> <p>How do I use ICT to communicate both within the council and in the community?</p>

B. Political Skills for Elected Members

- 1. Regulating and monitoring - understands and executes role by following standing orders and protocols and by evaluating arguments and making decisions that balance public needs and local policy. Ensures progress by monitoring and intervening where necessary.**

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provides civic leadership and demonstrates a proactive approach in the development of local initiatives.• engages proactively with community, canvass's opinion and seeks new ways of representing others.• keeps up to date with community and issues of local concern, drawing information and resources from a range of sources and people.• approachable, is empathetic and understanding and encourages trust.• provides a voice and develops effective relationships with council officers and partnerships with external organisations.• mediates fairly and constructively between people and communities.• campaigns with enthusiasm, courage and persistence on behalf of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not provide leadership and fails to be proactive in developing local initiatives.• does not engage in community activities and can be difficult to contact.• keeps a low public profile and is not known to members of the community.• is exclusive in approach and does not focus equally on community groups or issues.• does not have detailed understanding of local issues and needs.• concentrates more on council processes and meetings rather than constituents; and• underestimates what is achievable and does not deliver on promises.

2. Local leadership - engages enthusiastically and empathetically with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern. Mediates fairly and constructively, encouraging trust by representing their district electoral area and the city as a whole.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• evaluates arguments according to evidence, makes independent, informed and impartial judgements.• chairs meetings effectively, follows protocol and ensures business is conducted effectively and efficiently.• follows governance arrangement processes, balancing public needs and aspirations with corporate priorities.• monitors performance and intervenes as appropriate to ensure progress.• seeks to improve on own performance and engages in learning and development activities.• builds professional and effective working relationships with council officers; and• has a clear understanding of the distinct yet complementary role of members and officers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not declare personal interest and makes decisions for personal gain.• does not check facts or consider opposing arguments, makes subjective and uninformed judgements.• leaves monitoring and checks on progress to others.• makes decisions without taking advice or considering regulations and wider development frameworks.• fails to recognise or address limits of own knowledge and expertise.• misses deadlines, leaves business unfinished and lacks balance between council work and other commitments; and• fails to engage with or build professional and effective working relationships with council officers

3. Scrutiny and challenge - acts as a critical friend by seeking opportunities for scrutiny and providing constructive feedback. Analyses information quickly and presents arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily accessible way.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• quickly analyses and assimilates complex information, taking account of the wider strategic context.• presents arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily understood way.• inquisitorial, asks for explanations and checks for implementation of recommendations.• objective, rigorous and resolute in challenging process, decisions and people; and• acts as a critical friend, provides constructive feedback and acknowledges the success of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• does not prepare thoroughly or check facts, uses selective information and draws subjective or biased conclusions.• fails to recognise or engage in scrutiny as part of their role.• assimilates new information slowly, focuses on detail and does not distinguish between important, less important and inaccurate information.• adversarial in style, aggressive and confrontational when challenged.• and• fails to work collaboratively for the good of the council, abuses scrutiny processes for personal or political gain.

4. Communication skills - listens sensitively, uses appropriate language and checks for understanding. Communicates regularly with individuals and groups in the community, speaks clearly and confidently in public, and makes sure that people are informed.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• communicates regularly with community via advice centres, newsletters, phone calls and local media.• listens sensitively, checks for understanding and adapts style as necessary.• builds relationships with local media and creates opportunities for communicating key decisions, activities and achievements.• speaks clearly and confidently in public, uses accessible language, and avoids jargon or 'council-speak'.• provides regular feedback, keeps people informed and manages expectations.• uses appropriate language to communicate key points verbally and in writing (e.g., letters, reports, interviews and presentations); and• regularly attends meetings of outside bodies and other relevant groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• interrupts, appears not to listen and uses inappropriate or insensitive language (e.g., shouting, being rude or abusive).• communicates reactively and is slow to respond when approached by others (e.g., public, colleagues, officers or media).• fails to listen to others' views and presents rigid and inflexible arguments.• uses information dishonestly to discredit others and is unwilling or unable to deliver unpopular messages.• fails to participate in meetings and lacks confidence speaking in public.• presents subjective and confused arguments using poor language and style; and• fails to attend meetings of outside bodies and other relevant groups

5. Partnership working - builds positive relationships by making others feel valued, trusted and included and by working collaboratively with the council's many stakeholders to achieve corporate priorities. Maintains calm and focus and is able to take a long-term view in developing partnerships.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• builds good relationships with colleagues, stakeholders and the wider community.• works effectively with council officers to deliver corporate priorities.• achieves goals by co-ordinating others, maintaining task focus and persisting in the face of setbacks.• empowers others to take responsibility and knows when to provide support.• makes others feel valued, trusted and included, recognises and is inclusive of people from different communities and backgrounds; and• patient, takes a long-term view in developing networks and partnerships maintains calm and focus when criticised or under pressure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• uses status and position to exert control or impose solutions, fails to involve people in decisions.• exclusive in approach, fails to utilise diverse skills and perspectives of others.• unable to work across political divide and places political gain before collaborative working.• acts alone rather than seeking help or working as part of a team.• uses divisive tactics to upset relationships, council policies and decisions; and• defensive when criticised, blames others for failure and does not admit to being wrong

6. Political understanding - acts ethically, consistently and with integrity when communicating values or representing group views in decisions and actions. Works across group boundaries without compromising values or ethics.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• actively represents group views and values through decisions and actions.• helps develop cohesion within the group and contributes to constructive communication between the group and the council.• communicates political values through canvassing, electoral campaigning and by effectively engaging the public.• committed to developing own political intelligence and understanding of local and national political landscape.• acts ethically, understands and communicates political values to others.• works across party boundaries without compromising political values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrates inconsistent political values, lacks integrity and tends to say what others want to hear• has poor knowledge of party values and objectives and council priorities• puts personal motivations first, behaves in a 'maverick' fashion or changes beliefs and values for political self-gain• acts alone and fails to support colleagues in public forums• fails to translate group values into ways of helping the community• lacks understanding of how central government policy impacts on local issues and council functioning.

7. Effective use of Digital Technologies & Social Media – This skill places digital at the heart of what a councillor can do to increase efficiency of public service delivery, making resources go further and meeting the key challenges facing your local area and making use of technology and social media to engage with constituents in a positive way.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understands the role of digital technology in improving their local area.• Can identify how digital technology can bring about new sources of revenue for their area.• Works in partnership with the private sector to consider investment opportunities.• Uses digital technology to enhance engagement levels via multiple digital channels.• Uses social media effectively as a tool to engage with their constituents and community alongside traditional ways of working.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs more knowledge on how digital technologies can be applied and improve their local area.• Requires information and guidance on how digital technologies can bring about new sources of revenue for their area.• Requires support from partners in the community, private & public sector to consider investment opportunities.• Requires more guidance and training on how digital technology can enhance engagement levels via multiple digital channels.• Requires guidance and training on how to use social media effectively as a tool to engage with their constituents and community alongside traditional ways of working.

8. Resilience and Wellbeing – this skill relates to an individual’s ability to effectively deal with the challenges, problems, pressures and setbacks in conducting their role as a local councillor which can be challenging in today’s culture of constant scrutiny by media and the public, enabled by social media.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effectively deals with challenges and pressures of being in the public domain on a constant basis.• Manages stress effectively and proactively takes steps to reduce stress in their working lives.• Evaluates and learns from handling challenging incidents and those of others.• Seeks support to build personal resilience.• Effectively manages the volume and quantity of constituency casework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finds it difficult to deal with challenges & pressures of being in the public domain on a constant basis.• Does not manage stress effectively or know how to reduce stress in their working lives.• Does not handle incidents well to avoid the impact on their wellbeing• Does not have a support network around them to help them cope with the pressures• Avoids seeking support on how to build personal resilience• Has difficulty managing the volume & quantity of constituency casework

Party Leaders

9. Excellence in leadership - provides visionary and charismatic leadership, is well prepared, able to troubleshoot and juggle conflicting responsibilities. Works to shape a culture of excellence by liaising with the party on policy matters and speaking on behalf of the party. Encourages co-operation and communication within the party, across parties and amongst members and officers.

Positive indicators	Negative Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provides visionary and charismatic leadership, inspires trust in others and gains commitment to policies and decisions.• shapes a culture of excellence and acts as a role model for appropriate behaviour, ethical practice and democratic process.• builds strong relationships with other party leaders and senior officers based on open communication, co-operative working and trust.• collectively with the other party leaders, acts as the public face of the council by championing council needs to key stakeholders such as the Northern Ireland Assembly• works across political and council boundaries to foster communication and encourage co-operation.• well prepared and able to troubleshoot, judges what to get involved in and when to say 'No'• committed to learning, developing others and sharing best practice.• effectively 'juggles' numerous, potentially conflicting responsibilities.• builds professional and effective relationships and liaises directly with the Chief executive and Chief officers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• maintains personal control by imposing views and being overly directive.• demonstrates partiality for own party members and uses position to promote party agenda to the detriment of wider council needs.• defensive, avoids making difficult or unpopular decisions and unwilling to admit mistakes.• overly reactive, fails to plan ahead or foster a sense of mission.• does not encourage communication with community or promote the council.• lacks public recognition as a figurehead.• inconsistent in style and behaviour, fails to 'walk the talk' or set an example for others.• lacks detailed knowledge of the council and fails to integrate information to provide an overview of the council functions; and• does not build professional and effective relationships with the Chief executive and Chief officers but rather contributes to fostering a 'them- and-us' attitude.



Elected Member Personal Development Planning Process

Guidance Notes

2024-2027

Elected Members Personal Development Planning Process Guidance Notes

Introduction

Set out below is the agreed approach for developing elected member Personal Development Plans (PDPs). This also includes the process for elected members to follow if they wish to access their PDP budget to complete individual learning and development activities.

The approach involves a number of stages all of which will be coordinated by Corporate Human Resources in liaison with individual elected members.

Step 1: Completing a self assessment and PDP

In order to gain the most benefit from the PDP process and associated budget, it is recommended that a self-assessment exercise be completed at some stage during the members council term

- Elected members will be invited to complete a PDP self-assessment exercise with the Principal HR Advisor (Development) against the agreed suite of Members' Role Profiles and the Members' Knowledge and Skills Framework.
- The self-assessment will identify any gaps in knowledge or skills and inform what the development needs are. These needs will be captured in the Personal Development Plan which will include detail on how the need will be met (a training course, internal meeting, online workshop etc) as well as target timeframes.
- In addition, the PDP template asks members to indicate their preferred method of learning and development e.g classroom, webinars, workshops; and the preferred days and times of the week most suitable for their circumstances.

Following completion of the PDP, Corporate HR will work with Members to ensure that a suitable development activity is sourced and organised.

Externally Facilitated PDP Discussion - optional

- Each elected member will be offered the opportunity to have a structured, independently facilitated, PDP discussion.
- The elected member will be able to choose a facilitator from a select list which will be provided to them by Corporate HR. If an elected member chooses to have a facilitated PDP discussion Corporate HR will, in liaison with the member, arrange for the meeting to take place.
- The purpose of the facilitated discussion, based on the Council's Role Profiles and Knowledge and Skills framework, will be to allow a two way conversation to focus on the elected member's achievements to date, help the elected member carry out a self assessment and for the facilitator to offer support,

advice and guidance on future direction and suggested areas of focus for learning and development to be incorporated into the PDP.

- Should an elected member not feel it necessary to complete the self assessment process, the PDP template form can be completed without completing a self assessment.

Step 2: Individual Requests for PDP Development

- Individual requests from members to undertake learning and development activities using their dedicated PDP budget should be communicated to Corporate HR who will advise members of the information required to enable a request to be considered.
- Each individual request will be assessed by Corporate HR using a set of agreed criteria and taking account of the learning and development needs identified in the elected member's PDP and value for money considerations.

Step 3: Approval

- The elected member will be notified of the outcome of the approvals process. Should approval not be given the rationale for the decision will be provided, for example, the requested development need is not linked to PDP needs based on elected member role(s).
- Corporate HR, where feasible, will offer alternative suggestions to meet the Member's learning and development needs for example, using in-house expertise.

Step 4: Evaluation

- Following the completion of an individual member's learning and development activity, Corporate HR, for the purpose of evaluation and shared learning, will seek feedback from the member on the quality and usefulness of the learning and development activity and how in practice the learning will be applied.

Types of development activities which will be supported by the annual PDP budget allocation:

- Attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops whereby an individual elected member has requested to attend
- Best practice visits requested by an individual elected member to undertake
- One to one coaching, mentoring or tailored training and development sessions
- Accredited training
- Party group development activities

Development activities/areas which will not be supported by the annual PDP budget allocation:

- Those linked to an elected member's personal profession or occupation or for further progression within their respective personal profession or occupation
- Activities which could be perceived to support party political objectives, positions or strategies
- Have tenuous links only to the elected member role(s)
- Members attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops or best practice visits where attendance is agreed by a council committee or events hosted by the council.



Elected Member Personal Development Plan Template – identifying your development needs via self-assessment.

Councillor Name	
No. of years as a councillor	
Positions held, e.g., civic dignitary, committee chairperson etc	
Are you likely to hold a position of Responsibility next year? If so, please specify.	

Training Completed - Review training completed to date	date



Future Ambitions as a Local Councillor - what do you hope to achieve over the next year at both a community level and delivering council objectives?

When do you prefer development activities to be scheduled?

Preferred Learning Style	I prefer
Group facilitated training. Information provided by a trainer/facilitator via verbal information/hand-outs/slides	
E Learning – Online Training	
Mentoring by another Councillor	
One to one training	
Practical training. Learning by doing. Site visits and Demonstrations	
External Seminars and Conferences	
Training provided by In House Officers	

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Monday morning <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday afternoon <input type="checkbox"/>	Monday evening <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday morning <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday afternoon <input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday evening <input type="checkbox"/>
Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:
Tuesday morning <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday afternoon <input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday evening <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday morning <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday afternoon <input type="checkbox"/>	Friday evening <input type="checkbox"/>
Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:
Wednesday morning <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday afternoon <input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday evening <input type="checkbox"/>			
Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:	Ideal Times:			

DRAFT



Assessment of Knowledge and Core Political Skills

The Belfast City Council Members’ Role Profiles and Members’ Knowledge and Skills Framework are bespoke political skills frameworks which take account of all the roles members are tasked with discharging and the corresponding knowledge, skills and behaviours which are necessary to be effective in those roles.

Please refer to the Members’ Knowledge and Skills Framework and complete the self-assessment questionnaire, considering both knowledge and skills required and then indicate your own assessment of your knowledge/skill level from the following:-

1. I am Competent	2. I would like to undertake training to further enhance my skills	3. It is a priority that I undertake training to assist me in my role
-------------------	--	---

The self-assessment will help you identify what your development needs are, and Corporate HR will work with you to identify when and how the learning might be addressed, draw up an action plan and assist in arranging what is needed.

Note. This aspect may be facilitated by an independent facilitator, if needed.

Members’ Knowledge (please refer to the Knowledge & Skills Framework for more detail on each area)	1. I am competent	2. I would like to undertake training to further enhance my skills	3. It is a priority that I undertake training to assist me in my role
1. Understanding our City, Council & Customers			
2. Strategic Leadership			
3. Community Leadership			
4. Working with Others			



5. Good Governance & Due Diligence			
6. Personal Impact			
Members Skills (please refer to the Knowledge & Skills Framework for more detail on each area)	1. I am competent	2. I would like to undertake training to further enhance my skills	3. It is a priority that I undertake training to assist me in my role
1. Regulating & Monitoring			
2. Local Leadership			
3. Scrutiny and Challenge			
4. Effective communication for Influence			
5. Partnership Working			
6. Political Understanding			
7. Effective use of Digital Technology & Social Media			
8. Resilience and Wellbeing			
9. Excellence in Leadership			



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN			
Knowledge/Skill to be addressed	Learning & Development Need	Best way to address need/ potential cost	Deadline (to be completed in Council term 2023-2027 N.B. If priority please specify)

(continue on another page if needed)

Signed: _____

(Elected Member)

Signed: _____

(Officer – If Applicable)

Date: _____



Elected Members' Assistance to Study Scheme

1.1 Introduction

Belfast City Council is fully committed to ensuring that all elected members are given the opportunity to develop the relevant knowledge, skills and capacity to enable them to effectively fulfil their role. Elected member learning and development benefits the individual member, the Council in driving forward its corporate priorities, and the wider Belfast Agenda and as a consequence benefits the communities we serve.

As part of this commitment members can, on a part-time basis, undertake accredited courses of study resulting in recognised qualifications which will support them in their role and further enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities in an effective and capable manner. Members' individual Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are the means by which learning and development needs are identified and the suggested activities/interventions to meet these.

This scheme sets out the guidelines for approving requests from members to undertake part-time study and outlines the assistance available. All applications under the Members' Assistance to Study Scheme must lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Otherwise all other individual learning and development requests will be progressed using the approved Members' PDP process.

Funding for part-time study will be met from the member's designated PDP budget of £730 per annum. Individual development budgets may be carried forward from year to year of each council mandate to facilitate, learning, and development. This means that £2,920 is available to spend any time during the 4 year term.

Given the individual PDP budget allocation it is anticipated that the types of qualifications that could potentially be supported by the Assistance to Study Scheme include awards, certificates, diploma and degree type qualifications.

1.2 Conditions of assistance

A course of part-time study which a member requests to undertake must always, in the first instance, be able to be linked clearly to the role of an elected member as detailed in the members' role profiles and the corresponding knowledge and skills framework. In addition, the following conditions must also be met:

- the course of part-time study will assist the member in performing their role and in so doing enable them to contribute to the achievement of the objectives detailed in the Belfast Agenda
- the development need has been identified in the member's PDP and a course of study is the most appropriate method to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills
- part-time study must lead to a nationally recognised qualification or credits which can be off-set for future studies.
- studies must be undertaken in an educational/training establishment located in Northern Ireland
- value for money is achieved by selecting the provider with the most competitive costs for undertaking and completing the study
- subsequent applications for continued study will be considered in line with the available budgets.



- In the event of a member being co-opted during the council term, the remaining budget of the member leaving the council may be transferred to the new councillor. If the budget for the full term (£2920 as 1.1 above) has all been used then there will be no budget to reallocate to the new councillor.

1.3 Application Process

A member wishing to undertake accredited part-time study should first discuss the detail with the relevant officer in Corporate Human Resources:

Fiona Gunning, Principal HR Advisor, Corporate Human Resources
Telephone: 07522128811 email: gunningf@belfastcity.gov.uk

On receiving the request, Corporate HR will be responsible for ensuring that the part-time study is appropriate, is identified as a development need in the member's current PDP, and is within the financial limits of the member's annual PDP budget allocation.

Should approval be given for a member to undertake a course of part-time study Corporate HR will make all the necessary administrative arrangements, including the payment of the appropriate fees.

The application process and relevant forms are set out in Appendix 1.

1.4 Members' Responsibilities

An accredited course of part-time study will provide personal benefits to a member in terms of their learning and development given the degree of commitment expected from members choosing to undertake part-time study. This includes:

- raising their interest with the relevant Corporate HR officer and discussing suitability of the course of part-time study at the earliest opportunity, ideally at a facilitated PDP meeting
- completing and submitting all relevant forms, including enrolment/registration forms by the required date
- attending classes/activities scheduled as part of the programme of study
- advising the relevant Corporate HR officer as soon as possible, and, no later than within two weeks, if, for any reason, they may have cause to discontinue the course of study.

1.5 Assistance available

A member's PDP budget (£730 annually or £2,920 over the 4 year council term) can be used to meet the cost of the following associated with the agreed course of study:

- Tuition / registration fee
- Examination fees
- Residential fees associated with any compulsory residential element to the approved programme or course of study

- Textbooks and other materials subject to a maximum cost of £75 per year*
- Travel costs.

** Note: where payment for textbooks or materials has been made, these items must be returned to Corporate HR on completion of the course of study.*

1.6 Recoupment of costs

Completion of Study

Members will be expected to complete the part-time study within the agreed academic timetable unless special circumstances occur. Special circumstances are considered as:

- illness (personal/family)
- maternity/paternity leave
- adoptive leave
- long-term caring responsibilities
- family bereavement
- changes to employment status/working patterns

Repayment of Expenses Incurred

Members will be asked to complete an agreement that they will repay the costs incurred by the Council up to the point at which they discontinue their studies. Recoupment of costs will be sought in the following circumstances:

- resignation during the Council term; and
- discontinuing study for any other reason other than those outlined in point 1.

Recoupment of expenses **will not** be sought in the following circumstances. The member is not:

- selected by his/her Party to stand for re-election.
- elected to the Council for another term; and
- illness or any other extenuating personal circumstances preventing the Member standing for re-election (this will be considered on a case-by-case basis).

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Strategic Framework for Elected member Development in Belfast City Council

2024 - 2027





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Elected Member Development in Belfast City Council

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Our elected members actively serve the communities they represent and the city of Belfast as a whole. Our ability to deliver value for money services and add real value to the leadership of the city depends on our commitment to provide continuous learning and development for our elected members to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.
- 1.2 The purpose of this document is to set out the Council's approach to member development.
- 1.3 We recognise the complex and ever-changing environment impacting on members' roles and responsibilities as well as the diverse range of knowledge and experiences which they bring to the Council. The aim of this strategic framework is to ensure the Council provides a range of learning and development opportunities linked to the skills and knowledge members need to carry out their duties and deliver on the objectives and priorities set out in our corporate plan and the Belfast Agenda.
- 1.4 It focuses on, but is not limited to, induction of new members, training in roles and responsibilities, addressing individual development needs identified through the personal development planning process as well as any development needs identified at party or Council level. The Council provides dedicated resources for this commitment to be fulfilled.
- 1.5 Access to learning and development opportunities is available to all elected members. In support of this, we seek to provide opportunities in ways which best suit the needs of members taking account of their wide range of other commitments and learning styles.

2. Strategic Context

- 2.1 Learning and development is an important tool for councils, councillors and officers to deliver what our communities need. Inspiring local communities and ensuring the wellbeing of the people and places we represent takes ambitious leadership – and effective political leadership is at the heart of a healthy democracy; with councillors who are well equipped, supported and resilient in times of challenge or change.
- 2.2 The role of a councillor is a unique, complex, yet privileged position that can make a real difference to people's lives by focussing on improving social, economic and environmental wellbeing.
- 2.3 Effective councillors can help make the changes that are needed locally in their own areas. More than ever before, councillors' roles as political, civic and community leaders require visible, responsive and resilient leadership as they advocate on behalf of residents, work accountably and innovatively and help shape places in which people want to live, work and play.
- 2.4 Democracy and decision-making are strengthened when councillors are empowered to speak to, and for, communities and to support the effective business of local government. If we are to continue to meet the expectations of those we serve, in an



ever-changing world, we need to make sure we have the skills and expertise to carry out our duties.

- 2.5 The NILGA Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus provides Belfast City Council with a robust framework, that is flexible to local needs, ensures effective leadership, equips members with the support they need, and provides resilience in times of challenge. Continuous review and improvement of our elected member development activity and processes helps ensure that we continue to meet the development needs of our elected members. Continuous assessment against the Charter requirements ensures that we are taking the right approach and doing the right things.

3. Leadership Commitment and Governance

- 3.1 Our Party Group Leader Consultative Forum (PGLCF) provides leadership and direction to ensure member development is member led and includes members from all party groups. Our Corporate Management Team (CMT) provide leadership to create a culture of member development allocating and managing sustainable resources and budget to develop a Member Development Strategic Framework that supports the delivery of the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan.
- 3.2 The PGLCF and CMT are supported by a team of officers headed by the Director of Human Resources, HR Manager and a Principal HR Advisor who can provide guidance on learning and development and who will liaise with other senior officers of the council to ensure development is focused on both strategic and operational learning interventions including study and best practice visits.
- 3.3 The PGLCF will review this framework regularly including budget allocation with any proposed changes presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources committee. Development activity is appropriately resourced including officer support and co-ordination and reported to Corporate Management Team and Strategic Policy Resources Committee.
- 3.4 The PGLCF will be champions for and promote the development of elected members and will review and consider the elements of this strategy by taking a leading role in helping the council maintain a high standard of member development which continues to support the delivery of the Belfast Agenda and Corporate Plan and meet the Charter Plus status accreditation requirements. Party leaders will ensure that all members are involved in and endorse our approach to member development.

4. Member Development Framework

- 4.1 The Elected Member Development Framework ensures that capacity building activities and programmes are in place to support elected members in undertaking their various roles.
- 4.2 It includes:
- a) Bespoke **Elected Member Role Profiles** - these set out the role(s), and responsibilities that elected members undertake as both a local representative and as a civic leader. It will support members to consider how they take up and carry out different roles and responsibilities. Its purpose is to help members reflect on changes they want to make to better serve their constituents.



- b) A bespoke **Members' Knowledge and Skills Framework**- this sets out the knowledge, skills, qualities and behaviours elected members must demonstrate, in order to enact the role(s) of elected members effectively.
- c) A personal development planning (PDP) process.
- d) An Assistance to Study Scheme
- e) An ongoing programme of member development
- f) A Member Development Evaluation Framework

5. Members' Personal Development Plan (PDP) Process

- 5.1 There is an agreed approach for developing elected member Personal Development Plans (PDPs). This includes the process for elected members to follow if they wish to access their PDP budget to complete individual learning and development activities.
- 5.2 The approach involves a number of stages all of which will be coordinated by Corporate Human Resources in liaison with individual members. This will ensure members' needs are aligned to the Role Profiles and Knowledge and Skills Framework which will be reviewed to determine appropriate and relevant learning and development activities.
- 5.3 On completion of individual PDPs Corporate Human Resources will complete a training needs analysis for elected members to identify emerging common learning and development themes.
- 5.4 Simultaneously, individual needs will be reviewed to determine appropriate and relevant learning and development activities aligned to the elected members' Role Profiles and Knowledge and Skills Framework.

The PDP Guidance Notes and the template plan is available at APPENDIX C and D

6. Members' Assistance to Study Scheme

- 6.1 Members can, on a part-time basis, undertake accredited courses of study resulting in recognised qualifications which will support them in their role and further enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities in an effective and capable manner. Members' individual Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are the means by which learning and development needs are identified and will include the suggested activities/interventions to meet these.
- 6.2 This scheme sets out the guidelines for approving requests from members to undertake part-time study and outlines the assistance available. All applications under the Members' Assistance to Study Scheme must lead to an accredited qualification. Otherwise, all other individual learning and development requests will be progressed using the approved Members' PDP process.

The Assistance to Study guidance and application form is available at APPENDIX E



7. Member Development Budget

- 7.1 Each elected member has access to an individual personal development budget, currently £730 per member per financial year. This provides a total of £2,920 which can be used at any time during the 4-year council term.
- 7.2 This budget can be used for a part time accredited course of study as above or for development opportunities identified in a PDP.
- 7.3 Further detail on conditions of assistance can be found in the scheme at APPENDIX E

8. Member Development Activity

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Corporate Management Team, Corporate HR and officers across all departments have a role in facilitating elected member development in Belfast City Council. We do this to build capacity and to support members to understand the needs of our city and translate those needs into improved local services.
- 8.2 Member development will also be delivered through learning and development activities, events and visits, and by providing resources directly to elected members.
- 8.3 There are four strands to this part of our work:
 - 1. **Induction Programme** which includes support from a network of council officers. This is also available as a refresher to all returning members.
 - 2. **Ongoing programme of development activity** - to address specific needs identified from the personal development planning process or other initiatives /strands of work including those identified by members themselves.
 - 3. Participation in committees, area working groups and additional development activities provided by key council officers and community partners, including briefings, study visits, research and consultations.
 - 4. Support from partner organisations, such as NILGA, APSE and NAC and the NI Public Services Ombudsman to deliver learning opportunities and provide resources for elected members in areas where they have expertise and experience. These relationships also offer peer networking opportunities across local government in NI.
- 8.4 All elected members regardless of length of service, party membership or post held within the council will be given access to member development opportunities, be that as a collective group of members through workshops and information sessions or an individually tailored development intervention to address a personal development need identified through the PDP process.
- 8.5 It is however recognised that not all elected members may be able to access these training opportunities in the same way due to work/family/personal circumstances. Officers will look to provide training opportunities where appropriate, out with working hours and also look to online training sessions to allow elected members to access these resources at a time and place that is best for them.
- 8.6 Corporate HR will deliver or provide access to development activities on an ongoing basis and members will be invited to attend planned sessions and workshops or specific training



can be arranged. Examples of some of the training subjects that can be provided or sourced are outlined in the table below,

Code of Conduct for Elected members including Registration and Declaration of Interests	Recruitment and Selection
Local Government Employee & Councillor Working Relationship Protocol	Safeguarding - Keeping Children & Adults Safe
NILGSC Guidance on Social Media Use	Chairing Skills
Planning Training for Planning Committee Members	Equality & Diversity Awareness
Audit & Risk Training	Mediation Training
Local Government Finances	Mental Health First Aid
Disability Awareness	Managing Stress
Diversity Awareness	Decision Making & Problem Solving
Health & Safety Training	Influencing and Negotiation Skills
GDPR	Personal Effectiveness
Programme for Government	Place Shaping
Climate Change / Net Zero	Regeneration
Environment /Sustainability	City & Growth Deals
Housing	Poverty
Cyber Security	Economic Development

Other External Programmes & Resources available to members include:

NILGA www.nilga.org Regional Elected member Development Programme
NILGA Accredited Planning & Leadership Programmes
Local Government Association www.local.gov.uk
APSE Training Courses www.apse.org.uk
NAC Councillor Resources www.nac-ni.org
BCC Women's Leadership Programme
Advice NI www.adviceni.net
Housing Rights www.housingrights.org.uk
Study Visits
Best Practice & Benchmarking

This is not an exhaustive list and if a member has a particular request please contact corporate HR, contact details below.



9. Evaluating Member Learning and Development

- 9.1 Members attending learning and development activities will be requested to complete an evaluation form to establish the effectiveness of the activity and to ensure that it is fit for purpose and to inform decisions about future attendance by other members.
- 9.2 The views of members and senior officers will also be sought regularly to facilitate more effective evaluation of the impact of the council's investment in this area and the impact on our communities.

10. Further Information and Advice

If you have any queries, please contact Corporate HR at

memberdevelopment@belfastcity.gov.uk

Or the following officer for any queries you may have regarding elected member learning and development: Fiona Gunning, Principal HR OD Advisor, Tel: 02890 320202 ext. 6321 email: or gunningf@belfastcity.gov.uk

February 2024

APPENDICES



Subject:	Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officers:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officers:	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty, Karen Anderson-Gillespie, Strategic Performance Manager

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
------------	--

1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the findings of the public consultation on the draft performance improvement objectives and to present the draft Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2024-25 for Committee approval and publication.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. approve the draft Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) 2024-25 attached in Appendix 1 and authorise its publication on the council's website by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2024, subject to formal ratification by council on the 1 July 2024.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that the council has a statutory duty to consult residents on proposed improvement objectives and to develop an annual PIP, which must be published by the 30 June each year. The PIP identifies the agreed improvement objectives for the year ahead and the actions to be undertaken to achieve them. The PIP doesn't represent everything that the council plans to do, but focuses on a set of key improvement objectives, as informed by the evidence base and consultation and engagement feedback.</p> <p>3.2 The performance improvement objectives are aligned to the key themes and priorities identified within the new refresh of the Belfast Agenda and the emerging draft Corporate Plan. This provides a balanced approach to identifying improvement objectives that contribute to improving services, council functions and the quality of life for residents and communities. Members should also note that the council's strategic and collective partnership commitments to deliver shared city outcomes for the citizens of Belfast and the continuous improvement of internal organisational priorities will continue to be delivered and enhanced as part of the Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda.</p> <p><u>Consultation exercise and findings</u></p> <p>3.3 In March, Members approved six draft improvement objectives, which were issued for public consultation. In April 2024, we commenced a public consultation process over an 8-week period and received 92 responses, more than double the responses from last year. In assessing the findings of the consultation, it should be noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broad consensus across a majority of respondents supporting the improvement objectives. • the highest level of 89% was received from respondents who strongly agreed or agreed with 'Our people and communities' improvement objective based on supporting our residents to become healthier and engaged. • the lowest of level of 76% was received from respondents who strong agreed or agreed with 'Our economy' improvement objective based on helping business start-ups and

growth and creating opportunities for more and better jobs and employment and encouraging inclusive growth.

3.4 In seeking feedback on other improvement suggestions for the consideration of council, 55 qualitative comments were received. Appendix 2 sets out a high-level assessment of the consultation findings including a recommended council response and action on how the proposed changes will be taken forward.

3.5 In response to feedback received in relation to the need to provide more detail to help clarify the intent behind some of the improvement objectives and how the actions outlined will help achieve improvement, minor changes to some of the objectives has been proposed. Some of the actions have also been realigned across the improvement objectives to provide greater clarity on how they will contribute to the intended area of improvement.

3.6 It should be noted that some of the feedback received in relation to possible additional improvement objectives and/or actions in the PIP, are set out below. Members will be aware that such areas are already being progressed through existing strategies, plans and structures including, for example, the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the Belfast Local Development Plan and A Bolder Vision Strategy, including:

- Enhancing active travel infrastructure and opportunities to improve and enhance the cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure.
- Prioritising action on climate, including retrofitting existing buildings.
- Addressing city centre improvements and interventions such as vacancy rates and bringing forward a programme of interventions aimed at facilitating a clean, green, inclusive, and safe city centre delivered through a multi-agency group.
- Addressing key issues across the city such as homelessness and addiction support through delivery of the collaborative Complex Lives Model.

3.7 In discussing the consultation feedback with key officers across council, the following additional improvement actions have been included in the PIP:

- An improvement action to keep parks and open spaces clean and free from litter.
- Climate action such as the development of a sustainable food strategy.
- Promoting and educating young people on the reduce, reuse, and recycle message.
- A review of litter bins across the city and consideration of recommendations.

3.8	<p><u>Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25</u></p> <p>Based on the consultation feedback and engagement with key council officers, the improvement objectives have been updated (see below) and incorporated within the draft PIP 2024-25, attached at Appendix 1.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Our services</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Our people and communities</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Our place</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Our planet</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Our economy</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Compassionate city</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.</td> </tr> </table>	Our services	We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.	Our people and communities	We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.	Our place	We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).	Our planet	We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.	Our economy	We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.	Compassionate city	We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.
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3.9	<p>Members are asked to approve the draft PIP 2024-25 in Appendix 1 and to authorise its publication on the council website by 28 June 2024. In order to meet our statutory deadline, the plan will be published subject to formal ratification by full council meeting on the 1 July 2024.</p>												
3.10	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The improvement plan has already been reflected in the formal planning and budgeting processes of council; there are no resource implications contained in this report.</p>												
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no direct equality, good relations or rural needs implications of the PIP 2024-25.</p>												
4.0	<p><u>Appendices – Documents Attached</u></p>												
	<p>Appendix 1: Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25</p> <p>Appendix 2: Consultation feedback report: performance improvement objectives 2024-25.</p>												



Performance Improvement Plan

2024 - 2025



Belfast
City Council

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Foreword

I'm delighted to introduce Belfast City Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25. This year's improvement plan has been developed alongside the city's refreshed community plan, The Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and our draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 which sets out a renewed focus, vision, and energy for what our organisation and our city want to achieve over the next four years. This is an exciting time for the city and as an organisation we remain fully determined to ensure that Belfast fulfils its full potential as an attractive place for people to live, work, visit, learn and invest in.

Whilst we are always determined to look ahead, the significant planning and engagement that took place during the development of our new strategies and plans has also enabled us to look back and reflect on our achievements, of which we can be proud. Notably, we're delighted that we met all our improvement objectives set out in our Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24. This included meeting or exceeding 81% of our key performance indicators whilst 86% of our key performance indicators either maintained or showed improvement on previous years which highlighting the positive impact that the work of council staff continues to have on our residents and stakeholders.

During 2023-24, the number of people using council leisure centres increased by 10.6%, highlighting the role that our facilities have in encouraging people to become more active. We've also worked hard to provide more opportunities for our residents and stakeholders to be more actively engaged in consultation and decision making. We've built on our work in relation to Participatory Budgeting, an approach which allows local people to influence small scale funding decisions. We have also seen a 24% increase in the number of responses to our consultation surveys in the last 12 months.

Through our work on climate and the environment, we're pleased to have been awarded a silver NI environmental benchmarking survey rating. The survey rates the actions that we are implementing to improve our environmental

performance. This is demonstrated through our continued commitment to reducing our organisation's carbon footprint. For instance, in 2024-25 90.2 % of the fuel consumed by our council fleet was Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil ensuring that the majority of our vehicles are using fossil-free paraffinic diesel as an environmentally friendly alternative fuel.

Our economic development team supported 688 local businesses and participants through business start-up and growth support initiatives, which included the production of 263 business plans. We also promoted 165 jobs through the 'Go For It' programme, helping to support more local people into employment.

We have also continued to support our most vulnerable residents through the ongoing cost-of-living crisis with 19,853 people supported through our online cost-of-living support and advice services and a further 2,161 individuals accessing our local warm and welcome spaces.

However, whilst much has been achieved, we remain committed to continually improving to ensure that Belfast is a great place that we can be proud of. Through this year's performance improvement objectives, we will continue to focus on what matters most to you – improving our services; supporting our people and communities; enhancing the quality of our place; protecting our planet; growing our economy and being a compassionate city.

Our dedication to continually improve underpins all of our work as we strive to improve the quality of life for all our communities, as we seek new and innovative ways to build a city that we can all be proud of.



John Walsh, Chief Executive

Introduction

Aligned to our city’s refreshed community plan, the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, Belfast City Council draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the annual Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-25, our Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 sets out a number of priority areas where we intend to deliver improvements for our residents and stakeholders across the city.

Under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, we have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives, publish an annual Improvement Plan and ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to achieve them. This is referred to as our “Duty to Improve”.

In accordance with the Act and accompanying guidance, for us “improvement” is about *enhancing the sustainable quality of life and environment for ratepayers and communities* rather than limited to gains in service output or efficiencies.

This year, the refreshed Belfast Agenda, the development of the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the production of this plan coincided. This allowed us to align priorities and reinforce the link between them, providing a clear narrative and focus for all council improvement based on the areas where you think we could do better.

Our medium and longer-term arrangements to ensure continuous improvement are outlined in Figure 1 below. This plan sets out our performance improvement objectives for 2024 – 25 which are compliant with the requirement for them to be:

- **legitimate** - making a *demonstrable contribution* to at least one (or, probably, more than one) of the aspects of improvement listed in the Local Government Act.
- **clear** - setting out the *visible improvement* that citizens can expect.
- **robust** - with defined *terms of success* (whether *quantitative or qualitative*).
- **deliverable** - with established *links to individual service programmes and budgets*.
- **demonstrable** - capable of being supported by *objective (but not necessarily measured or quantitative) evidence*.



Looking back - performance improvement summary achievements 2023-24

Our 2023-24 year-end self-assessment will be published on our website in September 2024 and some key achievements are summarised below:



Arrangements to ensure continuous improvement

The council has a statutory duty to put arrangements in place to secure continuous improvement. Each year we are required to develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP identifies objectives for the year ahead and the council’s actions to meet these objectives.

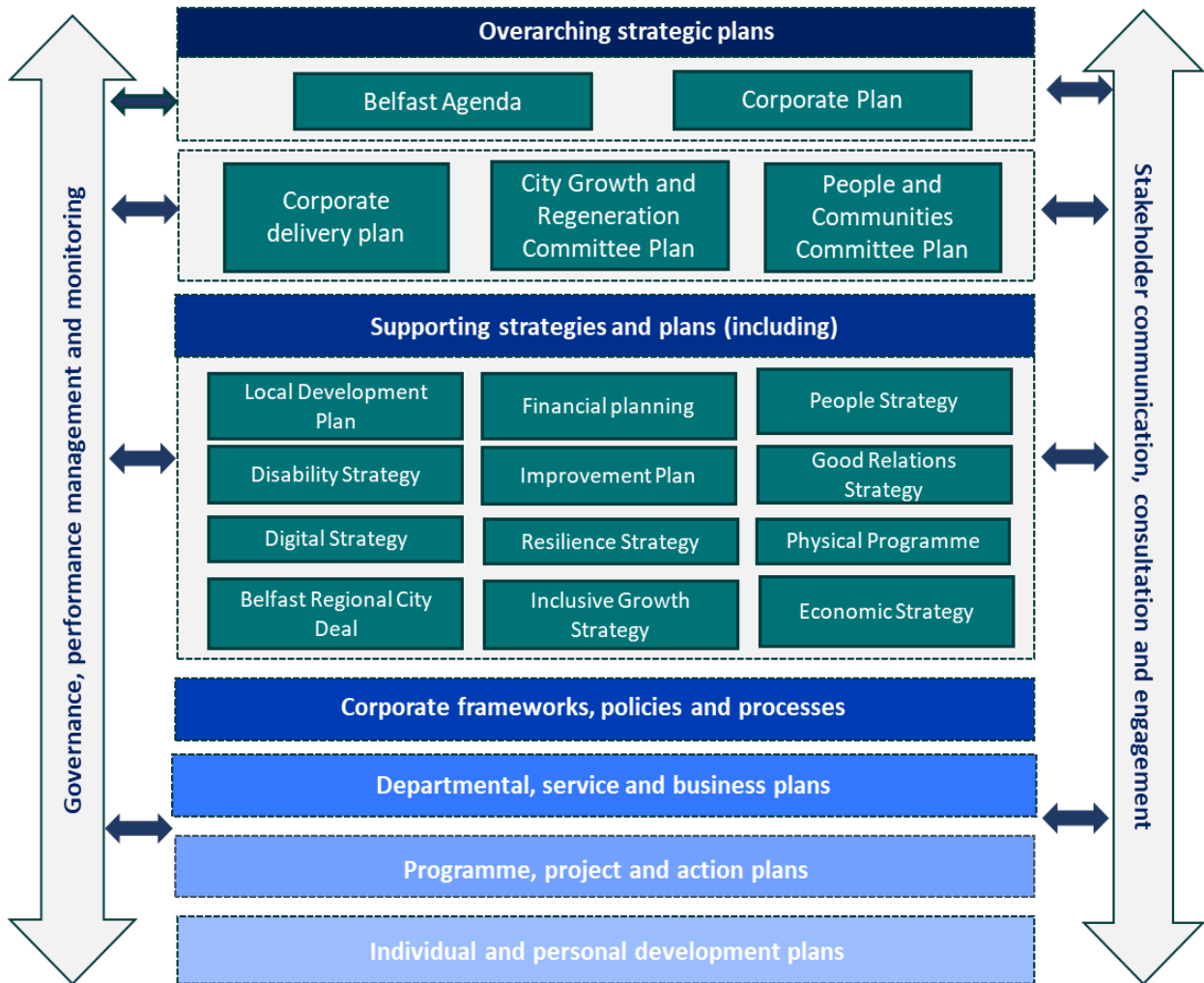
Everything we do in council is focused on improving the lives of people who live in or visit Belfast. The PIP is aligned to the Belfast Agenda outcomes and draft corporate plan priorities and is subject to, and informed by, public consultation. The council has well-established, robust, and comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure continuous improvement, summarised in figure 1 below. These arrangements are in accordance with Part 12 (Section 84 (2)) of the Local Government Act which states that they should improve our functions in terms of:



Council’s improvement framework

The council’s improvement framework sets out the various components of how the council works, bringing together the specific priorities, ambitions, and outcomes for the city of Belfast. It links the overarching strategic outcomes, ambitions and priorities of key strategies and plans to the annual individual works plans of our employees, making clear the contribution that individuals make towards achieving city and strategic outcomes. It provides a mechanism to establish and implement an integrated way of communicating and delivering objectives throughout council so that all plans, frameworks, and processes are clear and ‘joined up’, known as the ‘golden thread’.

FIGURE 1: Council’s improvement framework.



Strategic context

Our community plan, the Belfast Agenda was updated in 2024, with input from partners, residents, and other stakeholders to reflect the city’s current priorities. The overarching strategic plan explains the WHY of what we are doing, providing a holistic view of the needs and aspirations of the city, and articulating this in five long-term outcomes. It outlines how partners will work collectively to support the most vulnerable in our city while growing the economy, regenerating neighbourhoods, supporting communities, and achieving our climate targets. Figure 2 depicts the five strategic themes and priorities, the five things’ people want for Belfast by 2035 (our outcomes) and our ambitions which outline our key targets to make our vision a reality.



FIGURE 2: The Belfast Agenda 2024-28

The council’s draft Corporate Plan 2024-28 sets out our approach to delivering for local people in a time of both significant opportunity and considerable challenges for our city. The draft corporate plan is inextricably linked to the Belfast Agenda and explains WHAT the council will do to contribute to the outcomes above as well as outlining any other key priorities for us as an organisation. And finally, committee plans, and other departmental and business plans detail the HOW. Our corporate priority themes for the next four years are outlined on figure 3.

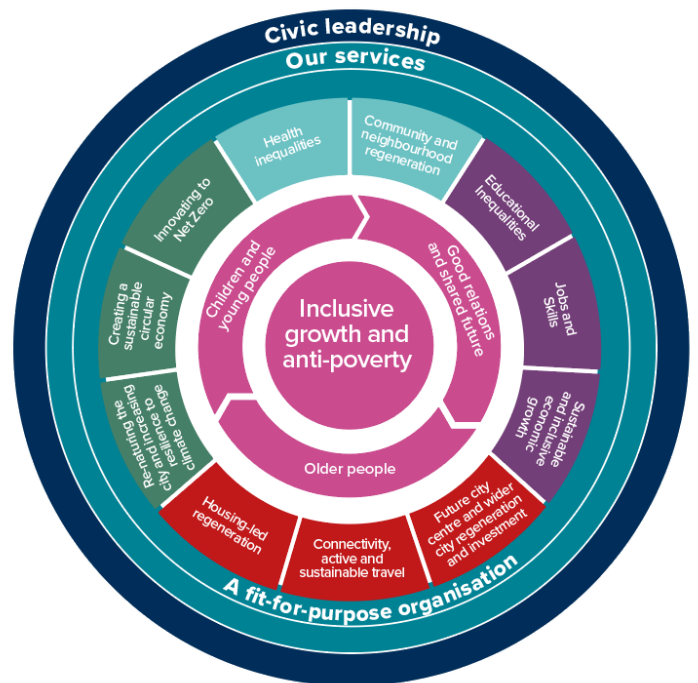
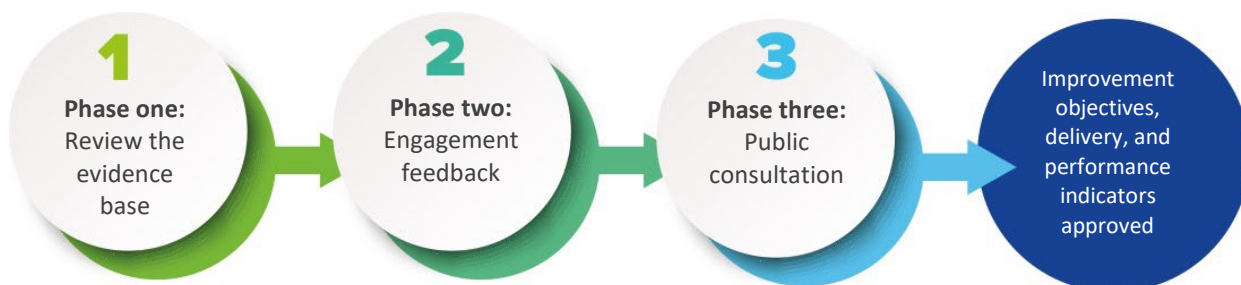


FIGURE 3: Council’s draft Corporate Plan 2024-28

Identifying our performance improvement objectives for 2024-25

All our key strategies and plans are informed and developed by listening to our residents, businesses, partners, staff, and elected representatives. Our 2024-25 performance improvement objectives were developed by rolling out a three-phase process. In phase one we reviewed the evidence base, in phase two, we engaged internally and in phase three, we carried out public consultation. The rich and diverse analysis and feedback we received throughout this process has been shaped into this revitalised Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25.

FIGURE 4: Three-phase process



Phase one: Reviewing the evidence base

Understanding the needs of users, citizens and the internal and external environment is critically important. We analysed baseline evidence drawn from existing engagement findings, survey results, performance data and a review of relevant strategies and plans, including:

- Results and trend data from our 2023-24 Performance Improvement Assessment report.
- Feedback gleaned from partners, residents, and other stakeholders as part of the consultation and engagement process for the Belfast Agenda’s refresh.
- Inclusion of guidance issued by the Department for Communities and recommendations provided by the NI auditor (including the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) Section 95 report).
- Evidence and issues arising from committee and meetings of the full council.
- Priorities identified during the rate setting process.
- Areas for improvement emerging from the internal audit and risk management processes.
- Results and trend data identified from the Residents Survey 2023.
- Good practice data benchmarking with other local authorities.
- Good practice research and a review of relevant strategies and plans, to ensure alignment to outcomes and ambitions and avoid duplication of effort, for example the Belfast Agenda, draft corporate plan, and annual corporate delivery plan.

Phase two: Engagement feedback

Feedback was gleaned and approval granted from engagement sessions including workshops and meetings, including:

- Priorities identified during corporate planning workshops with elected members, committee chairs and the Corporate Management Team (CMT).
- Planned service improvements identified during engagement with key officers from different council services.
- Regular engagement with departmental teams and key officers, at every phase – ensuring alignment to departmental and service level budget setting and planning processes.
- Meetings with Directors, Heads of Service and relevant managers to review draft content.
- Approval granted via scheduled meetings with senior management teams, CMT, committee and full council meetings.

Phase three: Public consultation

We carried out public consultation for eight weeks on the council’s Your Say Belfast consultation and engagement website (yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk). We promoted the consultation using a range of communication methods including social media posts, posters in community buildings, email marketing to existing mailing lists, newsletters, news articles, staff memos, intranet promotion and websites. We used the analysis of the feedback to finalise the plan. As part of phase three, we:

- Carried out public consultation on the performance improvement objectives and proposed actions, with 92 responses received via the Your Say Belfast website. This represents an increase of 130% compared to the number of consultation responses that helped to inform the 2023-24 Performance Improvement Plan.
- Worked closely with departmental teams and key officers to consider consultation feedback and refine the Performance Improvement Plan.
- Secured approval of the final objectives through the normal council governance cycle (CMT, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the full council meeting).

Consultation feedback summary

A summary of the consultation results is set out below:



The issues or improvements that respondents felt should be considered in relation to the draft 2024-25 improvement objectives are thematically summarised below. It is important to note that some of the areas highlighted as part of the public consultation process are already being progressed through existing strategies, plans and structures including, for example the Belfast Agenda 2024-28.

Active travel infrastructure and opportunities
work with relevant partners to improve and enhance the cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure to encourage more people towards active travel.

City centre improvements and interventions
improve the attractiveness, cleanliness, and appeal of the city centre. Focusing on delivering high quality cleansing services, improving our streetscapes, and reducing dereliction.

Focus on core services
ensure residents and ratepayers receive value for money and access to high quality core services. Delivery of more efficient waste collection and street cleansing should be prioritised. Increase community engagement and education to try to change attitudes and behaviours on litter.

Prioritise action on climate
champion and promote action on climate. Consider increasing EV charging points, delivering ground source and district heating schemes in all new developments and the retrofitting of existing buildings.

Economic growth and circular economy
ongoing support and advice to encourage more business startups and grow existing businesses. Focus on growing a circular economy for sustainability. Better support for businesses in specialised areas such as cyber security.

Greater support for VCSE organisations
consider how to better support VCSE delivering vital services to address key issues across the city, including advice, homelessness, and addiction support.

Looking forward – performance improvement objectives 2024-25

This year we have refocused our performance improvement objectives, to align better with the strategic themes and priorities outlined within the new Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. We have set clear performance improvement objectives and improved the alignment with improvement activity and performance targets. Our Performance Improvement Plan sets out six performance improvement objectives for the period 2024-25.

Our services
We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
Our people and communities
We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
Our place
We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).
Our planet
We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.
Our economy
We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.
Compassionate city
We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

The tables on the following pages set out the expected improvement (improvement objectives), how they link to relevant regional and local strategies and plans, the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, and the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. For each improvement we state:

- what we hope to achieve;
- why we chose it;
- how it aligns to the seven aspects of improvement.
- how we plan to do it; and
- how we will measure success.

Improvement objective 1: Our services

In addition to the specific improvement activities set out below, we will implement our regular programme of service redesign and adjustments to ways of working through the implementation of risk and audit actions to continually adapt and improve our services.

Improvement objective 1	We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residents told us to focus on improving the services we deliver. ▪ Members identified the service areas as key priorities during a party group leader (PGL) corporate planning session. ▪ Delivering effective and efficient services is identified as a key priority within our draft corporate plan. ▪ Improving customer care and providing best value for money are ongoing commitments. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: Waste Legislation NI (various), Waste Management Plan NI, Local Government Finance Act 2011, Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).</p> <p>Local: Belfast City Council Resilience Strategy, Local Development Plan (LDP) 2035, Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS), Belfast City Council Financial Regulations 2015, Putting You First: Transforming Customer Experience, Belfast City Council Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.</p>				
Belfast Agenda outcome(s) and corporate plan theme	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p> <p>Corporate plan theme: Our services – Delivering effective and efficient services.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability, and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop phase 3 of our Customer Focus Programme to enhance our services and customer experience. ▪ Enhance street cleanliness by delivering a dedicated street cleansing programme for 17,065 streets across the city. ▪ Deliver the Planning Service’s Improvement Plan to include a review of planning processes and charges. ▪ Complete an improvement plan for a range of parks and open spaces to create a standardised approach to monitor quality and operational standards. ▪ Pilot the introduction of smaller refuse collection vehicles to improve collection services to narrow and congested streets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieving at least 80% customer satisfaction levels (with customer hub contacts¹). ▪ Achieving 80% customer contact service level (people answered within 120 secs). ▪ Resolving 75% of corporate complaints within timeframe. ▪ Introducing improvement actions for 90% of corporate complaints. ▪ Achieving 65% cleansing index score. ▪ Facilitating at least 120 community clean ups with volunteers. ▪ Achieving the 30-week target for average processing time for major planning applications (statutory indicator). ▪ Achieving the 15-week target for average processing time for local planning applications (statutory indicator). ▪ Processing 70% of enforcement cases within 39 weeks (statutory indicator). ▪ Completing 85% of service requests for missed bins within 5 working days.

¹ The Customer Hub handles approximately 70% of all calls to the council and approximately 60% of all customer contacts including email and web forms. It’s the main point of contact for the following services: Resources and Fleet Waste Collections, Resources and Fleet Waste Management, Open Spaces and Street Scene, Complaints, General Enquiries, Switchboard.

Improvement objective 2: Our people and communities

In addition to the specifics set out below, we will improve our local areas and improve health and wellbeing for our resident, by delivering programmes of work and activities contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 2:	We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recent health data shows that life expectancy overall has stopped increasing and there is a growing need to tackle obesity and increase the levels of physical activity across Belfast. ▪ Objective is aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intents, and actions identified withing the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Results from our residents’ survey showed the need to focus on improving our neighbourhoods, providing more or better facilities, such as enhancing our parks and leisure facilities and enhancing how we engage with, and involve residents in decision-making. ▪ Feedback from the Belfast Agenda engagement process and residents’ survey highlighted improving health and wellbeing as one of the highest-ranking priorities for our citizens. ▪ Enables us to identify the specific areas that the council can do to improve the health of our residents. 				
Relevant strategies, plan, and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: Active Living the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for NI (2022), Marking Life Better – Strategic Framework for public health, Whole Systems Approach to Obesity Prevention, Regional Development Strategy (2035), SPPS.</p> <p>Local: The Department of Health’s Annual Health Inequalities report, The World Health Organisation’s Belfast Healthy Cities Strategy, LDP, BOSS, Get Active Belfast – A framework for physical activity – Active Belfast Partnership.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda (BA) and corporate plan	<p>BA outcome: Belfast will be a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan theme: Our people and communities – Making life better for all our residents.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan priority: Health inequalities and community and neighbourhood regeneration.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability, and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver improvements to parks and open spaces to improve people’s health and wellbeing. ▪ Enhance our playgrounds to encourage people to be more active. ▪ Complete Peace IV projects to enhance community assets and the availability of shared and inclusive spaces. ▪ Increase the number of people using our leisure centres, to participate in sport and physical activity. ▪ Enhance and improve how we engage and involve our residents in decision making. ▪ Deliver animation and outreach activities to encourage and engage people to participate in our community, play, leisure development and park programmes. ▪ Develop the Belfast Physical Activity and Sport Development strategy and action plan to create a more active city. ▪ Develop the Belfast Pitches Strategy and action plan to maximise provision and usage of outdoor pitches. ▪ Complete a parks and open spaces improvement action plan to achieve the vision of the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completing major improvements to one park (Pitt Park) by securing £1.7m external funding. ▪ Progressing major improvements to one park (Ballysillan Playing Fields). ▪ Progressing major improvements to one open space (Cathedral Gardens). ▪ Investing £580k and completing the annual playground improvement programme (based on new play value and accessibility criteria). ▪ Investing over €12m in two Peace IV projects - Shankill Shared Women’s Centre and Black Mountain Shared Space. ▪ Increasing the number of people using our leisure centres to 3.3 million. ▪ Increasing the number of adult and junior leisure centre monthly memberships (including swim school) to 31,250. ▪ Delivering at least two Participatory Budgeting (PB) processes. ▪ Delivering at least 100 programmes across our community, play, leisure development and park programmes.

Improvement objective 3: Our place

In addition to the improvement action below, we will create a more attractive, vibrant, and connected city by delivering programmes of work and activities contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 3:	We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvement objective aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intents, and actions identified within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Feedback from elected members during planning workshops highlighted the need to prioritise and enhance the appeal of our city centre for residents, visitors, and businesses alike. ▪ We are committed to enhancing the connectivity of the city and ensuring that we can work with partners to increase opportunities for active and sustainable travel through the Belfast Agenda. ▪ Residents have told us that they want the city centre to be vibrant, safe, and welcoming. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: Eastern Transport Plan 2035 (under development); Regional Development Strategy 2035.</p> <p>Local: Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS); A Bolder Vision for Belfast; Belfast Resilience Strategy, LDP.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan	<p>BA outcome: Belfast will be a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan theme: Our place – Creating a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan priorities: Connectivity, active and sustainable travel; Future City Centre and wider regeneration and investment.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver the Vacant to Vibrant programme to the end of the pilot period to support work to reduce city centre vacancy rates. ▪ Create a more connected city by progressing the delivery of the Greenways Programme. ▪ Deliver the Physical Programme including the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and other initiatives to support regeneration and place shaping across the city. ▪ Progress infrastructure works at the North Foreshore to support the development of the site. ▪ Work with the developer on emerging development specifications for the 250-acre Giant’s Park site through a Master Development Agreement. ▪ Complete a review of litter bin provision to ensure adequate resourcing and arrangements for waste disposal across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Occupying 26 previously vacant city centre properties as a result of the Vacant to Vibrant intervention. ▪ Awarding £420,000 (in total) through Vacant to Vibrant funding to city centre traders to address vacancy. ▪ Progressing four greenways to improve the connectivity of the city (Black Mountain Greenway, Access to the Hills, Sydenham Greenway, and Colin Greenway). ▪ Completing 10 projects under the Physical Programme. ▪ Developing 100 emerging projects under the Physical Programme. ▪ Supporting 23 organisations under the £10.28m NRF programme.

Improvement objective 4: Our planet

In addition to the specific improvement actions set out below, we will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast by delivering our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 4	We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Climate change is a global concern. Since we declared a climate emergency in 2019 and launched our Resilience Strategy in 2020, we have been taking action to transition the city to an inclusive, zero-emissions and climate-resilient economy in a generation. ▪ Therefore, this objective has been retained and refocused from the 2023-24 improvement plan as it remains a priority at a regional and local level, and we have statutory responsibilities to address climate change. ▪ Creating an environmentally sustainable city was identified as a key outcome and priority in consultation undertaken with partners, residents, and stakeholders in the process of refreshing the Belfast Agenda. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Global: COP21, UN Sustainable Development Goals</p> <p>Regional: The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland)2022, Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024, Energy Strategy –The Path to Net Zero Energy, Draft Green Growth Strategy, Programme for Government, Second Cycle NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027, Strategic Planning Policy Statement</p> <p>Local: Belfast Resilience Strategy, A Net Zero Carbon Roadmap for Belfast, A Bolder Vision for Belfast, Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP), Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, Belfast Air Quality Action Plan, Belfast Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, Belfast (Draft) Economic Strategy, Belfast (Draft) Adaptation Strategy, Belfast Local Area Energy Plan.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda (BA) and corporate plan	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable city.</p> <p>BA and corporate plan themes: Our services, Our people and communities, Our place, and Our planet.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance the resilience of our assets and services and progress towards net-zero through delivery of our operational Climate Action Plan – including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ adoption of our low emission vehicles strategy. ○ approval for a council single use plastics policy for the council. ○ publication of a council climate investment plan. ○ Deliver neighbourhood recycling pilot. ▪ Develop an evidence base to enable a cost-effective transition to net-zero by commencing the delivery of the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan. ▪ Improve and restore woodland by delivering year two of the Belfast Tree Strategy and Action Plan. ▪ Test nature-based solutions through the Horizon 2020 EU ‘UPSURGE’ Project. ▪ Embed net-zero in urban planning by progressing the Horizon Europe funded UP2030 project. ▪ Promote access to sustainable and healthy food for all through the development of a sustainable food strategy. ▪ Promote and educate young people on the reduce, reuse, and recycle message to improve environmental awareness on waste management. ▪ Deliver an effective waste management service across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining Carbon Disclosure “A” Status ▪ Maintaining silver NI environmental benchmarking survey rating. ▪ Improving the percentage of council municipal waste arisings that is sent for recycling to 38.5%. ▪ Reducing the tonnage of biodegradable council collected waste that is landfilled to 15,000 tonnes (statutory indicator). ▪ Increasing the % of household waste collected that is sent for recycling to 42% (or prepared for re-use) (statutory indicator). ▪ Achieving 160,000 tonnage of council collected municipal waste arisings (statutory indicator). ▪ Visiting a minimum of 150 schools to deliver a curriculum-linked environment workshop on anti-litter and reduce, reuse, recycle message. ▪ Planting trees as part of the One Million Trees Programme (target to be confirmed – subject to internal approval).

Improvement objective 5: Our economy

In addition to the specifics set out below, we will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment by delivering our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 5:	We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intents, and actions identified within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Council is committed to ensuring that Belfast has a thriving and prosperous economy that is a hub for businesses and provides diverse employment opportunities for our population. ▪ Supporting innovation at all levels will help deliver the promise of Belfast’s economic potential and position it as a driver for prosperity and growth across the region. ▪ Delivering inclusive growth is a core principle of our organisation as we strive to ensure that the success of the city reaches every citizen. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: A 10X Economy - Northern Ireland’s Decade of Innovation; Innovation Strategy for NI 2014-25, Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland, Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Action Plan.</p> <p>Local: Belfast Economic Strategy 2022-30, Belfast Inclusive Growth Strategy, Belfast Region City Deal, SMART Belfast - Belfast Urban Innovation Framework 2022 – 26, Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy.</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a place where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan theme: Our Economy – Creating inclusive and sustainable growth, learning and opportunity.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan priorities: Jobs and skills; Sustainable and inclusive economic growth.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure goods and services in accordance with our Social Value Procurement Policy (SVPP) to maximise the economic, social, and environmental impact of our expenditure. ▪ Implement a new finance system to reduce costs, improve compliance and support suppliers. ▪ Work with partners to identify and deliver employment and upskilling academies in priority sectors in line with industry demand. ▪ Extend commitment from businesses to the Belfast Business Promise (BBP) to increase the number of businesses committed to implementing inclusive business practices. ▪ Work with the Enterprise Support Service to deliver ‘Go Succeed’ to increase the number of new business starts. ▪ Support digital innovation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delivering the Augment the City SME challenge competition. ○ Developing Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDE) Grants projects with UU and QUB University Centres of Excellence. ○ Developing a regional Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) challenge competition programme. ○ Delivering the Belfast Region 5G Innovation Regions programme. ○ Supporting the Belfast Sejong Innovation Twins programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increasing the % of council contracts (over £30k value) where SVPP has been applied to 40%. ▪ Paying 95% of invoices within 30 calendar days. ▪ Paying 80% of invoices within 10 working days. ▪ Supporting 75% of participants to move into a positive outcome from an Employment or Upskilling Academy. ▪ Signing up a minimum of 50 companies to the BBP pledge. ▪ Promoting jobs through business start-up activity, i.e., completing 325 business plans (statutory indicator). ▪ Engaging 425 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to support digital innovation. ▪ Issuing £100,000 of funding to up to 10 companies to develop ideas, proof of concepts and prototypes using immersive technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and mixed reality to enhance visitor attractions. ▪ Investing over £1,500,000 to accelerate the development of innovative 5G solutions.

Improvement objective 6: Compassionate city

In addition to the specific actions set out below, we will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis by delivering of our normal programme of work contained within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28, the draft Corporate Plan 2024-28, committee plans and supporting departmental and business plans.

Improvement objective 6:	We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.				
Why is this an improvement objective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aligned to the outcomes, priorities, strategic intent and actions within the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and draft Corporate Plan 2024-28. ▪ Elected members identified the cost-of-living crisis as a key priority during corporate planning engagement sessions. ▪ We understand the pressures that the cost-of-living crisis is having on citizens and households. ▪ As part of community planning, we will also continue to work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to provide the most needed support for children and young people, families, and individuals across the city. 				
Relevant strategies, plans and evidence at regional and local level	<p>Regional: The Executive’s Child Poverty Strategy, NI Audit Office Child Poverty in Northern Ireland Report, The Trussell Trust State of Hunger Report, DfC Poverty, and Income Inequality (PII) Report</p> <p>Local: Belfast Inclusive Growth Strategy, Belfast City Council Social Value Procurement Policy,</p>				
Alignment to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan	<p>Belfast Agenda outcome: Belfast is a place where everyone fulfils their potential.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan theme: Compassionate City – Making Belfast a welcoming, caring, and inclusive city – leaving no-one behind.</p> <p>Belfast Agenda and corporate plan priority: Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty.</p>				
Statutory aspect of improvement	Strategic effectiveness	Service quality, availability and fairness	Sustainability	Efficiency	Innovation
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We will:	Our measures of success for 2025 include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In partnership, promote support and advice services across the city to help with the high cost of living and anti-poverty. ▪ Develop a funding commissioning framework to support the implementation of a Hardship Programme for 2024-25, to ensure that support is available for those most impacted by poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. ▪ Deliver cost of living and anti-poverty interventions for example Social Supermarkets, to provide support for those most in need. ▪ Provide funding and support to community-based advice services across the city to provide dedicated and tailored support to individuals. ▪ Implement the recommendations of the review of Belfast City Council Funded advice services. ▪ Provide funding and support to the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to enable them to deliver capacity support and local services. ▪ Develop and agree a new four-year community support plan (2025-29) to improve how we provide support to our local communities and residents across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting 27,500 people through accessing online and cost of living support guides. ▪ Hosting at least one marketplace event in City Hall to enhance awareness of available local support services and associated referral pathways. ▪ Supporting 21 Social Supermarkets with up to £50k per project to provide food support, alongside wraparound services. ▪ Providing up to £1.3m funding to 14 Advice Organisations, who are supported by 5 advice consortia, providing advice services to at least 20k clients across the city. ▪ Establishing a new partnership agreement with defined KPI's with 5 advice consortia. ▪ Providing and managing £1.9m of funding through the capacity building grant programme to support 43 organisations.

Performance monitoring and reporting arrangements

To ensure that we continuously improve and meet the needs and outcomes of our city and residents, we have put in place established governance arrangements in relation to corporate performance management, summarised and set out in figure 5 below.

Governance arrangements

Monitoring and regular reporting of performance is essential to ensure that priorities are being achieved, and that the information that was collected informed decision making and plans.

Progress is monitored and reported regularly to the Corporate Management Team (CMT), on a quarterly basis to the Audit Assurance Board and the Audit and Risk Panel, and regularly to relevant working groups, relevant committees, and the full council meeting.

Corporate, committee and departmental business plans and strategies containing statutory or self-imposed performance indicators, are monitored, and reported both internally to departmental and the Corporate Management Team and formally to the relevant committee.

In addition, action plans and programme plans relating to council's key priority projects are monitored and reported through cross-departmental groups, management teams and boards, and regularly to the relevant committee.

Figure 5 summarises the high-level governance arrangements and the responsibilities for implementing these.

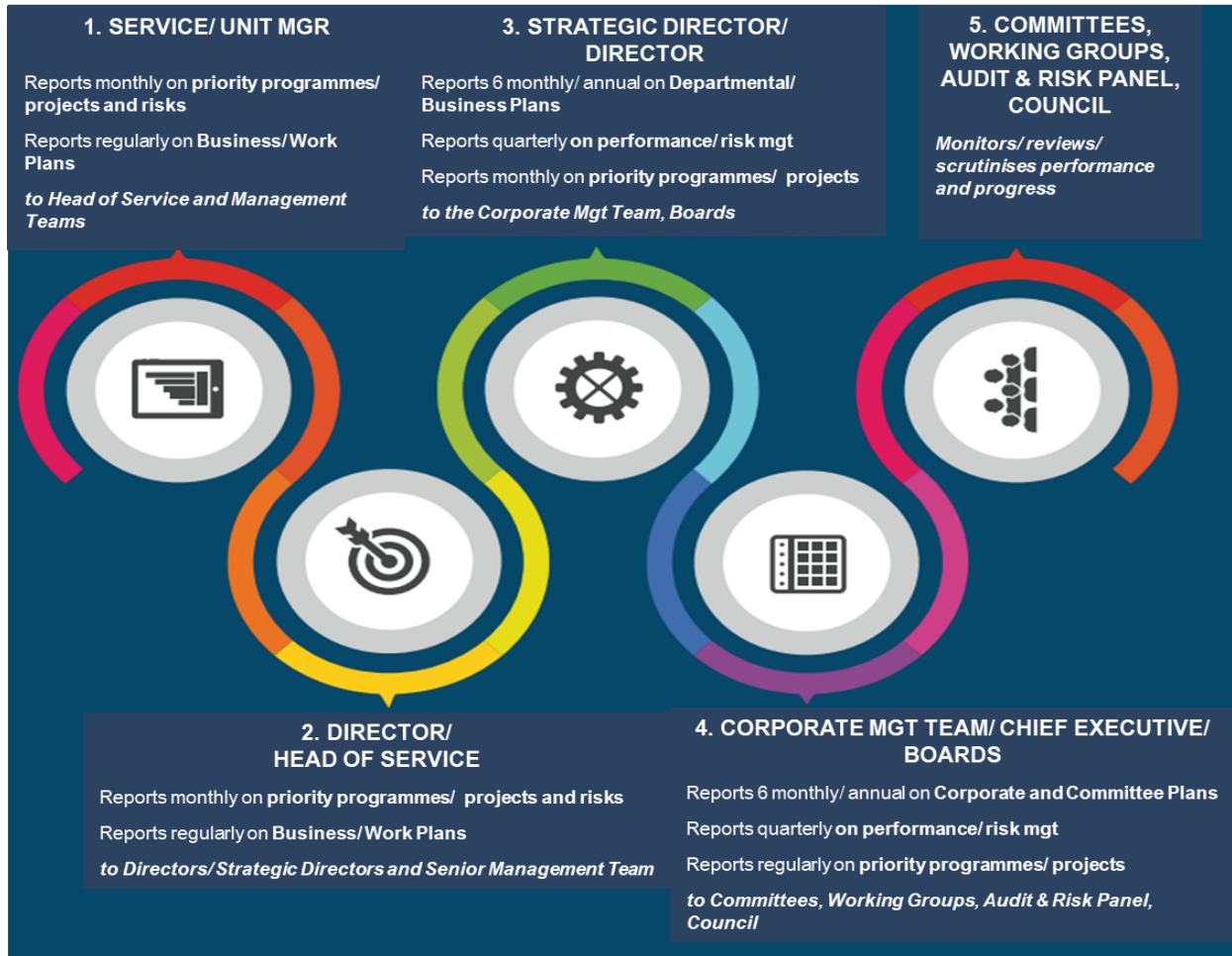
Each year, we publish a self-assessment report, setting out details of how we have performed as a council and benchmarked against other local authorities where possible. The council is a member of the Association of Public Sector Excellence (APSE), which is a public sector benchmarking organisation. This enables us to compare and improve our performance across a range of services and activities, with other comparable councils.

The council's internal audit team regularly review the improvement framework, and this is reported to the Audit and Risk Panel. Annually the NIAO reviews the processes and arrangements as part of the annual performance improvement audit and publicly publishes this.

A new planning and performance management framework is currently being developed which will refresh the current arrangements, provide a co-ordinated focus and a robust framework to enhance our continuous improvement journey. This new framework will enable us to deliver our collective responsibility with community planning partners, as well as supporting us to carry

out our statutory duty to improve, deliver best value and achieve the best possible impact for the people of Belfast.

FIGURE 5: High-level governance arrangements



** Please note these arrangements are subject to review as part of the development of the corporate planning and performance framework.*

Annual timeline

Every year, we review and update our performance improvement objectives and plan to ensure we are delivering continuous improvement. Our annual process to develop, monitor, report and review the council’s progress to deliver performance improvement is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1: Annual review timeline.

<p>January – March 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review and analyse the evidence base (continuous improvement). • Planning workshops with elected members alongside the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to identify draft improvement priorities for 2024-25 • Draft performance improvement objectives for 2024-25 presented and agreed by CMT, committee and the full council. • Council strikes the rate. • Quarterly performance report presented to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council.
<p>April – June - 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation process on the draft performance improvement objectives and proposed actions starts and ends. • Consultation responses collated and analysed, and a report summarising feedback developed. • Quarterly performance and year end reports presented to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 agreed by CMT, committee and the full council. • Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 published on the Council’s website by 30 June. • Carry out the annual self-assessment review of the prior year’s performance.
<p>July – September 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation for NIAO performance improvement fieldwork. • Annual self-assessment report brought to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Quarterly performance report brought to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Annual self-assessment report published on the Council’s website by 30 September.
<p>October – December 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly performance report to CMT, Audit and Assurance Board, Audit and Risk Panel, committee, and the full council. • Ongoing support and liaison with the NIAO and departments on performance audit. • Final NIAO Section 95 Report on Audit issued in November – presented to the relevant board and committee. • Annual self-assessment report published on the council’s website by 30 September. • Desktop analysis of all evidence. • Ongoing engagement on the planning, estimates and performance improvement process.

Feedback on areas for improvement

We welcome ongoing feedback, comments, and suggestions on how we might improve our services and performance.

Your feedback matters

Please use one of the following methods to provide your comments or suggestions at any time of the year:

Email: performance@belfastcity.gov.uk

In writing to the:

Strategic Performance Unit
City Organisational and Strategy Department
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hall
Room 212
BT1 5GS

You can also provide us with feedback or comments at any time via our website:




www.belfastcity.gov.uk/contact/complaints-comments-compliments

Alternative formats

This document is also available in hard copy format and can be provided in alternative formats by contacting the Strategic Performance Unit using the contact details above.

Contact us:

City and Organisational Strategy
City Hall
Donegall Square North
Belfast
BT1 5GS

-  performance@belfastcity.gov.uk
-  028 9032 0202
-  www.belfastcity.gov.uk/corporateplan



Belfast
City Council

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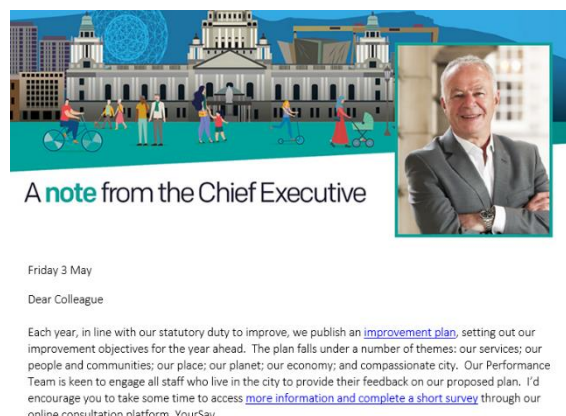
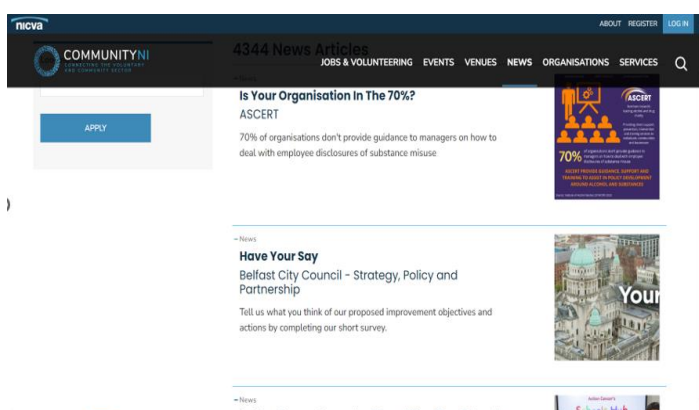
Appendix 2:

Draft Consultation Feedback Report: Performance Improvement Objectives 2024-25

Introduction

The eight-week public consultation period in relation to the Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 ran between 9th April – 4th June 2024 via Council’s YourSay engagement platform. In total, **92 individuals responded to the consultation**, a notable increase from a total of 40 respondents in 2023-24.

The public consultation was promoted using a range of communication methods including social media posts, posters in community buildings, email marketing to existing mailing lists, newsletters, news articles, staff memos, intranet promotion and websites, some of which are detailed below:



Respondent Profile

In total, 92 responses to the Performance Improvement Plan 2024/25 were received, all of which were from individuals / residents (no external organisations responded). Of those that responded:

- 56% were male, 43% were female and 1% preferred to use a different description.
- 39% were aged 40-54 years old, 25% aged 25-29, 18% aged 55-64, 13% aged 18-24 and 5% aged 65+. Notably no young people aged less than 18 years old responded to the consultation.
- 75% of respondents reside across Belfast with the remaining 25% residing in other areas outside of the city.

Support for improvement objectives

81%

strongly agreed or agreed with the 'Our services' improvement objective

89%

strongly agreed or agreed with the 'Our people and communities' improvement objective

83%

strongly agreed or agreed with the 'Our place' improvement objective

77%

strongly agreed or agreed with the 'Our planet' improvement objective

76%

strongly agreed or agreed with the 'Our economy' improvement objective

85%

strongly agreed or agreed with the 'Compassionate city' improvement objective

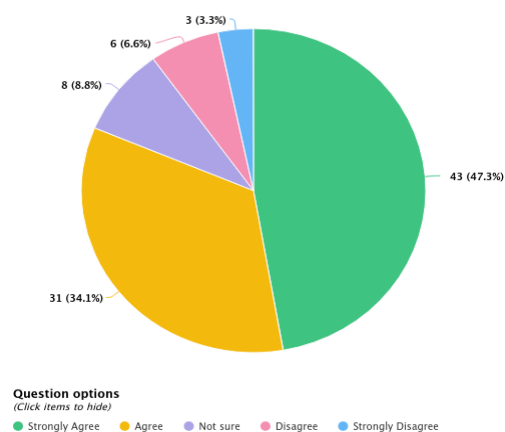
The charts below provide more detail in relation to the support for each improvement objective.

Improvement Objective 1

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following objective:

Our Services: We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.

- 81.4% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposed improvement objective;
- 8.8% were unsure about this proposed improvement objective and;
- 9.9% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed improvement objective.

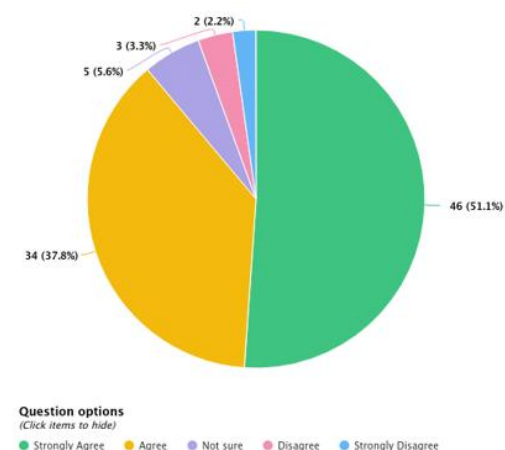


Improvement Objective 2

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following objective:

Our People and Communities: We will improve our local areas and support our residents to become healthier, engaged and more resilient.

- 88.9% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposed improvement objective;
- 5.6% were unsure about this proposed improvement objective and;
- 5.5% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed improvement objective.

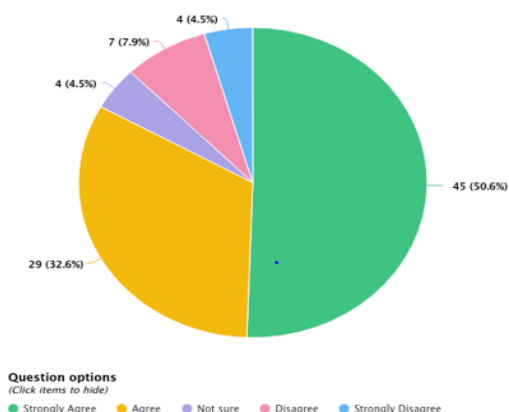


Improvement Objective 3

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following objective:

Our Place: We will create a more vibrant, attractive and connected city.

- 83.2% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposed improvement objective;
- 4.5% were unsure about this proposed improvement objective and;
- 12.4% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed improvement objective.

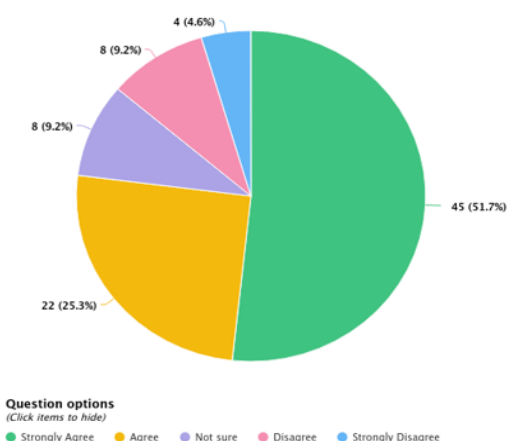


Improvement Objective 4

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following objective:

Our Planet: We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.

- 77% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposed improvement objective;
- 9.2% were unsure about this proposed improvement objective and;
- 13.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed improvement objective.

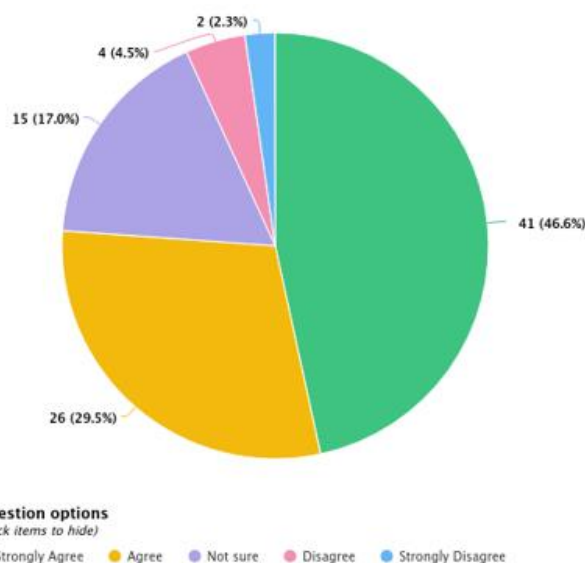


Improvement Objective 5

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following objective:

Our Economy: We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create more and better opportunities for jobs and employment.

- 76.1% strongly agreed or agreed with this proposed improvement objective;
- 17% were unsure about this proposed improvement objective and;
- 6.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the proposed improvement objective.

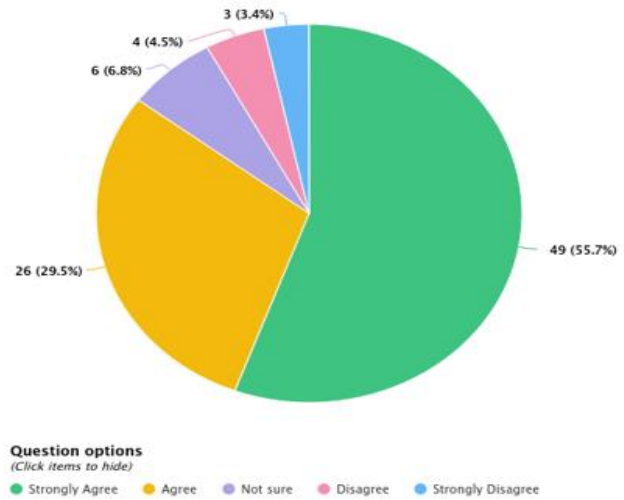


Improvement Objective 6

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following objective:

Compassionate City: We will support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

- 85.2% strongly agreed / agreed with this proposed improvement objective
- 6.8% were unsure about this proposed improvement objective and;
- 7.9% strongly disagreed / disagreed with the proposed improvement objective.



Key issues or improvements for consideration

Respondents were asked to identify key issues or improvements that they felt should be considered in relation to the draft 2024-25 improvement objectives and actions. For ease of reading a generic and thematic summary of the qualitative feedback is presented below, including a council response and action on how the proposed suggestions will be taken forward by council.

Consideration	Feedback received	Council response and action
Generic feedback – rewording and use of simple and clear language.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various suggestions for rewording and more detail to help clarify or emphasise the objectives and proposed actions to make it clear on how we would achieve our proposed improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted and agreed. • Action: Wording amendments made and some realignment of objectives to provide clarity, improve emphasis of what we want to achieve and the ability to achieve the objectives – using simple and clear language. The actions (what we will do) in the draft performance improvement plan have been updated to set out clearly what we intend to do and why we are doing it to ensure that all stakeholders are better informed around our intended delivery to achieve objectives. Measures of success have also been included which state clearly how we measure our performance and impact in 2025. The measures of success either include what performance targets will be achieved and what actions will be delivered by 2025.
Enhanced active travel infrastructure and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrianisation of York Street that runs between Ulster University campus. • Improvement to existing and creation of additional safe cycle routes throughout Greater Belfast area. • Prevention of free day long roadside parking for motorists within Greater Belfast area - short-term parking only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. • Action: Where suggestions do not fall or have not been considered within the scope of the improvement plan, they will be considered by the appropriate Chief Officer, Department or Service and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of other existing plans and policies. Some of the suggestions are already being supported through the implementation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote public transport and encourage shared versus individual travel options. • An active travel plan. Active travel has regressed from development to "engagement" and "awareness". • Greater pedestrianisation and a reclaiming of the streets to meet a changed, post-Covid landscape. • Clampdown on double-yellows, cycle lane parking, abuse by party bikes etc. • More cycling infrastructure and dedicated cyclist lanes. 	<p>of existing or emerging strategies and plans, such as the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 being delivered collaboratively with partners and the Belfast Local Development Plan.</p>
<p>City centre improvements/ interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted plan for Royal Avenue, Belfast - make it safe, clean and lively. • Please keep 2 Royal Avenue in its current form as shared civic space. • Resolve the looming crisis from Belfast's abundance of vacant office sites, most of which occupy upper floors for buildings with ground floor occupancy. • Street begging feels like it has increased, but I understand that this is complex and multi-agency related. The anti-abortion people and preachers in front of city hall are also off putting. If you could do anything about that it would be amazing. Not easy though. • Need for city centre greenery, requirement to adapt to city centres as service-heavy attractors as opposed to status quo of inherent gravity via office work. • There is a requirement to address the homeless on our streets, if we can place the homeless in accommodation during covid we should be able to assist now. • Support for the city centre as it is becoming more and more dangerous, and uncomfortable to be in the city centre even during the day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. • Action: Where suggestions do not fall or have not been considered within the scope of the improvement plan, they will be considered by the appropriate Chief Officer, Department or Service for consideration and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing plans and policies. Some of the suggestions are already being supported through the implementation of existing or emerging strategies and plans, such as the Belfast Local Development Plan, Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and A Bolder Vision Strategy being delivered collaboratively with partners.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large amounts of vacancy is impacting the look and feel of the city centre. The VCSE sector and arts sectors can support changing this. • Knock on effect of homelessness is off-putting for people who wish to visit the city centre. There is a massive drug usage problem in the city centre which reduces the amount of people willing to go in. • More flexible and dynamic rates system for city centre properties to encourage better utilisation - lower rates for independent businesses and encouraging the use of under-utilised upper floors above ground floor retail/commercial units for the purposes of accommodation. • Rates need to be increased on dereliction not removed. The Council also needs to enforce legislation in relation to maintenance of listed buildings. • Address the battery powered amplification in the city centre and speakers on the outside of businesses. The sound of a city is just as important as how it looks. 	
Focus on key services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council should stick to the areas that it has responsibility. Focus on keeping our streets and parks free from litter, lifting our waste on time etc. • Cleaning of streetscapes to continue to improve, particularly around the city centre. • A more thorough review of the customer focus programme as it has failed to deliver on a number of objectives. • Services are councils' bread and butter issues (improving customer experience, planning, waste collection, street cleansing, etc.). The fact council has highlighted its own shortcomings as issues is commendable, but these should have been dealt with years ago. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. • Proposed action: Where suggestions do not fall or have not been considered within the scope of the improvement plan, they will be considered by the appropriate Chief Officer, Department or Service for consideration and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing plans and policies. An additional action has been added to include the development of an improvement plan for parks and open spaces to create a standardised approach to monitor internal quality and operational standards.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Cleansing a big problem. Belfast has never been in a worse state, the streets are filthy with dirt and rubbish. 	
Climate interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get serious about decarbonising the energy Belfast consumes as a city. Find out what this is, have a targeted, costed plan for generating it. • Put in place ground source heating schemes and district heating schemes in all new developments and retrofit existing buildings. Invest in wind and solar power for the city. • Truly make the economy inclusive by Investing in community energy, making sure low-income homes have access to free, emission free, renewable energy generation. (See https://www.power.film/home) • Needs to be a push on domestic recycling, not just through recycling centres and promotion of recycling and waste reduction to schools, community groups and households. • More focus on waste reduction and educational elements in this direction. • More affirmative action on the climate - not just summarising what everyone else in the organisation is doing in relation to it. Waste is a large part of action on the climate in terms of outcomes. • Transition to renewable energy and the subsidisation of green technologies such as heat pumps, solar panels, and EVs. • Cities, towns and villages are for people not planet polluting motors. Pedestrians and cyclists should be prioritised over motorists (especially single occupancy motors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. • Action: Where suggestions do not fall or have not been considered within the scope of the improvement plan, they will be considered by the appropriate Chief Officer, Department or Service for consideration and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing plans and policies. Some of the suggestions are already being supported through the implementation of existing or emerging strategies and plans, such as the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 being delivered collaboratively with partners and the Belfast Local Development Plan. Additional delivery actions have been added to the improvement plan to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop an evidence base to enable a cost-effective transition to net-zero by commencing the delivery of the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan. ○ Promote access to sustainable and healthy food for all through the development of a sustainable food strategy. ○ Promote and educate young people on the reduce, reuse and recycle message to improve environmental awareness on waste management.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with QUB to study the potential and invest in research on sustainable battery storage. 	
Economic growth and circular economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support young people, especially those who are disengaged with schools, or at risk of becoming NEET. • To tackle embedded structural issues and economic inactivity engagement and supports are required especially in those areas experiencing disadvantage to address cyclical and embedded challenges especially around economic inactivity and health inequalities and educational attainment. • Provide proper financial support for the disadvantaged to create social businesses, not just endless advice. • The economy section should include promoting the circular economy for a more sustainable economy, not just growing the economy, which can conflict with other objectives such as tackling climate change. • Better support for businesses in specialised areas. Belfast is marketing itself as a digital city but the Council could also do more in the area of Cyber security to help small business plan and respond to Cyber incidents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. • Action: Where suggestions do not fall or have not been considered within the scope of the improvement plan, they will be considered by the appropriate Chief Officer, Department or Service for consideration and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing plans and policies. Some of the suggestions are already being supported through the implementation of existing or emerging strategies and plans, such as the Belfast Agenda 2024-28.
Greater support for VCSE organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as delivering advice services to the residents of Belfast, to provide funding and grants to individuals would be an ideal world. • Provide funding and support to community-based advice services across the city. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comments noted. • Action: Where suggestions do not fall or have not been considered within the scope of the improvement plan, they will be considered by the appropriate Chief Officer, Department or Service for consideration and if applicable may be supported through the implementation of existing plans and policies. Some of the suggestions are already being supported through existing plans or structures in place including the Belfast Community Planning Partnership governance structure through the VCSE panel.

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Subject:	City Innovation programme update
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Mark McCann, City Innovation manager (Acting)

Restricted Reports					
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 30px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 					
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?					
<p>After Committee Decision</p> <p>After Council Decision</p> <p>Sometime in the future</p> <p>Never</p>	<table border="1" style="width: 30px; height: 80px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="height: 20px;"></td></tr> </table>				

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on City Innovation initiatives and to seek approval on a number of key projects developing over the next few months.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note Belfast City Council’s participation in the Ulster University’s ‘Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator’ bid to EPSRC, and to approve officer involvement in the design phase, (subject to a successful bid). And note that a further update on a successful bid would be presented in September. 2. To note the success of the Lord Mayor’s Innovation Twins mission to South Korea and to approve the issuing of an invitation to the mayor of Sejong to visit Belfast in May 2025. 3. Members are asked to approve acceptance of a further £50,000 from Connected Places Catapult to support work on the Innovation Twins programme including preparation for the Mayor’s visit through to March 2026. 4. To note Innovation City Belfast’s participation at the Smart Cities World Congress in November 2024. Members are asked to approve attendance by a small number of officers to support work on the Sejong Innovation Twins, ICB, engagement on City Deal opportunities, and the current Belfast 5G Innovation regions programme.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>The Smart Belfast urban innovation programme encourages collaboration on digital innovation projects between government, industry, SMEs, academia and communities. The aim is to harness innovation to address public policy challenges, while at the same time encouraging greater investment in innovation to stimulate economic growth. The following initiatives seek to contribute to both these aims:</p>
3.2	<p>(1) Belfast Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator</p> <p>Ulster University and University College London have submitted a £2 million bid to the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) to establish a Belfast-based ‘Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator’ that will build capacity amongst the city’s digital health tech companies by encouraging more collaboration with university researchers, clinicians and industry. The accelerator is also committed to a place-based approach that seeks to have positive health outcomes for local communities.</p>
3.3	<p>The Life and Health Science sector is important to the local economy, contributing 25% to the region’s entire economic output. The sector grew by 75% between 2019 and 2022 and now has 170 companies employing over 20,000 people. It’s a sector dominated by Innovation Driven Enterprises (IDEs) and is responsible for 75% of all of the region’s university spin-out companies. The Accelerator aims to build on this success by meeting the innovation needs of these IDEs and spin-outs.</p>

3.4	Members had previously approved an in-principle Council commitment to the programme in the form of in-kind staff time to the value of £100,000 over four years. There is also potential for Belfast Region City Deal partners to develop a complementary funding proposal to encourage the wider participation of start-ups and IDEs.
3.5	The Ulster University bid has now been shortlisted by EPSRC for final consideration, with a decision on funding expected by the end of June. Ulster have requested that an officer from the City Innovation team attend the final selection interview to support the application. This is scheduled for 18 June.
3.6	If the bid is successful design work on the programme is expected to commence from early July. With this timeline in mind, and assuming a successful bid, Members are asked to approve officer participation in this design work. An update will be then brought to Members in September on the final agreed programme and Belfast City Council's role.
3.7	<p>(2) Belfast Sejong Innovation Twins programme</p> <p>As part of the UK South Korea 'Innovation Twins' programme the Lord Mayor led a mission to Sejong in April. During the visit the mayors of both cities signed off/endorsed a roadmap to deliver a series of joint projects over the next few years. These initiatives include a Global Innovation Network that will support SMEs from both cities to develop trade opportunities; a satellite-based 'Security in Space' project with Queen's University; a cyber-security event; a Net Zero accelerator project with the Belfast Climate Commission; an autonomous transport project with Belfast Harbour; and a 5G project with Ulster University and Digital Catapult. Invest NI are also supporting an inward investment mission by Sejong SMEs to Belfast in 2025. Partners from both cities also explored joint cultural opportunities. Senior officials from Sejong are visiting Belfast later in June to agree an approach with local cultural and tourism organisations including Titanic Belfast, Belfast Stories, the Ulster Museum and others, to take forward joint opportunities.</p>
3.8	Following the visit, the Mayor of Sejong wrote to Belfast City Council explaining that he will be visiting the UK in May 2025 and has indicated that he and his team would like to visit Belfast as part of their visit and would welcome an invitation from Belfast's Lord Mayor.
3.9	Initial feedback on the Belfast missions from Connected Places Catapult, who have been facilitating the Innovation Twins programme on behalf of UK Government, has been extremely positive. The Belfast Sejong twinning is being highlighted to UK Government as exemplar for other cities in the programme to follow. Connected Places Catapult has also indicated that they wish to make a further £50,000 available to Belfast City Council and its partners to take forward

	work into 2025 including preparation for the inward visit of the Sejong Mayor and to support engagement work at this year's Smart Cities World Congress at which Sejong and South Korea are participating.
3.10	Members are asked to note the success of the April Mission to Sejong and to approve the issuing of an invitation to their mayor to visit Belfast in May 2025. Finally, Members are asked to approve acceptance of a further £50,000 from Connected Places Catapult to support the continuation of work on the programme through to March 2025.
3.11	<p>(3) Barcelona Smart Cities World Congress</p> <p>The Smart Cities Congress is an annual event that attracts 850 cities and over 1,100 digital companies. It is an opportunity for cities to promote their innovation ecosystem and build relationships with industry partners and investors in innovation.</p>
3.12	Belfast has had a limited presence at the previous events, with individuals from Belfast City Council, the universities and Belfast Harbour attending. More recently Invest NI have taken a stand at the event to promote their client companies.
3.13	This year Innovation City Belfast (ICB) has been approached separately by both Invest NI and Connected Places Catapult to explore how Belfast partners can promote a shared story about the city's ambition, our City Deal Digital Innovation investments, the work of our universities, and the success of our innovative companies.
3.14	This year Connected Places Catapult have been commissioned by Government to host a pavilion that will accommodate up to 10 UK smart cities. The Catapult are organising a series of panel discussions, meeting spaces, shared collateral, and presentation opportunities for the participating cities. They are also keen to support opportunities for Belfast and Sejong (who are also attending as part of a large South Korean delegation) to present on the innovation twins work noted above to a wider audience. In addition, Sejong want to discuss with Belfast and other cities and industry partners joint opportunities associated with their 'Smart District 5.1' where \$4 billion will be invested over the next decade.
3.15	The Belfast presence will be led by Innovation City Belfast's new Innovation Commissioner who is expected to be in post by the time of the conference. The City Innovation Office has already secured a speaking slot for the Commissioner in the main Congress programme. The Commissioner has also received invites to participate in the Microsoft and Bloomberg's 'City Innovation Commissioners' programming at the event.

3.16	Members are asked note to ICB's planned attendance at the Smart Cities World Congress. Members are asked to approve attendance by a number of officers to support work on the Sejong Innovation Twins, ICB, engagement on City Deal opportunities, and the current Belfast 5G Innovation regions programme. Belfast City Council officer travel costs would be funded by the relevant project budgets.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.17	Budgets for the initiatives noted above are funded via third-party sources, with any Council contributions identified within the existing Council budgets. Officer travel for the Smart City World Congress will be sourced from the Innovation Twins and 5G IR engagement budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.18	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Update on Hardship Programme 2023/24
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy David Sales, Strategic Director of City Operations
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Services

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the implementation of the 2023/24 Hardship Programme, which seeks to help alleviate the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living on vulnerable people across the city, and to provide an update on the budget position for a 2024/25 programme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. note the contents of this report including the update on the implementation and impact of the 2023/24 Hardship Programme; ii. consider the current budget position in relation to the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2024/25, which seeks to support those most impacted by poverty and the cost-of-living crisis; and iii. consider and agree the proposed funding framework to be adopted to support the implementation of a Hardship Programme in 2024/25 (subject to the availability of funding).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Members will be aware that the Council agreed, at its meeting in December 2023, the implementation of a £1,018,790 hardship scheme for the 2023/2024 financial year. The programme was funded through £724,600 provided by the Department for Communities, and £294,190 from Covid Support Grant underspends.
3.2	Members agreed that the hardship scheme would provide support and assistance to a range of cohorts including children and families, vulnerable individuals and families in emergency need and to enhancing the capacity of existing and high-impact support programmes. The design of the programme was based on the lessons learnt from previous schemes as well as discussions with the Members' Cost of Living Working Group and service providers in relation to potential areas of greatest need and impact from any such funding.
	<u>Implementing 2023/24 Hardship Programme</u>
3.3	The delivery of the hardship programme ended on 31 March 2024. Appendix 1 provides a high-level progress update and what has been achieved through the intensive work by our delivery partners. It should be noted that the delivery partners attended and presented to a recent meeting of the Members' Cost-of-Living Working Group to provide members with an insight into the demand for and impact of

the funding. A copy of the slide-deck is attached at **Appendix 2** for information. In summary, key delivery highlights include:

- **121 schools** supported across the city have designed projects to support children through food projects, help with uniform/stationary costs or period poverty initiatives, with over **21,000 children supported** (28 schools still to provide returns – so this number will increase)
- **23 community day care providers** delivered **16,042 hot nutritious meals to 1,187 children**
- Save the Children provided support to **913 individuals** through their early years grants programme
- Family support hubs have supported **1,271 families**
- St. Vincent de Paul have supported **3,398 people in emergency need**
- Trussell Trust have **supported 4,514 people** through 3 food banks
- Fareshare have **distributed over 37 tonnes of food** to their network of community food banks
- NEA have **supported 625 households through the Warm & Well programme**
- Age NI supported **445 older people with fuel vouchers**
- Package of programmes for children & young people, older people and families have been delivered across the **26 council community centres**.
- **Seven independent community facilities** have received funding to deliver programmes.
- **21 social supermarkets have supported over 3157 individuals** as a result of the Hardship Programme investment. (Almost 10,885 supported through the total Social Supermarket Fund).

Feedback received from delivery partners on lessons learnt

3.4 A key area of feedback received from partners related to the pressure on funding having to be spent in-year (2023-2024) and the fact that the commitment and release of funding was late in the year. This effectively meant that delivery had to take place at pace over a three-month period from January to March. This operating environment is difficult and creates pressure on officers and partners throughout programme design, delivery & monitoring stages. Partners highlighted that the level of demand for support was unprecedented and has become an all-year-round challenge for many families. Whilst recognising the budgetary pressures faced by the Council, delivery partners did highlight the need for councils and central government to consider annual recurring funding going forward and how that this would enhance their ability to plan and deliver more positive outcomes for people.

3.5 Another key area highlighted by delivery partners was the usefulness and impact of the cost-of-living support guide prepared by Council and distributed widely across the city. This helped enhance people's awareness and understanding of the types of support available across the city and to improve referral and signposting processes.

3.6 Members will note that a **Market-Place event** has been scheduled in City Hall in October 2024, It's purpose will be to recognise the impact of the hardship programme, what support has been delivered across the city as well as providing an opportunity for members of the public and delivery organisations to learn about available services and support. This event will also explore the potential to establish a stakeholder network of organisations that are working to help address poverty and cost-of-living issues through relevant services.

Budget Position for 2024/25 Hardship Programme:

3.7 As outlined earlier in the report, the 2023/24 Hardship Programme was funded through £724,600 provided by the Department for Communities, and £294,190 from Covid Support Grant underspends. The previous year (2022/23) the Fuel Poverty Hardship Programme was funded through £1.1m of Council funding.

3.8 At present, there is no certainty around funding from the Department for Communities and there is no Council allocation towards a 2024/25 Hardship Programme. While some underspend from previous years is available, the impact of this would be much less than in previous years unless additional funding can be secured.

3.9 Members may recall that at the April committee meeting SP&R agreed to provide £122,627 to fund 21 Social Supermarket Projects in the absence of a Letter of Offer from DfC to fund this area of work. In previous years DfC has provided significant funding to support social supermarkets, approximately £415,000 in 23/24. The current position is outlined in the table below.

Current available Hardship Programme 24/25 budget (from identified underspends)	£223,400*
Commitment to provide 25% funding to 21 Social Supermarket Projects (April SP&R)	£122,627
Current Balance for Hardship Programme	£100,773

Strategic approach to future commissioning of hardship support

3.10 Based on feedback from delivery partners and in order to ensure that the Council can move at pace when Hardship Funding becomes available Members are asked to consider and agree to the development of a procurement framework, which will allow funding to be distributed at pace to organisations with experience & capacity and provide the Council with assurance in relation to Audit, Governance & Risk.

Development of Funding Framework for 2024/25 Programme:

3.11

Based on constructive and positive discussions at the Cost-of-Living Task Group meetings, as well as learning from delivery partners Committee is asked to agree the following approach towards the delivery of the 2024/25 Hardship Programme (subject to the availability of funding):

(i) Thematic focus of support

The Hardship Scheme will seek to support those most vulnerable affected by the cost-of-living crisis with a key focus on enhancing the capacity of existing organisations across the following themes:

- Support to children and young people and families;
- Support to individuals/families in emergency need; and
- Support for older people.

(ii) Design principles

The Members’ Cost of Living Working Group agreed that the following guiding principles to inform and help shape the design of the emerging Hardship Fund.

- **Dignity** - delivered in a way that maintains the dignity of the person accessing support.
- **Needs driven** - targeted at those most in need and can demonstrate this.
- **Wraparound** – any individual accessing emergency support should be offered access to other wraparound services to help address need on an ongoing basis.
- **Promote sustainability** – not displace/ duplicate but add value to what is already in existence.
- **Delivery Infrastructure** - proper infrastructure (internally within BCC and externally within other organisations) is in place to support the delivery of support.

Suggested Next Steps

3.12

Members are asked to consider the next steps in taking forward a Hardship Programme for 2024/25:

Task	Target Date
Update SP&R on delivery of 2023/24 Programme and seek views on budget position for 2024/25	June 2024
Develop a funding framework based on Members feedback	July/August 2024
Seek feedback from the Cost of Living Task Group	September 2024
Seek ratification on approach from SP&R	September 2024

	Market Place event to enhance signposting and referral processes across the city	October 2024
	Establish delivery mechanisms	October 2024
	Design & Distribute Cost-of-living Support Guide	October 2024
	Delivery of Hardship Programme 2024/25	November 2024 – March 2025
	Financial & Resource Implications	
3.13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is currently £223,400 allocated identified from underspends for a Hardship Programme in 2024/25. However, there is a Commitment to provide 25% funding to 21 Social Supermarket Projects (April SP&R), which will potentially use £122,627 • This would leave £100,773 for the delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2024/25 • Given the fact that no Letter of Offer from DFC for Social Supermarkets has been received it is difficult to accurately plan the financial allocation for delivery of a Hardship Programme 24/25. 	
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment	
3.14	An Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment was undertaken for the delivery of the 2023/24 programme. This will also be the case for the delivery of any Hardship Programme for 2024/25.	
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached	
	Appendix 1: Update on Cost-of-Living Hardship Programme 2023/2024. Appendix 2: Slide deck provided to Cost of Living Task Group on 6 th June 2024	

Cost-of-Living Hardship Fund 2023/24

Progress Update

The following table provides a short update on delivery across each of the thematic areas of the cost-of-living hardship programme.

Theme	Partner(s)	Funding Agreed	Current Status
1. Support to Children and Families	Schools via Education Authority	£260,380	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 121 schools confirmed following expression of interest process (68%) ▪ Coverage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North 29 (64%) - East 23 (68%) - West 46 (87%) - South 22 (50%) ▪ Projects focussed on food poverty, support with uniform/stationary and period poverty initiatives ▪ All very positive feedback being received from schools ▪ Majority of schools have returned monitoring forms – still working with 28 schools to return monitoring information
	Sponsored/Community Day-Care (Children 0-10 years age / vulnerable children)	£24,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 23 sponsored daycare providers participated in a winter food initiative ▪ Each partner provided warm, nutritious and substantial meals to early years children ▪ 16,042 meals were provided over a 4 month period and 1,187 children benefitted from this service ▪ Feedback from the scheme indicates it was extremely beneficial for children and families and would very much welcome more consistent year round funding of the programme
	Save the Children	£100,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hardship funding enhanced delivery of STC's early years grant programme across Belfast. ▪ Delivery commenced on 1st Jan. 2024 ▪ Referrals through 13 referring partners Sure Starts and community referral partners ▪ 276 Family applications to the programme ▪ 913 individuals supported (314 adults & 599 children)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 38 pregnant mothers at the time of application <p>Early data analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 83% lone parent families • 36% of families had 3+ children in the home (largest family 8 children) • 22% families identify as coming from differing ethnicity background or mixed family ethnicity. • 47% reported a health condition/disability. • 70% are in receipt of Universal Credit • 35% unable to work due to illness or disability. • 35% with caring responsibilities for a child or other family member • 16% employed FT/PT • 61% living in social housing • 17% temp accommodation
	Family Support Hubs (network of 11 including Colin)	£175,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £94,500 spent supporting 793 families. ▪ Supported families provided with a voucher for food or utility costs ▪ 1,271 families benefitted from the support ▪ Feedback very positive – opens the door to families that haven't engaged before who can then access further wraparound support e.g. advice, budgeting
2. Support for Individuals & Families in Immediate (Emergency) Need	SVDP	£75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supported over 1,000 families and funding fully spent by 31 March ▪ Good geographical spread & has complemented existing provision ▪ 3,398 individuals supported - £55 voucher per household for food/meals.
	Age NI	£50,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age NI provided vouchers for food to the value of £100 ▪ Criteria: individual needed to be in receipt of benefits due to income, health, disability or care needs or as a carer or in hardship for other reasons/circumstances ▪ £45k in total supported 445 vulnerable older people supported with all vouchers disbursed by 31 March 2024 ▪ Referrals via Age NI Services (direct care, wellbeing and advice services)
	Generalist Advice Providers	£20,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consortium of 5 Belfast Advice Groups provided vouchers to 20 advice providers throughout the city ▪ Consortium covered North, South, East, West & Central Belfast

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 180 £100 fuel vouchers provided to individuals and families in emergency need ▪ Advice workers identified individuals in need and offered support ▪ Good geographical coverage across Belfast supported
	Trussell Trust	£30,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivery commenced in December 2023 ▪ North Belfast Foodbank – 1743 individuals received foodbank packages totalling £15,600 ▪ Dundonald Foodbank – 1665 individuals supported totalling £9,233 ▪ Southwest Foodbank – 1,100 individuals supported totalling £10,023 ▪ Three foodbanks across Belfast have delivered the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food Packages delivered (921) - People supported (2295) ▪ Feedback has been very positive but has highlighted increasing demand from residents all year round. Currently, need is outstripping stock in all foodbanks.
	Fareshare	£40,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivered 39 tonnes of food across Jan-March across 40 groups in Belfast ▪ SSM, Food Banks, Asylum, Homelessness Provision, Mindwise, Day Centres, Church Groups, Salvation Army ▪ Retail Value of £80,000 – benefit outweighed the value of funding ▪ 3,565 individuals supported ▪ Good geographical spread across Belfast ▪ Funding very much welcomed
3. Enhance Capacity of Existing Structures & Programmes	Winter Wellbeing Community Programmes	£15,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A range of programmes for children & young people, older people and families have been/are being delivered in 26 Council community centres. ▪ These have included provision of a hot meal or nutritious food/healthy snack. ▪ 7 Independently managed community centres have also received support to deliver programmes. ▪ 2,161 individuals supported, mostly pensioners groups / mother and toddlers groups using the centres as well as period products for centres.
	Warm & Well Programme	£75,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support included gas/electric vouchers to the value of £49, with households able to receive a maximum of two vouchers

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New e-voucher scheme launched on 23 January to streamline process ▪ 630 households supported ▪ NEA have enlisted 22 trusted stakeholders to support referrals 																																										
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Total beneficiaries</td> <td>630</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gender</td> <td>Female 75%</td> <td>Male 25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Age Ranges</td> <td colspan="2">30-39 26% 40-49 22% 50-59 16% 60-69 17% 70-79 7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Flu Jab</td> <td>36%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Respiratory Health</td> <td>33%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mental Health</td> <td>65%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cardiovascular</td> <td>23%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Disability</td> <td>47%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other chronic condition</td> <td>35%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Children under 18</td> <td>43%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Postcode area</td> <td colspan="2">BT7 31 % BT9 22% BT13 11%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing Status</td> <td>Social Housing 69%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Income</td> <td colspan="2">Under 8K 20% 8-12K 39% 12-16K 29%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fuel Debt</td> <td colspan="2">8% (does not reflect those who self disconnect)</td> </tr> </table>	Total beneficiaries	630		Gender	Female 75%	Male 25%	Age Ranges	30-39 26% 40-49 22% 50-59 16% 60-69 17% 70-79 7%		Flu Jab	36%		Respiratory Health	33%		Mental Health	65%		Cardiovascular	23%		Disability	47%		Other chronic condition	35%		Children under 18	43%		Postcode area	BT7 31 % BT9 22% BT13 11%		Housing Status	Social Housing 69%		Income	Under 8K 20% 8-12K 39% 12-16K 29%		Fuel Debt	8% (does not reflect those who self disconnect)	
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Social Supermarkets	£165,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 21 SSMs across the city either offering physical supermarket or food vouchers. ▪ Visits to SSMs over last few weeks have provided very positive feedback on the programme and the support that it offers. ▪ SSMs report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rising numbers of users and concern about final migration to Universal Credit. ▪ Number of users is constant; pressure on households is all year round. ▪ Stark increase of those using service that are employed. “in-work poverty” increasing at an alarming rate. ▪ Longer term strategic funding is needed. 																																										
TOTAL	£1,029,380																																											



Cost of living support

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Support and advice services to help people across the city with the high cost of living



Belfast
City Council



www.belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving



Purpose of today's meeting

Cost of living support

Officers are seeking to update members of the cost-of-living task group on the following:

- **Hardship Programme 2023/24** – Provide members with a comprehensive overview on delivery and key achievements
- **Delivery Partner Update** – Partners will provide members with a brief overview of their respective projects and any lessons learned
- **Consideration of 2024/25 Hardship Programme** – Provide members with an overview of the current budget position

Design Principles... Recap...

Cost of living support

- **Dignity** – will be delivered in a way that maintains the dignity of the person accessing support
- **Needs driven** – will be targeted at those most in need and can demonstrate this
- **Wraparound** – any individual accessing emergency support should be offered access to other wraparound services to help address need on an ongoing basis
- **Promotes sustainability** – will not displace or duplicate but add value to what is already in existence
- **Delivery Infrastructure** - proper infrastructure is in place to support delivery, monitoring and evaluation



Funding Allocations

Cost of living support

Theme	Partner(s)	Funding Allocation (indicative)
1. Support to Children and Families	Schools via Education Authority	£250,000 (increased to £260,380)
	Sponsored/Community Day-Care (Children 0-10 years age / vulnerable children)	£24,000
	Save the Children	£100,000
	Family Support Hubs (network of 10)	£175,000
	2. Support for Individuals & Families in Immediate (Emergency) Need	SVDP
	Age NI	£50,000
	Generalist Advice Providers	£20,000
	Trussell Trust	£30,000
	Fareshare	£40,000
3. Enhance Capacity of Existing Structures & Programmes	Winter Wellbeing Community Programmes	£15,000
	Warm & Well Programme	£75,000
	Social Supermarkets	£165,000
	TOTAL	£1,029,380

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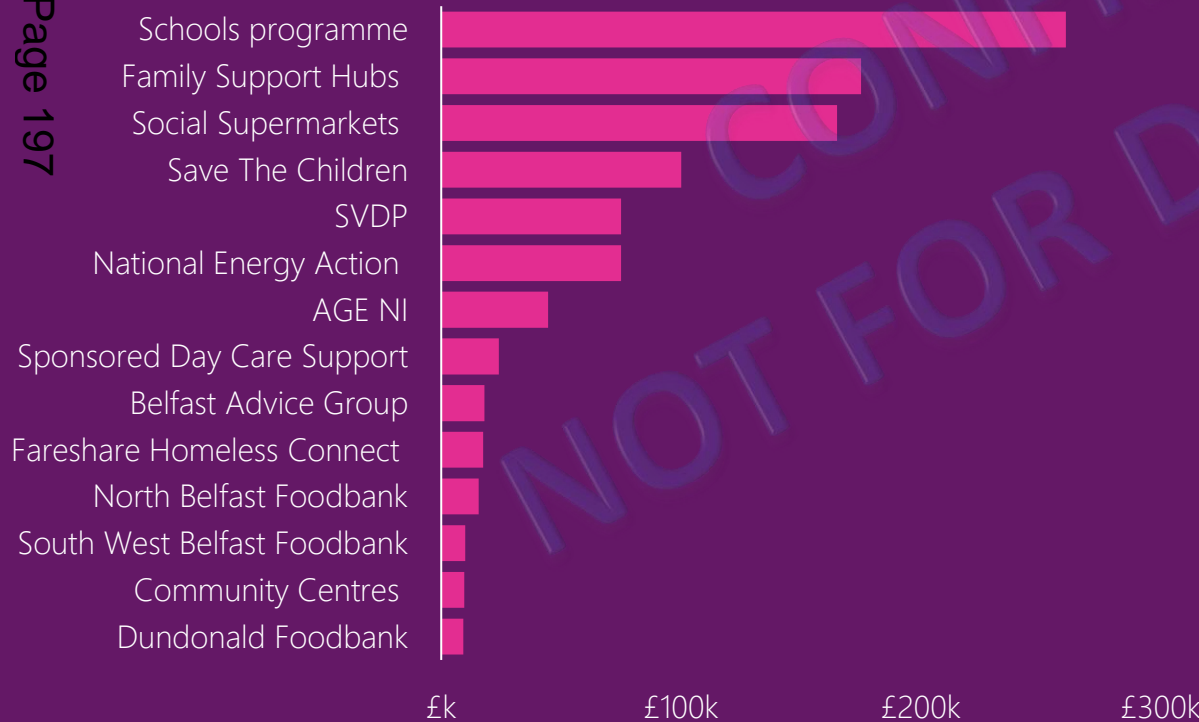
Total Funding Allocated
£1,002,852



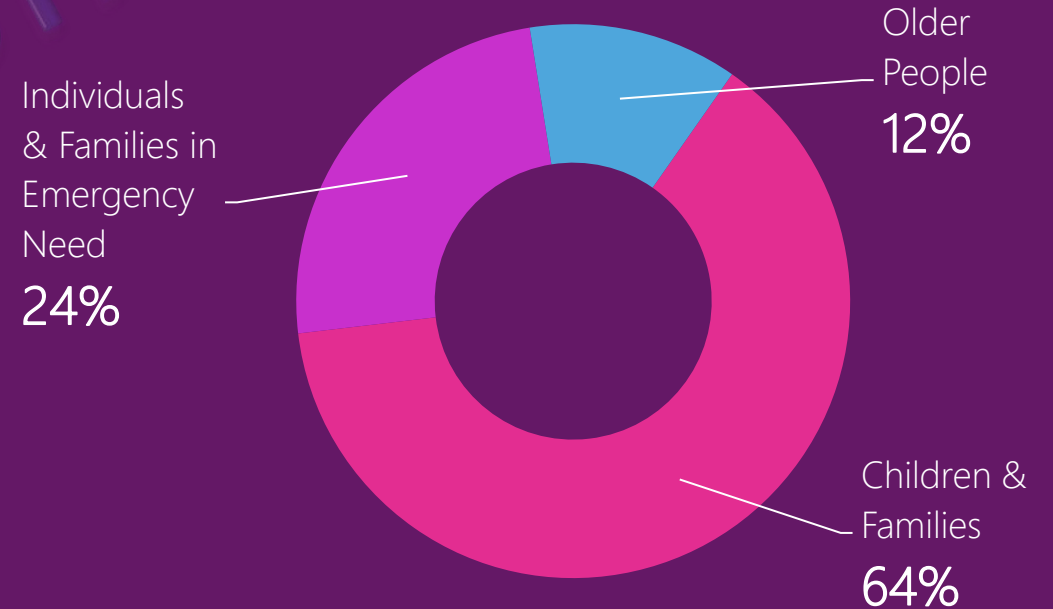
Number Of Individuals Supported
42,050

Total Funding Per Project

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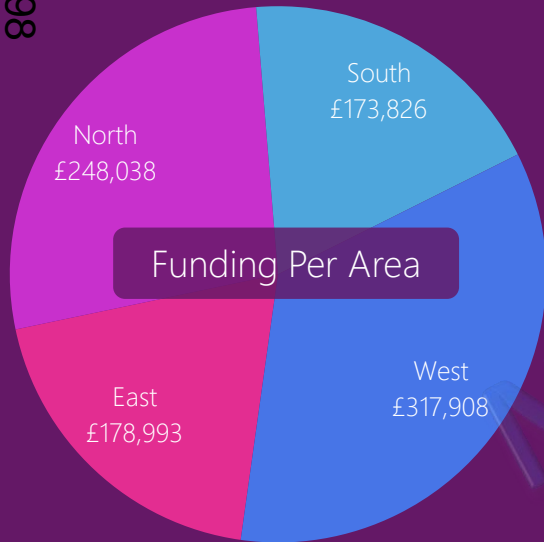
Proportion of Total Funding Per Area of Support



Total Funding
Across Belfast City Council

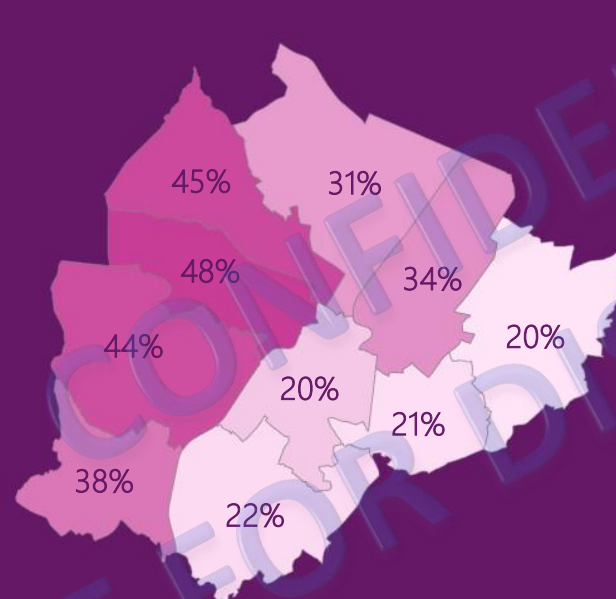
£1,002,852

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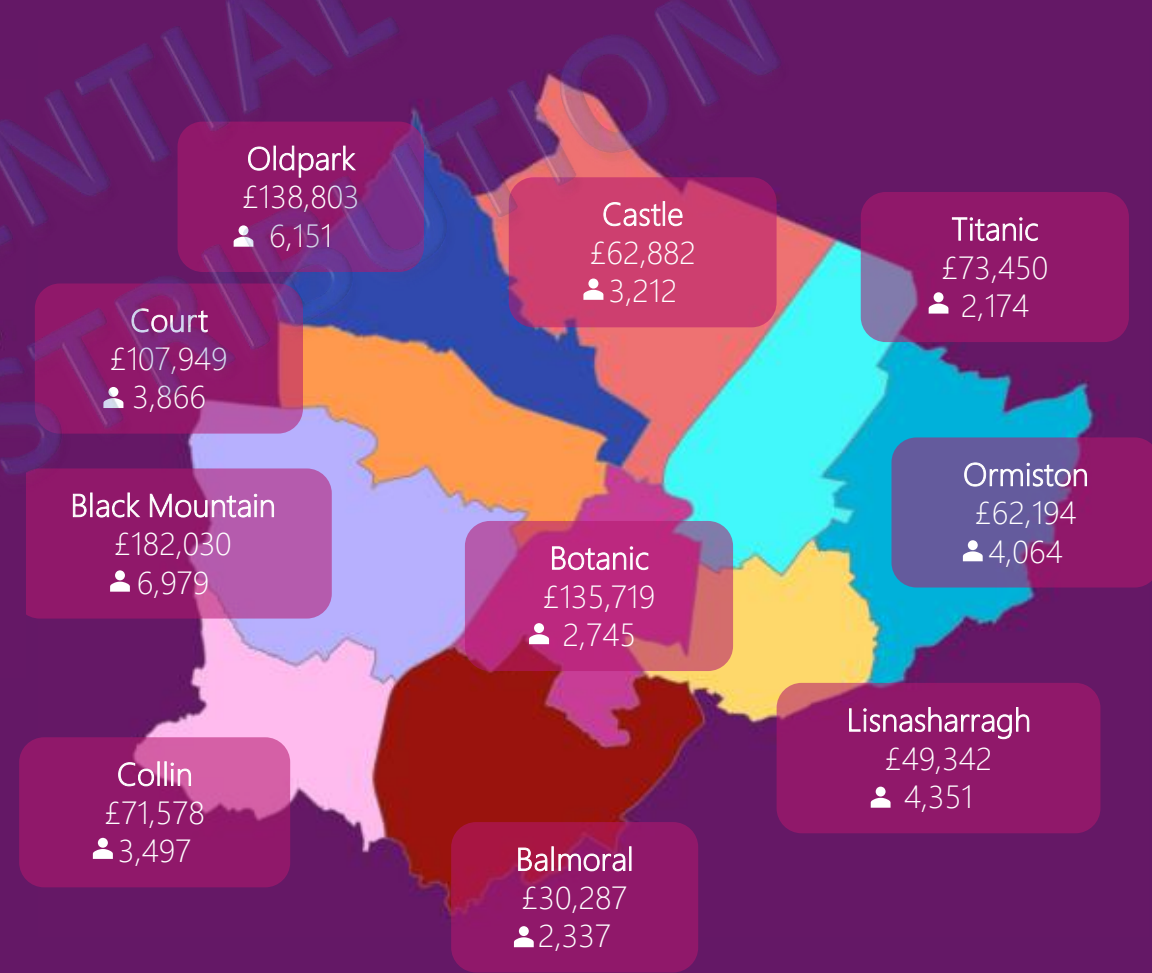


2021 Census

Proportion of households deprived in 2 or more dimensions by District Electoral Area



Area Based Funding Per District Electoral Area*



*Fareshare Homeless Connect have been excluded from District Electoral Area count.

A proxy based on household count has been used to illustrate funding disrupted across Area/District Electoral for National Energy Action and Fareshare Homeless Connect.



Total School Programme
Funding
£193,283

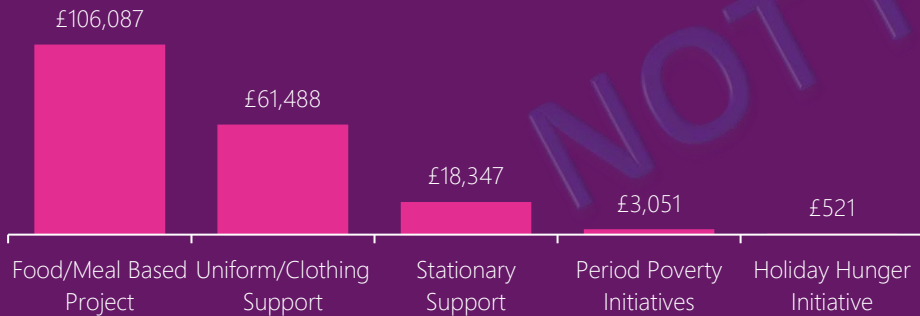
*Total of £260,380 paid to schools – still awaiting
29 Schools monitoring returns



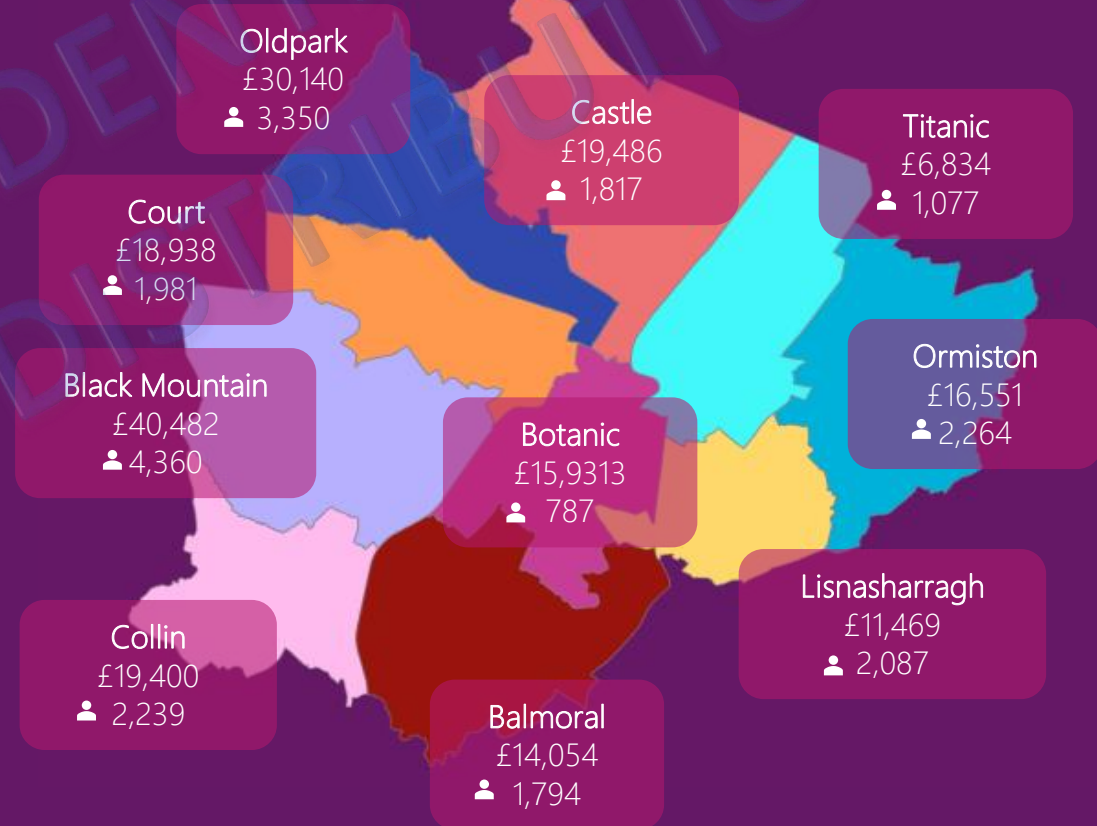
Number Of Students
Supported
21,756

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Type of Support



Area Based Funding Per District Electoral Area



Communications

Cost of living support

Your views on City Matters

How often do you read City Matters?

Always

Sometimes

This is the first time

City Matters is delivered to your door twice a year. Do you think this is:

Not often enough

About right

Too often

The council should not provide a publication of this kind

Don't know

What areas appeal to you most in City Matters?

A-Z services

Historic features (eg City Hall)

Bin information

Business articles

Green section

Zoo section

Competition

What's On

Seniors' section

It is a good way for me to find out about the council?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Any other comments?

Thank you for taking the time to tell us what you think.

Now return this slip to:

Freepost, RTHB-SJTZ-TZUJ, Belfast City Council, BT1 5GS (no stamp required)

Or email your comments to MarketingandCorporateCommunications@belfastcity.gov.uk

Belfast City Council complies with the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The personal information you provide on Your Views will only be used if we need to respond to you about your feedback. It will not be used for any other purpose and will be deleted after use.

16 City Matters Summer 2024

Help for those facing hardship

Last winter we supported thousands of people through our £1 million hardship programme in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

The programme was designed to target children and their families in need of help, plus individuals and families who needed emergency support such as help with food, fuel and other bills. We also provided funding to organisations in the city already providing support to people affected by poverty.

Below are some of examples of the support provided.



Support for individuals and families in immediate need

Over 3,500 individuals and 40,000 families received emergency support, including help with food and fuel costs, through funding we provided to St Vincent de Paul, Age NI, the Trussell Trust, Fareshare and generalist advice centres across the city.

"I'm struggling with the price of things and have had to make major cut backs with my food shopping. Knowing my two sons get an additional hot dinner in the afternoon before home time has taken a lot of pressure of me as I use the food bank every week."

Support for children and families

- Schools:** We supported 121 schools (more than 2/3 of all schools in the city). This included over 5,000 children who were fed at breakfast clubs. Other types of support included help with the cost of uniforms, stationery and period products.
- Day care providers:** 16,042 warm and nutritious meals were provided to 1,187 young children.
- Family Support Hubs:** 793 families received help with their food and utility costs.
- Save the Children:** 276 families, 913 individuals (352 adults, including 38 pregnant mothers, and 599 children) received help with household costs.

"Myself and my husband work full time and don't pick our children up until after 5pm. Knowing that our children are getting a hot meal was of great benefit to us and definitely a big support, particularly with rising costs."

Enhancing existing programmes

- Social supermarkets:** 8,400 people received help with food and other costs at 17 social supermarkets which received funding.
- Warm & Well Programme:** 630 families and individuals received help with their gas and electric bills through National Energy Action.
- Community centres:** Over 300 people were supported through programmes which including provision of free hot meals and nutritious food and snacks.

"This funding really is great as a parent that suffers from mental health issues. There are days I don't cook hot meals for myself or the children, so knowing they have a nutritious meal in nursery helps me a lot."

For contact details of organisations in Belfast offering support for those in need, visit www.belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving

Our hardship programme was possible thanks to funding from the Department for Communities.

City Matters article highlighting the overall Hardship Fund and impact including quotes will be delivered to all households' w/c 24th June

Vox Pop videos – Videographer booked for 14th June for videos with schools explaining the positive impact the hardship fund has had on their pupils and families. Video interviews will be organised for all funded projects throughout the year to highlight the impact of the hardship fund and used for councils' socials

Hardship / Anti-Poverty event in Oct to showcase the great work being done in this space. Further details to be shared in future.

 www.belfastcity.gov.uk/costofliving

Delivery Partner Updates

Cost of living support

Partners will provide a brief 5-minute overview of the support provided, to include:

- **Cohort** – description of the cohorts that were supported
- **Activity** – overview of activities
- **Referral routes** – overview of how people access services, including any assessment of need or eligibility criteria applied
- **Learning & Lived Experience** – what are the lessons learned from delivering the programme and what is needed going forward?

Hardship Programme 2024/25 Budget Position

Cost of living support

Current available Hardship Programme 24/25 budget (from identified underspends – this may increase)	£223,400*
Commitment to provide 25% funding to 21 Social Supermarket Projects (April SP&R)	£122,627
Current Balance for Hardship Programme (this is likely to increase with DfC Social Supermarket Funding)	£100,773

- There is still no certainty around funding from DfC for SSM or Hardship Funding for 2024/25
- There is currently no allocation from Council towards a 2024/25 Hardship Programme

Future Funding Framework

Cost of living
support

Key Considerations:

- Are members content to recommend support with the approach of enhancing capacity of existing structures & programmes
- Cohorts to support i.e children & families, older people, individuals and families in emergency need -
- Development of a procurement funding framework will allow funding to be distributed at pace to organisations with experience/capacity and provide AGRS assurance
- Feedback from delivery partners states that annual recurrent funding throughout the year is needed and will have more impact

Next Steps & Target Dates...

Cost of living support

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Task	Target Date
Seek initial views & feedback from Cost-of-living task group	Now
Update SP&R Re: Delivery of 2023/24 Programme and budget position for 2024/25	21 st June 2024
Develop a funding framework in more detail based on Members Feedback	July/August 2024
Seek feedback from Cost-of-Living Task Group	September 2024
Seek ratification of agreed approach from SP&R	September 2024
Market-Place event in City Hall in October to enhance signposting and referral processes across the city – potential establishment of stakeholder network	October 2024
Establishment of Delivery Mechanisms	October 2024
Design & Distribution of Cost-of-Living Booklet	October 2024
Delivery of Hardship Programme 2024/25	November 2024 – March 2025

ing

2.0	Recommendation																				
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the content of this report and approve a third apprenticeship opportunity. 																				
3.0	Main Report																				
3.1	Initial proposals on an apprenticeship programme were presented to SP&R committee in February 2023 and members agreed that a further report be submitted detailing how the proposals could be financed. At its meeting in March 2024, the Committee approved funding for two apprentices 2024/25 from realignment of specified reserves with the costs for future years to be incorporated into the medium-term financial plan.																				
3.2	Two apprenticeship opportunities were approved: one in Fleet Services and one in Digital Services. The report detailed approximate salary and training costs for the two posts of £77,000 per full year (around £45,000 for 24/25 by the time the posts are recruited).																				
3.3	The proposed costings were based on a higher-level Digital Services apprenticeship (level 4 – 7). Having had detailed engagement with Belfast Met, the Head of Digital Services has determined that a Level 3 apprenticeship better meets the needs of the service. Accordingly, the revised indicative salary costs are set out below. Members will note the reduction in annual salary costs of around £10,000.																				
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Skill area</th> <th>Level required</th> <th>Approximate BCC Salary Grade</th> <th>Approximate Annual Salary Costs per apprentice</th> <th>Approximate Annual Training costs per apprentice</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Fleet Technician</td> <td>Apprentice level 2 or 3</td> <td>Scale 2</td> <td>£30,000</td> <td>£2,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Digital services</td> <td>Apprentice level 3</td> <td>Scale 2</td> <td>£30,000</td> <td>£5,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Total indicative costs per annum</td> <td>£67,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Skill area	Level required	Approximate BCC Salary Grade	Approximate Annual Salary Costs per apprentice	Approximate Annual Training costs per apprentice	Fleet Technician	Apprentice level 2 or 3	Scale 2	£30,000	£2,000	Digital services	Apprentice level 3	Scale 2	£30,000	£5,000				Total indicative costs per annum	£67,000
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Digital services	Apprentice level 3	Scale 2	£30,000	£5,000																	
			Total indicative costs per annum	£67,000																	
3.4	<p>Revised proposal</p> <p>Following further discussion with City & Neighbourhood Services, the department has advised that based on previous experience, recruiting 2 apprentices to work alongside each other, increases learning and the support provided by a “buddy” to each other, can also increase the chances of an apprentice completing the training programme.</p>																				

Peer support for the Digital Services apprenticeship will be provided by the service's two industrial placement students.

- 3.5 The revised annual cost of 2 Fleet Technician and one Digital Service's apprentice is approximately £99,000, this is around £61,000 for the 24/25 financial year. The Director of Finance has confirmed that an additional cost of £16,000 could be funded from firstly in year underspends, if available, or re-alignment of specified reserves. As proposed previously, costs for future years will be incorporated into the medium-term financial plan. Members are asked to approve the recruitment of an additional Fleet Technician apprentice.

Recruitment and employability outreach.

- 3.6 The Fleet Technician Apprentice post will be recruited in July 2024 with a view to starting the apprenticeship programme in September 2024. The Digital Analyst Apprentice post will be recruited during September 2024 with a view to starting the apprenticeship programme in November 2024.

- 3.7 A programme of employability outreach will be delivered in line with inclusive growth ambitions. Corporate HR will work with Place & Economy Department to ensure the opportunities are promoted across all four inclusive growth cohorts and other groups currently underrepresented in our workforce. The outreach activity will focus on the apprenticeship opportunities (the job roles) as well as the benefits of working for the Council.

- 3.8 Members are reminded that at the completion of an apprenticeship programme, where permanent vacancies exist and the number of qualified apprentices is equal to the number of permanent jobs, apprentices are automatically appointed permanently to those posts. Where the number of vacancies is less than the number of qualified apprentices, the posts are ringfenced to the qualified apprentices, a selection process undertaken, and appointments made in order of merit.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 The Financial implications are set above out at 3.3 and 3.5 above.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 Recruitment for an apprenticeship programme will be carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection.

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Diversity Mark Summit 2024 - Sponsorship
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Catherine Christy, Corporate HR Manager - Development

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

- After Committee Decision
- After Council Decision
- Sometime in the future
- Never

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval to sponsor the Diversity Mark Summit 2024 taking place at Titanic Belfast on 8 October 2024.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to the sponsorship of the Diversity Mark Summit.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Council was one of the founding signatory organisations to the Gender Diversity Charter in 2017. Now “Diversity Mark”, this membership organisation provides support to employers to make and demonstrate progressive improvement in creating an inclusive & diverse workplace. The Council currently holds Silver Accreditation and works closely with Diversity Mark on a number of initiatives and forums aimed at sharing and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion best practice.</p>
3.2	<p>The theme for ‘EDI 2.0 – is from Action to Impact’. The headline sponsor for this event is Allstate, and the Council has been invited along with a small number of other organisations to join the forum that curates this annual event as supporting sponsors.</p>
3.3	<p>The benefits for sponsoring organisations are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Involvement: Gain a seat on the newly formed EDI Forum. The forum will support on shaping the strategic direction of this annual summit and meet to explore best practice and global trends in EDI as identified by Diversity Mark. • Prominent Recognition: Elevate your organisation’s profile with extensive recognition and promotional opportunities throughout the summit as a valued supporting sponsor, ensuring visibility among industry leaders and decision-makers. • Exclusive Attendance: Secure up to 15 in-person summit passes for employees, promoting diversity from senior levels throughout, with the flexibility to invite guests or donate tickets to charitable organisations. • Thought Leadership Platform: Opportunity to showcase your expertise by speaking at the summit or suggesting influential speakers. • Comprehensive Branding: Benefit from extensive branding across all promotional materials, advertisements, and the website, with logo prominently displayed throughout the summit venue as a supporting sponsor, reinforcing your organisation’s commitment to EDI and its pivotal role in driving economic growth and inclusivity.

	Financial and Resource Implications
3.4	The investment required for this sponsorship is £2000 which will be met from the existing Organisational Development budget.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.5	Sponsorship of this event will allow the Council to demonstrate its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as well as showcase our best practice as an employer and civic leader.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None

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Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
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6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which

	<p>the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report includes a review of recently completed and underway physical projects, along with requests for approvals relating to the Capital Programme.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Programme Half Year Update - note the overall update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently under construction at 3.1 to 3.5 below and in Appendix 1; and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway. • RICS Awards – note that two Council projects recently won prestigious NI RICS Awards in the Heritage category for Templemore Baths and also for St. Comgall's in the Refurbishment category and will now go on to compete in the National Finals in London in October. Approval is sought for the Chair of the SP&R Committee or their nominee along with a senior officer to attend the awards in October. • Capital Programme – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HWRCs & Civic Amenity Sites – Containers (Skips and Compactors) – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £675,000 be allocated. ○ IT Programme – C&NS Case Management Solution – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
3.0	<p>Main report</p> <p><u>Key Issues</u></p>
3.1	<p><u>Physical Programme Half Year Update</u></p> <p>Members are aware of the scale of the Council's Physical Programme via a range of internal and external funding streams. Members are advised that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway. Below is a brief summary of projects completed since February, as well as a sample of projects currently underway.</p>

3.2	<p><u>Awards and recognition</u></p> <p>Two of the Council’s recently completed capital projects have been successful at the prestigious Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Awards held on 21 May – winning in the Heritage category for Templemore Baths and also for St. Comgall’s in the Refurbishment category. The awards recognise and celebrate the most inspirational initiatives and developments across the UK and the projects are going forward as finalists for October’s national awards. Approval is sought for the Chair of the SP&R Committee or their nominee along with a senior officer to attend the awards in October.</p> <p>In addition, the VOYPIC project delivered by the Council was shortlisted in the Refurbishment category. Templemore Baths and St Joseph’s Church Sailortown were also shortlisted in the Heritage Angel Awards organised by Ulster Architectural Heritage.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Recently completed projects:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Hall Statues – Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken – sculptures of both women have been installed in the grounds of Belfast City Hall. Mary Ann McCracken was an abolitionist, social reformer and activist who fought for the rights of women and championed Belfast’s poor, and Winifred Carney was a suffragist, trade unionist and Irish independence activist. The unveilings took place on International Women’s Day in March. • Pitt Park – the £1.7 million redevelopment of Dr Pitt Memorial Park is now complete, funded by Urban Villages. The park has created an attractive, safe and accessible area where families, children, and people of all ages can get active, have fun and enjoy the rich heritage of the area. • Paisley Park Sportsplex – the improvement project is now complete and included the installation of the 3G pitch, floodlighting and also new changing facilities. Funded by DfC. • Belfast Bikes Expansion – new bike stations are now installed at Sandown Road, Drumglass and Glencairn. • Playground Improvement Programme – improvements are now complete at Loughside Park and Northlink playgrounds. • Bredagh GAC (BIF) – completion of refurbishment of the club’s premises to provide a multi-purpose hall, meeting and IT rooms, kitchen facilities, installation of a new lift, new roof and external improvements. • Greater Shankill Community Council (BIF and SOF) – completion of refurbishment of the building including installation of accessible door, lift to all floors, and new shop frontage. • LORAG (LIF) – community garden project is complete (see also below for Lockhouse); • Somme Cross-Community Memorial (LIF) – completion of environmental improvements at the Garden of Remembrance including installation of a Cairn stone monument;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tullycarnet Outdoor Gym (LIF) – project completed. • Holylands Area Improvement Initiatives (LIF) – completion of environmental improvements which included tree planting. • Musgrave Car Park – completion of environmental improvements to car park including asphalt surfacing and line marking.
3.4	<p><u>Physical projects underway:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF): a total of 16 significant scale projects have now progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery stage under the £10m+ NRF Programme. Procurements are well underway for the majority of schemes dependent on the requirements of each scheme. Officer support remains in place for projects at Stage 2. • Ballysillan Playing Fields -this is a £7.5m partnership project with DfI's Living with Water Programme, DfC and Urban Villages. Design and engagement stages have been carried out and Planning permission has been secured. It is anticipated that the contractor will be on site in Autumn. • Lagan Gateway Greenway Phase 2 – work continues on the next stages of this major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections. • The Lockhouse - this £2.7m partnership project will reimagine a historic and culturally important residential building along the Lagan towpath into a community focal point for good relations activity and cross-community partnership working including minority ethnic communities. Remaining elements funded by DfC, DfI and Urban Villages. Works underway on site. • ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub – Phase 2 of the project is continuing on site comprising a community café, boxing club, minor halls, community gym and office space. Part of the Urban Villages Initiative. • Playground Improvement Programme – New Lodge playground is due to be completed in June. • LIF and BIF - a total of 2 projects on site under the BIF Programme, 18 completed to date; and a total of 5 projects are on the ground under the LIF Programme, 127 projects completed to date. • Corporate projects – a range of capital IT projects via Digital Services to ensure business continuity including the completion of the e5 Financial Replacement System; and ongoing delivery of Fleet Replacement Programme via City & Neighbourhoods Services.

3.5 **Physical projects in development:**

The remainder of the Physical Programme includes projects in the development stage (*Stage 2 – Uncommitted, Stage 1 – Emerging* or equivalent) including:

- **Capital Programme:** Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, Belfast Stories, Reservoir Safety Programme, Alleygates Phase 5, LTP Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Waste Plan, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery, Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Black Mountain, Sydenham Greenway, Glencairn Park/Ligoniel Park Greenway, Black Mountain / Upper Whiterock Greenway, Colin Greenway, City Hall – Installation of 2 Stained Glass Windows.
- **A range of other schemes** including the remaining LIF, BIF and SOF projects.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

3.6 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities.

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

Project	Overview	Stage movement
HWRC & CAS Containers	The project involves the replacement of containers (compactors and skips) at HWRCs and Civic Amenity sites in order to maintain service continuity and health & safety standards.	Stage 3 – Committed: Proceed to contractor appointment with a maximum budget of £675,000
IT Programme – C&NS Case Management Solution	This project will replace the existing IT system (APP) for the regulatory management functions, to ensure procurement, legal and GDPR compliance.	Move to Stage 3 - Committed

3.8 **HWRCs & Civic Amenity Sites - Containers**

Members will be aware that the Containers (Skips and Compactors) project was approved at SP&R Committee in October 2023 to move to *Stage 3 - Committed* project on the Capital Programme. Members agreed that the necessary procurement processes be initiated as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. **Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has now been achieved and it is recommended that a maximum of £675,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.**

3.9	<p>IT Programme – C&NS Case Management Solution</p> <p>This project is part of the overall IT Programme and will replace the existing IT system (the Authority Public Protection software case management system or APP) for the regulatory management functions, to ensure procurement, legal and GDPR compliance. The current system has been in place since 2005. The new system will be a single modern and intuitive system designed to embed mobile technology and digitally transform how CNS plan, manage and monitor service delivery across core units. Members are asked to recommend that the IT Programme - C&NS Case Management Solution project now progresses to Stage 3 – Committed and that it is held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p><i>Financial</i> – Capital Programme - HWRCs & Civic Amenity Sites – Containers – a maximum of £675,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.</p> <p><i>Resources</i> – Officer time to deliver as required</p>
3.11	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 - Photos of completed projects (February – Mid June 2024)</p>

Physical Programme Completed Projects

February – June 2024



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City Council

City Hall Statues

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Belfast
City Council

City Hall Statues



Pitt Park

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Pitt Park



Paisley Park

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Belfast Bikes Expansion – Sandown Rd



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Belfast Bikes Expansion - Drumglass

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Belfast Bikes Expansion - Glencairn

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Playground Improvement - Loughside

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Playground Improvement - Northlink

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Bredagh GAC

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Greater Shankill Community Council



LORAG – community garden

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Tullycarnet Outdoor Gym



Holylands Area Improvement Initiatives

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Somme – cross community memorial



Musgrave Park car park

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2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Committee is asked to approve the minutes of the meetings of South AWG - 20 May, West AWG - 22 May, North AWG - 28 May, West AWG (special) - 5 June, East AWG of 6 June and South AWG (special) - 10 June 2024 as attached.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Area Working Group Minutes</u> It was agreed in June 2016 that the minutes of the meetings of the Area Working Groups would be presented to the SP&R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups. The Committee is asked to approve the most recent meeting, as attached.
	<u>South AWG – 20 May 2024</u>
3.2	Members of the South AWG agreed to recommend the following allocations for the additional £53,893 for South Belfast under NRF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £26,946 to Hearth Historic Buildings Trust - Redevelopment of Riddel's Warehouse, and; - £26,946 to Sólás Special Needs Charity - Sólás New Build Project.
	<u>West AWG – 22 May 2024</u>
3.3	Members of the West AWG agreed to recommend the following allocations for the additional £93,878 for West Belfast under NRF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £37,058 to Michael Davitt's GAC - Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre - £37,058 to Glór na Móna - Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' Phase 1; and; - £19,762 (Shankill) to be retained as a contingency for the Shankill projects.
3.4	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> Financial – All NRF allocations are part of the £10,280,000 already agreed for NRF. Resources – None.
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u> The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund has been equality screened.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Minutes – Meeting - South Belfast Area Working Group 20 May 2024 Appendix 2 - Minutes – Meeting – West Belfast Area Working Group 22 May 2024 Appendix 3 - Minutes – Meeting - North Belfast Area Working Group 28 May 2024 Appendix 4 - Minutes – Special Meeting - West Belfast Area Working Group 5 June 2024 Appendix 5 - Minutes – Meeting - East Belfast Area Working Group 6 June 2024 Appendix 6 - Minutes – Special Meeting - South Belfast Area Working Group 10 June 2024

South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 20th May, 2024

MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND
REMOТЕLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); and
Councillors Bunting, T. Brooks,
Kelly, Lyons, McKay and McKeown.

In attendance: Mr. J. Girvan, Director (Operational) City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Physical Programmes Portfolio Manager;
Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services
Integration Manager;
Ms. E. Gowdy, Lead Officer OSS;
Mr. D. O'Kane, Acting Planning Manager, Plan and Policy;
Mr. C. Campfield, Acting Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision;
Mr. S. Lavery, Programme Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors McAteer and McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd April, 2024 were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Physical Programme Update

Given that a Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership meeting was due to commence shortly, and that some Members were also due to attend it, the Working Group agreed that the Physical Programme Update be considered first as the first item of business.

The Working Group was provided with a detailed report in respect of projects under a range of funding streams, including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), the Social outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF). The report also included information on projects which the Council was delivering on behalf of other agencies.

The Working Group noted the recently completed projects including the recently installed statues of Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken within the grounds of the City Hall, the expansion of the Belfast Bikes to Drumglass and the Holylands Area Improvement Initiative under the LIF programme.

At the suggestion of officers, the Working Group agreed to remove the Belfast Islamic Centre from the BIF long list, as the project had since been completed with funding from other sources.

The Working Group was advised that an additional £53,893 had been reallocated to the South NRF and it was being asked to consider recommending allocating it to any existing projects which had already passed the threshold level or which had already been agreed at Stage 3 – Delivery.

Moved by Councillor Murray
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Working Group agrees to allocate £26,946 to the Redevelopment of Riddell's Warehouse and £26,946 to the Sólás New Build Project.

A number of Members stated that they felt that the funding should instead be split equally between all the Stage 3 groups.

A further Member stated that some of the projects at Stage 3 had already been allocated their full requested amount of funding and therefore did not require any additional money.

On a vote by show of hands, on the proposal standing in the name of Councillor Murray, four Members voted for the proposal and three against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Presentation from the Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. A. Walsh, Chairperson, Ms. B. McElhill, Secretary, and Mr. J. Pilcher, Botanist, to the meeting.

Mr. Walsh outlined that Belfast Botanic Gardens was the only of its kind in Northern Ireland, with a magnificent collection of trees and plants. It had been created on the current site in 1828 and, therefore, it would be celebrating its 200th anniversary in four years.

He explained that the Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens (FoBBG) was established in the 1990s and was a charity in law. The Working group was advised that they had a good working relationship with the gardeners and the Council Officers who managed the gardens. The charity actively promoted and raised the profile of the Botanic

Gardens, educated the public, helped to conserve the buildings and enhanced the plant collections by raising funds for investment in the gardens. He reported that the charity had contributed £25,000 towards the restoration of the Tropical Ravine.

The charity had curated a database of trees in the gardens and had created a Global Medicine Garden, a collaborative project with the Council and the Botanic gardeners. They had also initiated the new labelling of trees in the gardens, with the first batch of 200 labels having been completed.

Mr. Walsh outlined that, being the only Botanic Garden in NI and therefore a unique asset for BCC, FoBBG felt that the Gardens should be differentiated from other parks under the control of the Council. He stated that they felt that it deserved a masterplan for the development of the gardens and that there was a perceived lack of earmarked investment in the gardens. He reported that they felt that more staff with horticultural skills were required.

He stated that, with a renewed focus on looking forward to the 200th anniversary and beyond, the Botanic Gardens could be the jewel in the crown of the industrial and Victorian heritage of the city and rated as a world class destination to visit.

The Members were advised that FoBBG had had informal talks with Council officers to examine ways of improving the status of the gardens as a Botanic Garden. Mr. Walsh requested that the Working Group would consider formalising those talks and draft a terms of reference which would then form the basis for an independent report on the gardens. As well as looking at areas for improvement as a botanic garden, the report would also look at how the Botanic Gardens could meet the challenges of surviving in an uncertain period of climate change while also meeting key targets of the Belfast Agenda.

A number of Members thanked the representatives for their informative presentation and particularly for highlighting that the 200 year anniversary of the Botanic Gardens would take place in 2028.

In response to a Member's question as to any specific requests which they had for the Botanic Gardens, Mr. Pilcher stated that there was currently no budget line for purchasing plants and that was something which they would like to see rectified.

The Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that a draft Terms of Reference be drawn up to form the basis for an independent report on Belfast Botanic Gardens.

Local Development Plan - Local Policies Plan (Verbal update)

The Principal Planning Officer and the Senior Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Emerging Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and set out the Council's growth strategy up to 2035. The Working Group was advised that it mirrored the aims of the Belfast Agenda and set out operational policies against which all planning applications would be assessed. The LPP would set out development zonings and Key Site Requirements and other site specific proposals related to sites and allocations.

The Members were advised that a Call for Sites had closed on 1st March, 2024, which provided an early opportunity for engagement to suggest sites, for example, for housing or commercial retail. Belfast was the first authority to do this in Northern Ireland and it had provided an opportunity to draw in a variety of stakeholders, mostly targeting private land assets.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of Lands for Protection within South Belfast, including the Settlement Development Limit, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

The Members were advised that officers would plan workshops to discuss the LPP with Members in more detail.

Noted.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs) - Verbal update

The Lead Officer (Community Provision) reported that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in February 2024, had agreed that £20,000 would be allocated to each of the four areas of the city for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the additional schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the City.

He explained that officers had attended a summer provision planning meeting organised by the Education Authority's Special Education team, involving Special Schools, Councils and charity and voluntary organisations. At that meeting, officers had been able to engage directly with the principals of Belfast Special Schools to understand the challenges and opportunities with which they were faced.

The Members were advised that, working with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's (BHSCT) Locality Planning Co-ordinator, officers had carried out an expression of interest exercise to all 470 members of the Belfast Locality Planning Group, sponsored Day Care providers and Special Schools. 22 organisations had replied to the questionnaire advising of their potential to deliver programming.

Council officers had attended the Belfast meetings of the Special Schools Partnership pilots, identified under Children and Young People theme within the Belfast Agenda. The Belfast schools involved were Glenveagh in south Belfast and Clarawood in east Belfast. Other organisations in attendance included the Education Authority's Special Education Team, Sólás, the Mae Murray Foundation, Guide Dogs NI, Middle Town Autism and Angel Eyes NI, to explore potential for collaborative approaches. That group had advised that the time frame required to pilot a safe and properly resourced holiday was too short for the summer of 2024, and they had committed to look at developing a model from September for a trial delivery during the Easter of 2025. Council officers would continue to attend that partnership.

Officers had met with the BHSCT staff to discuss the potential to extend funding through the Family Support Hubs. Due to time and resource pressures within the sector there was not capacity to extend delivery beyond the current planned programming.

Officers therefore requested that the Area Working Group would agree to support a recommendation to provide £12,480 for Sólás to provide a six week scheme and to give

permission for officers to continue to engage with the sector and source additional providers which had yet to confirm detailed proposals and summary costings.

The Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that £12,480 be allocated to Sólás, to provide a six week scheme in the summer of 2024, and also for officers to continue to engage with the sector and source additional providers.

Visit to Belfast Islamic Centre - date to be agreed

It was agreed that a number of dates would be circulated to the Members of the Working Group to determine the most suitable day for the visit to take place.

Request for a Special Meeting re: Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Working Group was advised that the reporting officers on the Citywide Strategic Site Assessments were out of the country and were requesting a Special meeting. A decision had been taken at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023 to outline emerging proposals on the strategic site assessment work to the Area Working Groups. The Place and Economy Department was keen to outline the strategic review of Council assets, on a citywide basis, for housing-led regeneration, which included Council assets, in conjunction with wider public and private sectors.

The Working Group agreed to hold a Special Meeting on Monday, 10th June, at 5.15pm.

Chairperson

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South Belfast Area Working Group

Monday, 10th June, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF SOUTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: The Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray);
Councillors T. Brooks, Bunting, Groogan,
Kelly, McAteer, McKay and McKeown.

In attendance: Ms. C. Reynolds, City Regeneration and
Development;
Ms. P. Conway; Regeneration Development Surveyor;
Mr. A. Ferguson, Senior Development Manager;
Mr. M. Kelly, Regeneration Project Officer;
Ms. E. Gowdy, Lead Officer OSS; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by The Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray) and

Resolved – that Councillor McKeown be elected to serve as
Chairperson of the South Area Working Group until the date of the Annual
Council Meeting in 2025.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Citywide Strategic Site Assessment

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update in terms of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) programme across the city. She explained that this followed previous decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth Committees to undertake strategic site assessments of Council owned lands across the city to identify potential for housing led or mixed-use regeneration, either in isolation or in partnership with the private/voluntary sector or other statutory agencies. She referred to the report which had been circulated which highlighted that housing led regeneration had been identified as a corporate priority and a priority within the Belfast Agenda. Following a recommendation of the Strategic

Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023 it was agreed to bring emerging proposals in respect of Council assets city wide to respective Area Working Groups.

The Director provided an update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 which included a number of strategic Council owned city centre lands as well as a partnership approach in respect of adjoining public sector lands. Concept regeneration plans, community and stakeholder engagement and planning Pre-Application Discussions had been undertaken in respect of a number of cluster sites, some of which were located in the southern part of the city centre. She advised that following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of September 2023, the Council was currently undertaking a Competitive Dialogue procurement process for a long-term partner for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration across these sites, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity. She advised that recommendations on the outcome of this would be brought to Elected Members later in the year.

The Members were also reminded that it had previously been reported to both the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in September 2023, that a Development Brief for lands in the ownership of the Department for Communities (DfC) and Belfast City Council at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St (the Inner North West Development Brief) had been reissued following input from DfC (as the land owner of part of the lands) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The Members were reminded that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decision, the reframed brief had been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return of 28th June 2024.

The Director also referred to the Housing Led Regeneration Group which had been established under the Belfast Agenda Community Planning structures, chaired by the NIHE Chief Executive and included senior officers from BCC, NIHE, DfC, LPS and SIB. She reported that a key task of this group had been to identify and map public lands across the city with potential for housing led regeneration as well as identifying strategic private sector land opportunities and exploring partnership opportunities and identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

As a second phase of the Strategic Site Assessments programme, and as agreed by Council, a comprehensive assessment had been undertaken in respect of Council lands across the city to ascertain the potential for housing led and /or mixed-use regeneration. This had also included working in partnership with other public sector bodies as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Group to include wider public land review and where appropriate to also include private sector land.

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director updated the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work. She advised that the policy context across the various policies and plans included:

- By 2035 to deliver to 31,600 new homes, with 8,000 units within city centre and to increase population by 66,000 people;
- To increase city centre living across all tenure types;
- To identify publicly owned land for housing and mixed use developments;
- To see Belfast transition to an inclusive, low carbon climate resilient economy; and

- To recognise that housing was an equivocal lever for economic development.

She referred to various barriers and challenges associated with demand and housing supply and the potential role for Council. The Members considered and discussed potential assessments/options for housing led/mixed use regeneration for various Council owned lands identified through this SSA process in the south of the city. It was highlighted that these were intended to be initial high level options for consideration by the Members to help inform next steps.

The Director advised that officers had been working with Mr K. Carlin, Carlin Planning Ltd to consider potential options for the various lands. Mr. Carlin was welcomed to the meeting. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director and Mr. Carlin provided the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work.

During discussion on barriers to bringing forward increased residential development including city centre living, the Director advised the Members that one of the constraints was that Belfast did not have access to certain funds which were available in England to assist with development and viability issues, such as the Brownfield Infrastructure Levy Fund.

Given the finite suitability of public lands across the city, the Members were encouraged to advise officers of any lands they considered might potentially have housing led regeneration potential and which could be assessed through the work of the HLRG referenced above.

Noted.

Chairperson

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West Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 22nd May, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

- Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson),
Councillors Black, Canavan, M. Donnelly,
R. M Donnelly, Duffy, Canavan, Garrett,
McCabe, McDowell, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin and Verner.
- In attendance: Ms. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration Manager;
Mr. D. Logan, Programme Delivery Manger;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer - Community Provision; and
Mr. D. O’Kane, Planning Manager, Plan and Policy;
Mr. C. Campfield, Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 28th February 2024 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation from BUILD Shankill

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. B. Drummond representing BUILD Shankill.

Mr. Drummond provided an overview of the Shankill BUILD (Better Understanding in Land Development) project. He advised that it had evolved from a Communities in Transition programme led by Greater Shankill Community Network. It began at the start of 2021 with a survey and scoping exercise identifying derelict and unused land and sites in the Shankill, particularly on the arterial routes.

He explained that the BUILD Shankill Working Group had identified 82 undeveloped, vacant or derelict sites within the Greater Shankill area that were either in public or private ownership and was committed to developing innovative and community-led approaches to addressing these as well as lobbying and campaigning for Government backed intervention to improve the local environment through an increase in public and private investment.

He highlighted that the regeneration and redevelopment of the vacant sites was not just the building of houses and that different sites needed different interventions. He advised that the Group had explored best practice models and a wider framework for economic drivers. He pointed out that 57 of the 82 sites had development potential.

Mr. Drummond provided details of feasibility assessments and cost evaluation that had been undertaken, together with the Groups vision and strategic long-term investment objectives.

During discussion, the Working Group highlighted the importance of the project and its links to the city centre core and the Belfast Agenda.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Drummond for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Presentation from St Michael's Amateur Boxing Club

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting representatives of St Michael's Amateur Boxing Club.

Mr. J. Pollock, Club Chairman, provided an overview of the work of the club to tackle deprivation and provide important community outreach in the area, together with the Club's ambitious plans to develop its industrial unit.

He highlighted that the dream of the club was to open its own purpose-built facility where people from all backgrounds from the local area could come and take part in boxing and exercise and gain all the benefits of being involved in the healthy activities the sport had to offer, both contact and non-contact.

He advised that their current provision included:

- Boxing;
- Exercise Programmes;
- School Engagement;
- Partnership Work; and
- Social Provision and Community Outreach.

He outlined the Club's Sports Development Plan and stated that, currently, they were unable to facilitate a large number of users, due to the size of the unit which did not have changing facilities. He highlighted that they could not cater for males and females at the same time, and could only facilitate up to 20 users, due to the restricted space.

He described the facility ambitions and plan for the site, together with costings and potential funding streams.

During discussion, the Working Group praised the work of the club and the importance of providing a space to introduce females to the sport, together with future proofing the club.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the contents of the presentation.

Physical Programme Update

The Working Group considered the following report:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- **Note the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1):**
 - **Belfast Bikes Expansion – Glencairn Station – Capital Programme.**
 - **Playground Improvement Programme – Northlink Playground – Capital Programme.**
 - **Paisley Park Sportsplex Refurbishment – DfC funded project.**
- **Note the reallocation of an additional £93,878 to West NRF (£74,116 for West and £19,762 for Shankill) and consider any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.**

3. Local Investment Fund

Members are reminded LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation. (LIF 1 – West - £1,127,500 + Shankill £490,000 and LIF 2 - £1,400,000).

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 50 projects have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 49 have been completed and 1 project is at delivery stage. In total, 98% of all LIF West projects have been completed. Further details of these are outlined below.

LIF breakdown – West	LIF 1		LIF 2	
Stage/ Description	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	25 (100%)	£1,617,500	24 (96%)	£1,341,788
Number of Projects On-going Delivery			1 (4%)	£58,212
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)				
Total Number of Approved Projects	25	£1,617,500	25	£1,400,000

The table below shows an overview of the remaining live project:

LIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
WLIF2-08	Berlin Swifts Football Club	LIF £65,085; SOF £113,000	On Ground	NI Water have advised sewer connection is scheduled for this week (w/c 20 May). All other works complete.	Continue engagement with NI Water.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration, partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment. The West AWG had a total allocation of £9m comprising £5.5m from the original allocation, an additional £1.2m which was ring-fenced for projects in the Shankill area when this became part of the West AWG following the Council elections in 2015, and £2.5m which was ringfenced for projects in the Colin area following LGR.

6 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF accounting for the full allocation. Each of the 'In-Principle' projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. Table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

West	<p>Stage 3—Davitt's GAC—£1m; Raidió Fáilte—£950k; St Comgall's-£3.5m; Colin Glen Forest Park—£2.5m; Greater Shankill Community Council - RBL project- £300k, Glencairn Community Project— £700k</p> <p>Stage 2— St Mary's CBS— no commitment</p> <p>Stage 1— An Sportslann; Suffolk Community Forum; Belfast Hills- Black Mountain Access—no commitment</p>
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF09	Glencairn Community Project	BIF- £700,000; NRF- £200,000	Committed; Due Diligence	Smaller scale concept design agreed. Procurement underway for design team (PQQ stage) with tender due to be issued in June 2024. Discussions on land continuing with NIHE.	Continue engagement with the group.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is a £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. 5 projects in West Belfast received an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to LIF and BIF, all projects are subject to a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

SOF – West Belfast projects overview

West	<p>Stage 3— James Connolly Interpretative Centre—£650,000; Rock Centre — £200,000; Belfast Orange Hall Museum- £80,000; Roddy McCorley Museum - £1,350,000; Berlin Swifts Football Club - £113,000; Greater Shankill Community Council - £507,000; Shankill Road Environmental Improvement Project - £50,000; Woodvale Park - £80,000</p>
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An overview of the remaining SOF projects is outlined in the table below –

SOF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
SOF10	Shankill Road Environmental Improvement Project	£50,000	Complete	Funding agreement for Phase 2 to be prepared. Due	Continue engagement with the group.

				Diligence complete. Progressing.	
SOF13	Woodvale Park	SOF: £80,000; IFA/ DMCS: £120,000	On Ground	Project is on site and progressing.	Continue engagement with key stakeholders.

6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Members will note that in April 2024, Council agreed an additional allocation of £280,000 to NRF on top of the original £10m. Following the agreed funding allocation model and the agreed project pathway, the overall NRF allocation for West has therefore increased from £3,352,776 to £3,446,654, with an increase of £93,878. The increase can be broken down into West - from £2,647,017 to £2,721,133 (increase of £74,116) and Shankill - from £705,759 to £725,521 (increase of £19,762). It is also agreed that any additional funding is only allocated to existing projects which have already passed the threshold level and/or already been agreed at Stage 3- Delivery.

Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

West Belfast – NRF overview

West	<p>Stage 3— The Mountainview Hotel, Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre, Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1, The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre, The Road, Glencairn Community Project (Hub)</p> <p>Stage 1— <i>Improving the Environment at Patrick Sarsfield's GAC, Corrigan Park Redevelopment Project, WCC New Purpose-Built Childcare and Family Support Centre, Curam Leanaí na Faiseoige, Conway Mill - redeveloping for the future, Westcourt Uplift Project, Lamh Dhearg Renewable Energy & External Lighting Improvement scheme, St. Gall's Milltown Community Development, Colin Glen Eco Air-Cruizer, CNP Regeneration of Cloona House</i></p>
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West Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3 - Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre	£647,000	Stage 3- Committed	Planning permission granted in May 2024. Procurement preparation is underway.	Continue engagement with the group.

			A researcher is being appointed to inform a capital bid to Heritage Fund. The group is also exploring a further phase to the project to develop landscape around trim trail pathways and potential funders.	
Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1	£500,000	Stage 3-Committed	Planning Permission granted in March 2024. Discussions ongoing with potential funders and engagement will continue with the group.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Mountainview Hotel	£1.5m	Stage 3-Committed	Negotiations with the landowner continuing. Expected to proceed to Due Diligence in the Autumn of 2024.	Continue engagement with the group.
The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitors' Centre	£295,000	Stage 3-Committed	Purchase of building complete and the Council awaits legal documents for finalisation. Procurement process to be initiated for exhibition in late May 2024.	Continue engagement with the group.
Glencairn Community Project	£200,000	Stage 3-Committed	As above at BIF09. Smaller scale concept design agreed. Procurement underway for design team (PQQ stage) with tender due to be issued in June 2024. Discussions on land continuing with NIHE.	Continue engagement with the group.
The Road	£210,759	Stage 3-Committed	Officer awaiting response from group to discuss next steps.	Continue engagement with the group.

Members are asked to note the reallocation of an additional £93,878 to West NRF (£74,116 for West and £19,762 for Shankill) and consider any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building/buying new ones. The table below provides an update on current live projects on the Council's

Capital Programme in the West Belfast area. Members are asked to note status and update.

West Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
City Cemetery Visitor Centre– Heritage Fund/ DfC	Project complete. The new centre is operational. <i>Members will continue to receive reports on this project until the other external works and signage are completed.</i> Works are still ongoing on the Victorian Fountain. Dual language signs are currently being installed on site. Work is underway to issue an Expression of Interest for an operator for the Visitors Centre.
Playground Improvement Programme – Northlink	Project complete. The upgraded playground is complete and now open to the public.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> In January, SP&R Committee agreed terms of reference for a local inquiry in the event that an objection to a proposed Gating Order is received. Members granted approval for the publication of a Gating Order in November 2023 for certain streets and to proceed with a ten-week consultation for the remaining streets. Committee agreed 51 gates in May and works will progress once ratified by full council in June. Approval will be sought to proceed at more locations in June and September 24.
Black Mountain / Upper Whiterock Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Design stage. Design team is continuing to develop the project to prepare for planning application. Ongoing engagement with DfI as key partner. Public consultation is now closed and the next step is a meeting via the PAD process.
Colin Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Meeting with DfI, DfC, NIHE, BCC held on 29 April 2024. DfC presented short, medium and long term Belfast Cycle Network (BCN) routes for the Colin area which encompasses some of the routes included in the Colin Active Travel Business Plan. Next steps are to identify any gaps with respect to the Active Travel Plan to clarify the funding requirement to deliver the remainder of Phase 1 Colin Active Travel Plan.
Access to the Hills - connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> This is also being considered within the wider study as below and is part of the Peace Plus 'Access to the Hills' application.
Connectivity - Access to Hills Programme (city wide)	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Secured DAERA funding for the Access to the Belfast Hills Feasibility Study. Study and delivery plan was completed in April 2023. Ongoing consultation with other stakeholders. Presented to Members in Autumn 2023. Three of the identified routes submitted in the Peace Plus Local Action Plan application.

Belfast Bikes Expansion	<p>Glencairn – Project complete and operational since March 2024.</p> <p>The contract with existing operator that was coming to an end in March 2024, has been extended until the end of the year. The tender for a new provider/operator will be published in Summer 2024.</p>
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8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, namely Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office, Peace IV, DfI as well as schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to West Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in West Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined West Belfast geography (Colin area).

West Belfast – UV overview

Project	Status and update
Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub	<p>Council is acting as Delivery Partner. This is a developing project from Colin Neighbourhood Partnership. At business case stage and subject to TEO approval. This project is classified as transformational. A planning application has been submitted. A funding application has been submitted by the Group to PeacePLUS. The outcome of the application is pending.</p>

PEACEIV – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACEIV Programme.

West Belfast – Peace IV Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	<p>Project completed. Signage package to be installed subject to agreement via Committee and Council.</p>
Black Mountain Shared Space Project	<p><i>Phase 1 - Handover stage.</i> Completion and handover is scheduled for 24 May 2024. Liaising with end users regarding reducing the deficit through applications for funding. Funding deficit being finalised. Discussions are ongoing with end users Black Mountain Shared Space Project regarding handover and their operation of the facility.</p> <p><i>Phase 2 - Mobilisation.</i> Contractor scheduled to begin works on site at end of May 2024.</p>

Shankill Shared Women's Centre	On ground. Works complete, snagging and mobilisation underway. End users staggered decant from their existing premises from March to June to maintain existing service provision. Liaising with end users regarding reducing the deficit for programming. Funding deficit being finalised. Official opening 27 June 2024.
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Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on projects funded by Department for Infrastructure in West Belfast

Dfl – West Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Covered cycle stands Phase 2	<i>Via Dfl Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i> Funding has been received for Phase 3 of this programme. It will see the delivery of covered cycle stands in locations at Musgrave Park, Falls Park, Bog Meadows and Whiterock Leisure Centre.

DfC funded projects

Members are asked to note that projects match funded by Department for Communities are covered elsewhere - Berlin Swifts Football Club, Forth Meadow Community Greenway, Black Mountain Shared Space Project, except Paisley Park Sportsplex refurbishment which is reported below.

Project	Status and update
Paisley Park Sportsplex refurbishment	Project complete. Refurbishment of the existing 3G pitch, provision of floodlighting, changing facilities and associated amenities completed. Ongoing discussions with DfC regarding land arrangements.”

During discussion, the Working Group discussed the reallocation of an additional £93,878 to West NRF (£74,116 for West and £19,762 for Shankill).

During further discussion, in response to a Member’s query in relation to the progress of the Sensory Gardens in Woodvale Park, together with toilet facilities, the Programme Delivery Manager advised that this would be investigated with City and Neighbourhood Services in relation to the priority lists.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the physical programme update for West Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1):
 - Belfast Bikes Expansion – Glencairn Station – Capital Programme.
 - Playground Improvement Programme – Northlink Playground –

- Capital Programme.
- Paisley Park Sportsplex Refurbishment – DfC funded project.
- Agreed to the following reallocation of the additional £93,878 of the West Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund:
 - £74,116 (West) to be allocated equally between Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre (£37,058) and Croí na Carraige - 'The Heart of the Rock' - Phase 1 (£37,058); and
 - £19,762 (Shankill) to be retained as a contingency for the Shankill projects.

Local Development Plan - Local Policies Plan

The Principal Planning Officer and the Senior Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Emerging Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and set out the Council's growth strategy up to 2035. The Working Group was advised that it mirrored the aims of the Belfast Agenda and set out operational policies against which all planning applications would be assessed. The LPP would set out development zonings and Key Site Requirements and other site specific proposals related to sites and allocations.

The Members were advised that a Call for Sites had closed on 1st March, 2024, which provided an early opportunity for engagement to suggest sites, for example, for housing or commercial retail. It was reported that Belfast was the first authority to do this in Northern Ireland and it had provided an opportunity to draw in a variety of stakeholders, mostly targeting private land assets.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of Lands for Protection within West Belfast, including the Settlement Development Limit, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

During discussion, the Working Group commended the Team for their work and highlighted the importance of community engagement and consultation,

The Principal Planning Officer answered a range of questions in relation to the protection of greenways and sites. In response to a Member's suggestion for Grosvenor Road to be protected, he confirmed that this could also be considered.

The Members were advised that officers would plan further workshops to discuss the Local Policies Plan with Members in more detail.

Noted.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs) -

The Lead Officer (Community Provision) reported that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in February 2024, had agreed that £20,000 would be allocated to each of the four areas of the city for specialist providers to facilitate additional summer

schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the additional schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the City.

The Working Group agreed to defer consideration of the funding to allow further information to be provided at its Special Meeting on Wednesday, 5th June.

Request for Special Meeting - Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Working Group was advised that a decision had been taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in September 2023, to outline emerging proposals on the strategic site assessment work to the Area Working Groups. The Place and Economy Department was keen to outline the strategic review of Council assets, on a citywide basis, for housing-led regeneration, which included Council assets, in conjunction with wider public and private sectors.

The Working Group agreed to hold a Special Meeting on Wednesday, 5th June, at 5.15pm to consider the item.

Chairperson

West Belfast Area Working Group

Wednesday, 5th June, 2024

SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE WEST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor McCann (Chairperson),
Alderman McCoubrey
Councillors Beattie, Canavan, M. Donnelly,
R. M Donnelly, Duffy, Garrett,
McCabe, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Verner and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision;
Ms. A. McGlone, Neighbourhood Integration Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

The Area Working Group noted that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved – that Councillor McCann be elected to serve as Chairperson to the West Belfast Area Working Group until the date of the Annual Meeting.

Apologies

No Apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were reported.

Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update in terms of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) programme across the city. She explained that this followed previous decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth Committees to undertake strategic site assessments of Council owned lands across the city to identify potential for housing led or mixed-use regeneration, either in isolation or in partnership with the private/voluntary sector

or other statutory agencies. She referred to the report which had been circulated which highlighted that housing led regeneration had been identified as a corporate priority and a priority within the Belfast Agenda. Following a recommendation of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023 it was agreed to bring emerging proposals in respect of Council assets city wide to respective Area Working Groups.

The Director provided an update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 which included a number of strategic Council owned city centre lands as well as a partnership approach in respect of adjoining public sector lands. Concept regeneration plans, community and stakeholder engagement and planning Pre-Application Discussions had been undertaken in respect of a number of cluster sites. She advised that, following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of September 2023, the Council was currently undertaking a Competitive Dialogue procurement process for a long-term partner for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration across these sites, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity. She advised that recommendations on the outcome of this would be submitted to Elected Members later in the year.

The Members were also reminded that it had previously been reported to both the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in September 2023, that a Development Brief for lands in the ownership of the Department for Communities (DfC) and Belfast City Council at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St (the Inner North West Development Brief) had been reissued following input from DfC (as the land owner of part of the lands) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The Members were reminded that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decision, the reframed brief had been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return of 28th June 2024.

The Director also referred to the Housing Led Regeneration Group which had been established under the Belfast Agenda Community Planning structures, chaired by NIHE CX and included senior officers from BCC, NIHE, DfC, LPS and SIB. She reported that a key task of this group had been to identify and map public lands across the city with potential for housing led regeneration as well as identifying strategic private sector land opportunities and exploring partnership opportunities and identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

As a second phase of the Strategic Site Assessments programme, and as agreed by Council, a comprehensive assessment had been undertaken in respect of Council lands across the city to ascertain the potential for housing led and /or mixed-use regeneration. This had also included working in partnership with other public sector bodies as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Group and including wider public land review and where appropriate to also include private sector land.

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director updated the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work. She advised that the policy context across the various policies and plans included:

- By 2035 to deliver to 31,600 new homes, with 8,000 units within city centre and to increase population by 66,000 people;
- To increase city centre living across all tenure types;
- To identify publicly owned land for housing and mixed use developments;
- To see Belfast transition to an inclusive, low carbon climate resilient economy; and
- To recognise that housing was an equivocal lever for economic development.

She referred to various barriers and challenges associated with demand and housing supply and the potential role for Council. The Members considered and discussed potential assessments/options for housing led/mixed use regeneration for various Council owned lands identified through this SSA process in the West of the city. It was highlighted that these were intended to be initial high level options for consideration by the Members to help inform next steps.

The Director advised that officers had been working with Mr K. Carlin, Carlin Planning Ltd, to consider potential options for the various lands. Mr. Carlin was welcomed to the meeting. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director and Mr. Carlin provided the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work.

A Member thanked the Director for the work that had been undertaken to date. He stated that he felt there was an opportunity to bring a number of these sites forward for potential housing led regeneration, with further consideration to be given to the next steps in respect of the various sites.

Given the finite suitability of public lands across the city, the Members were encouraged to advise officers of any lands they considered might potentially have housing led regeneration potential and which could be assessed through the work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group referenced above.

Noted.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs)

The Lead Officer (Community Provision) reported that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in February 2024, had agreed that £20,000 would be allocated to each of the four areas of the city for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, with a view to delivering the additional schemes in summer 2024, one in each area of the City.

He explained that officers had attended a summer provision planning meeting organised by the Education Authority's Special Education team, involving Special Schools, Councils and charity and voluntary organisations. At that meeting, officers had been able to engage directly with the principals of Belfast Special Schools to understand the challenges and opportunities with which they were faced.

The Members were advised that, working with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's (BHSCT) Locality Planning Co-ordinator, officers had carried out an expression of interest exercise to all 470 members of the Belfast Locality Planning Group, sponsored Day Care providers and Special Schools. 22 organisations had replied to the questionnaire advising of their potential to deliver programming.

Council officers had attended the Belfast meetings of the Special Schools Partnership pilots, identified under Children and Young People theme within the Belfast Agenda. The Belfast schools involved were Glenveagh in south Belfast and Clarawood in east Belfast. Other organisations in attendance included the Education Authority's Special Education Team, Sólás, the Mae Murray Foundation, Guide Dogs NI, Middle Town Autism and Angel Eyes NI, to explore potential for collaborative approaches. That group had advised that the

time frame required to pilot a safe and properly resourced holiday was too short for the summer of 2024.

Following a query, the Lead Officer confirmed that officers had committed to looking at developing a model from September for a trial delivery during the Easter of 2025 and advised that officers would continue to attend Belfast Special Schools Partnership meetings.

The Members were also advised that officers had met with the BHSCT staff to discuss the potential to extend funding through the Family Support Hubs, however, due to time and resource pressures within the sector there was not capacity to extend delivery beyond the current planned programming.

Officers therefore requested that the Area Working Group agree to support a recommendation to provide 8,100 to St. Gerard's for 12 days, £9,100 to Kids Together for a three week programme and £2,800 to Snowflakes for a one week programme

The Working Group agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources the aforementioned allocations.

Chairperson

North Belfast Area Working Group

Tuesday, 28th May, 2024

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Bradley (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Cobain, Doran,
Magee, Maskey, Nelson, Ó Néill
and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. D. O’Kane, Planning Manager;
Mr. C. Campfield, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services
Integration Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th February were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ó Néill declared an interest in agenda item 5, Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs) in that his son was a pupil of Cedar Lodge School, however, he had left the meeting before the item was considered.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Working Group with an overview of the undernoted report:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf

of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for North Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1)
 - Playground Improvement Programme – Loughside Playground
 - LIF - Somme Cross Community Memorial
- Note the stage movements for Malgrove and Cultural Community Hub projects under BIF to *Stage 3– Committed*.
- Note the reallocation of an additional £68,179 to North NRF and consider any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the North being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £800,000 under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 43 projects in total have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 36 have been completed; 4 are at delivery stage; and 3 remain at due diligence/ initial stages.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	23 (92%)	£996,500	13 (72%)	£624,867
Number of Projects On-going Delivery	1 (4%)	£66,000	3 (17%)	£143,334
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (4%)	£65,000	2 (11%)	£30,000
Total Number of Approved Projects	25*	£1,127,500	18**	£798,201

**This includes additional funding for a LIF 2 project, Ballysillan Youth for Christ.*

*** This includes additional funding for two LIF 1 projects, Marrowbone Parochial Hall and Jennymount Church.*

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects. Members are asked to note the status of the current LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	Project	LIF Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
NLIF2-21	Somme Group – cross community memorial	£21,667	Complete	Project complete except for final minor snagging work which is due to be complete shortly.	Continue engagement with group.
NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	On Ground	On ground. HED approval received and construction work on gallery continues.	Continue engagement with group and HED.
NLIF2-19	Women's Tec	£46,667	On Ground	On ground. Work progressing.	Continue engagement with Group
NLIF057	Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club <i>(Link to UV project – ABC Trust H&L Hub)</i>	£66,000	On Ground/ Due Diligence stage	On ground. Phase 1 works are complete. Boxing Club LIF project will be part of Phase 2 underway and meetings with the group are taking place.	Continue engagement with Group and with UV
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building <i>(Link to UV Project)</i>	£65,000	Due Diligence stage	Partnership project with UV. Work is progressing on the land arrangements and the governance model. A Letter of Offer is awaited from the Executive Office.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO
NLIF2-05	Mercy Primary, Crumlin Road	£15,000	Due Diligence stage	Agreed in June 2016. As agreed at the AWG in Feb 2024, a letter was sent to the school to determine if they wish to remain in the process, with a decision deadline of 30 May 2024. An officer has since met school reps and the project was discussed at Due Diligence in April 2024.	Continue engagement with the school and information will be brought to DD in June 2024 for approval.

NLIF2-03	Holy Cross Trust/ Houben Centre (<i>The Parent Room</i>)	£15,000	Due Diligence stage	Agreed in June 2018. As agreed at the previous NAWG in February 2024, a letter was sent to the group to determine if they wish to remain in the process, with a decision deadline of 30 May 2024. A response is awaited.	Continue engagement with Group.
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4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – North Belfast was allocated £5.5m. In North Belfast, 7 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m: and 2 projects are on the longer BIF list. Each of the ‘In Principle’ projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

Members are asked to note the status update of these projects provided below. The table provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

North	Stage 3 - Cancer Lifeline—£575k; Grace Family Centre —£1.3m; Midland Boxing Club £550k; Marrowbone Park £750k; Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k Stage 2- Malgrove- £950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF49	Cavehill Tennis Club	£71,413	On Ground	Final element of works (resurfacing) is underway and due to complete shortly.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Uncommitted - Design stage	Detailed design agreed for a 4-team changing pavilion. Planning submitted and verified. Planning have requested further site	Continue engagement with the group. Move to Stage 3 - Committed

				surveys which are currently ongoing. Project will be taken in to Due Diligence following Planning approval and return of tenders.	
BIF43	Cultural Community Hub	£350,000	Uncommitted – Design stage	Planning approval was granted on 3 May 2024. Procurement preparation is underway. Project will be taken in to Due Diligence following return of tenders.	Continue engagement with the group and stakeholders. Move to Stage 3 - Committed

5. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Members will note that in April 2024, Council agreed an additional allocation of £280,000 to NRF on top of the original £10m. Following the agreed funding allocation model and the agreed project pathway, the overall NRF allocation for North has therefore increased from £2,434,979 to £2,503,158, an increase of £68,179. It was also agreed that any additional funding is only allocated to existing projects which have already passed the threshold level and/or already been agreed at Stage 3 - Delivery.

Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

North Belfast – NRF overview

North	<p>Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises,</p> <p>Stage 1 (Reserve)— <i>Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain, Indian Community Centre, North Belfast Working Men's Club, North City Business Centre, Quaker Service, Belfast Charitable Society, Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Arts for All, Ligoniel Improvement Association</i></p>
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North Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3- Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
USEL - Green Growth & The Circular Economy	£518,191	Stage 3-Committed	<i>Procurement stage has been initiated for the integrated design team.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3-Committed	Procurement of integrated design team is well underway.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises – Community Hub	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Link to UV programme. Remediation works on the contaminated site are ongoing and the team is managing the associated rising costs and delays. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed.	Continue engagement with the group.
Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Further to Members' agreement in Feb that the project would progress with a reduced scope of works, the consultant is now being procured on this basis.	Continue engagement with the group.
St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Officers met with the group and identified elements of the restoration project that can be delivered with a reduced budget.	Continue engagement with the group. Prepare quotation for the appointment of an architect.

Members are asked to note the reallocation of an additional £68,179 to North NRF and consider any recommendations on allocations to existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.

6. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new ones. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on the council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in the North Belfast area.

Members are asked to note the updates on the Physical Programme.

North Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. The Landfill Gas Ring Main tender has been reviewed due to material price increases and will be re-issued with returns anticipated in Summer 2024. Foul Pumping Station to be tendered before Summer 2024. NIE connection required for future supply is being progressed.
Reservoir Safety Programme (links to PeacePlus)	<i>Stage 3 - Committed.</i> Works to Alexandra Park, Waterworks Upper and Waterworks Lower. Consultants appointed and undertaking investigative work to assess the existing condition of the reservoirs and associated structures. The application has been submitted under PeacePLUS Theme 1.4 and clarifications were received in April. Consultant has been appointed to work up the project to planning stage. Public consultation closed in March 2024. It is anticipated that SEUPB will consider the applications in late Aug 2024.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Design team is continuing to develop the project to RIBA Stage 3 – Spatial Coordination. Stakeholder engagement ongoing, including discussion with NI War Memorial on Belfast Blitz element. Aim to submit planning application by end of June 2024.
Playground Improvement Programme	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Loughside Park playground - Project complete. New Lodge playground is scheduled to be completed in June 2024.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> In January, SP&R Committee agreed terms of reference for a local inquiry in the event that an objection to a proposed Gating Order is received. Members granted approval for the publication of a Gating Order in November 2023 for certain streets and to proceed with a ten-week consultation for the remaining streets. Committee agreed 51 gates in May and works will progress once ratified by full council in June. Approval will be sought to proceed at more locations in June and September 2024.
LTP - Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> DfC partnership project. Officers are currently responding to comments from DfC on the business case. Design team has been re-mobilised and is developing designs to Planning stage.
Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> OBC being worked up. Viable alternative site at Corporation Street Car Park being assessed by design team. Designs progressing to RIBA Stage 3-4 up to planning application stage. Confirmation of design requirements is progressing. Anticipated that

	planning application will be submitted in August 2024.
Glencairn Park/ Ligoniel Park Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Project outline details submitted to DfI as part of the Greenway Development priority projects.
Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Will also be considered within the wider study as below.
Waste Plan – Waste Transfer Station Upgrade	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> OBC being worked up. Link to Duncrue Masterplan and citywide kerbside scheme.
Connectivity - Access to Hills Programme (city wide)	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Secured DAERA funding for the Access to the Belfast Hills Feasibility Study. Study and delivery plan was completed in April 2023. Ongoing consultation with other stakeholders. Presented to Members in Autumn 2023. Three of the identified routes submitted in the Peace Plus Local Action Plan application.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	Expansion in the North area for Phase 4: <i>Yorkgate</i> – Translink have confirmed that the area for the Belfast Bikes docking station will be complete in August 2024.

7. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, including Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office and Peace IV under SEUPB. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to North Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in North Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined North Belfast geography (Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan).

North Belfast – Urban Villages Initiative overview

Project	Status and update
ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (links to LIF programme)	On ground. Partnership project with UV DfC, DfI and Flax Trust. Phase 1 of the project completed which provided a modern, purpose-built sports hall, support space and accommodation for BCT NI. Phase 2 works are progressing with completion anticipated middle 2025.
Ballysillan Playing Fields	Partnership project with UV, DfC and DfI Living With Water Programme. Planning approval secured. Due to inflationary pressures project costs have escalated from projections. Awaiting confirmation of business case addendum from TEO. Tender process complete. It is anticipated that a main contractor will be appointed and on site in Summer 2024 subject to confirmation of funding from funder.

Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project <i>(links to NRF programme)</i>	As above at NRF. Partnership project with Urban Villages. Remediation works on the contaminated site are ongoing and the team is managing the associated rising costs and delays. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed.
Sunningdale Community Centre	Council is acting as delivery agent for project proposed on Council land. Lease is being finalised. Planning application submitted and gathering of reports and surveys to support the planning application is continuing. Scheduled to begin on site in late summer/ early autumn subject to Planning.
Westland Community Centre <i>(links to LIF programme)</i>	As above under LIF. Partnership project with UV. Work is progressing on the land arrangements and the governance model. A Letter of Offer is awaited from the Executive Office.

Peace IV/ Peace Plus

Members are asked to note the update on Peace IV - Forth Meadow Community Greenway and the proposed Reconnected Belfast project under Peace Plus.

Project	Status and update
Forth Meadow Community Greenway project	Project completed. Signage package to be installed subject to agreement via Committee and Council.
Reconnected Belfast - Waterworks and Alexandra Park	<i>As above at Capital Programme.</i> The Reconnected Belfast proposal focuses on the redevelopment of the Waterworks and Alexandra Park. The proposal will enhance and improve connectivity within and between the two parks as well as enhance linkages with other parts of the city and to the Belfast Hills. The application has been submitted under PeacePLUS Theme 1.4 and clarifications were received in April. Consultant has been appointed to work up the project to planning stage. Public consultation closed in March 2024. It is anticipated that SEUPB will consider the applications in late Aug 2024.”

At the request of a Member, the Director of Property and Projects agreed to liaise with the South Eastern Education and Library Board regarding a pitch at the Shore Road which it might be willing to transfer to Council ownership and to provide an update at a future meeting.

The Working Group noted the update report and agreed to consider the reallocation of an additional £68,179 to North NRF and any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or whether to retain it as a contingency provision at the next meeting of the Working Group.

LDP – Local Policies Plan – verbal update

The Principal Planning Officer and the Senior Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Emerging Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and set out the Council’s growth strategy up to 2035. The Working Group was advised

that it mirrored the aims of the Belfast Agenda and set out operational policies against which all planning applications would be assessed. The LPP would set out development zonings and Key Site Requirements and other site specific proposals related to sites and allocations.

The Members were advised that a Call for Sites had closed on 1st March, 2024, which provided an early opportunity for engagement to suggest sites, for example, for housing or commercial retail. Belfast was the first authority to do this in Northern Ireland and it had provided an opportunity to draw in a variety of stakeholders, mostly targeting private land assets.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of Lands for Protection within North Belfast, including the Settlement Development Limit, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

The Members highlighted the challenges of HMOs in the city, problems associated with land banking, the need for vesting powers and open spaces/green areas within new developments.

The Members were advised that officers would plan workshops to discuss the LPP with Members in more detail.

Noted.

Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update in terms of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) programme across the city. She explained that this followed previous decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth Committees to undertake strategic site assessments of Council owned lands across the city to identify potential for housing led or mixed-use regeneration, either in isolation or in partnership with the private/voluntary sector or other statutory agencies. She referred to the report which had been circulated which highlighted that housing led regeneration had been identified as a corporate priority and a priority within the Belfast Agenda. Following a recommendation of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023, it was agreed to bring emerging proposals in respect of Council assets city wide to respective Area Working Groups.

The Director provided an update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 which included a number of strategic Council owned city centre lands as well as a partnership approach in respect of adjoining public sector lands. Concept regeneration plans, community and stakeholder engagement and planning Pre-Application Discussions had been undertaken in respect of a number of cluster sites, some of which were located in the northern part of the city centre. She advised that, following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of September 2023, the Council was currently undertaking a Competitive Dialogue procurement process for a long-term partner for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration across these sites, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity. She advised that recommendations on the outcome of this would be submitted to Elected Members later in the year.

The Members were also reminded that it had previously been reported to both the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in September 2023, that a Development Brief for lands in the ownership of the Department for Communities (DfC) and Belfast City Council at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St (the Inner North West Development Brief) had been reissued following input from DfC (as the land owner of part of the lands) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The Members were reminded

that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decision, the reframed brief had been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return of 28th June 2024.

The Director also referred to the Housing Led Regeneration Group which had been established under the Belfast Agenda Community Planning structures, chaired by NIHE CX and included senior officers from BCC, NIHE, DFC, LPS and SIB. She reported that a key task of this group had been to identify and map public lands across the city with potential for housing led regeneration as well as identifying strategic private sector land opportunities and exploring partnership opportunities and identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

As a second phase of the Strategic Site Assessments programme, and as agreed by Council, a comprehensive assessment had been undertaken in respect of Council lands across the city to ascertain the potential for housing led and /or mixed-use regeneration. This had also included working in partnership with other public sector bodies as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Group to include a wider public land review and where appropriate to also include private sector land.

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director updated the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work. She advised that the policy context across the various policies and plans included:

- By 2035 to deliver to 31,600 new homes, with 8,000 units within city centre and to increase population by 66,000 people;
- To increase city centre living across all tenure types;
- To identify publicly owned land for housing and mixed use developments;
- To see Belfast transition to an inclusive, low carbon climate resilient economy; and
- To recognise that housing was an equivocal lever for economic development.

She referred to various barriers and challenges associated with demand and housing supply and the potential role for Council. The Members considered and discussed potential assessments/options for housing led/mixed use regeneration for various Council owned lands identified through this SSA process in the North of the city. It was highlighted that these were intended to be initial high level options for consideration by the Members to help inform next steps.

The Director advised that officers had been working with Mr K. Carlin, Carlin Planning Ltd, to consider potential options for the various lands. Mr. Carlin was welcomed to the meeting. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director and Mr. Carlin provided the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work.

A Member referred to various options that had been presented in respect of one of the sites where housing and alternative mixed use community-based options had been presented and expressed concern at the inclusion of housing with the exclusion of other potential uses for this location. He advised that he had been in discussions with officers to consider community and business-based uses for the site.

Given the finite suitability of public lands across the city, the Members were encouraged to advise officers of any lands they considered might potentially have housing led regeneration potential and which could be assessed through the work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group referenced above.

Noted.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that it had been agreed at the February meeting of the People and Communities Committee that £20,000 would be allocated to each of the four areas of the city for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs.

The Working Group considered a report which detailed the proposals received from potential providers to deliver summer scheme activities for children with additional needs in north Belfast.

He drew the Members' attention to the below table which summarised the proposals received from the potential providers, based on engagement within the sector:

Provider	Extent of Support	Age group	
174 Trust Disability Project	children and young people who have severe learning disability, wheelchair users, sight loss, autistic, challenging behaviour and life limiting illnesses	0-4; 5-11; 12-15; 16-18	Detailed proposal received £10,013 for four weeks
Cedar Lodge School	Children and young people young people have complex special educational needs and additional complex medical needs	3 -16 years old	Detailed proposal received £13,771 for one week. 62 participants each day. Children not in other provision

The Working Group agreed to support a recommendation to provide an amount of £13,771 for Cedar Lodge School for one week of programming and an amount of £6,725 for 174 Trust to provide one week of programming.

Request to Present – North Belfast Community Partnership

The Neighbourhood Services Integration Manager advised the Members that the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships (NRPs) had facilitated several sessions for key stakeholders over the last number of months to explore the potential of developing a new North Belfast Community Partnership, this would replace the North Belfast Partnership Board, and would have a number of working groups linked to the strategic themes of People, Place, Pride and Prosperity. She advised that the Chairs of the NRPs had requested an opportunity to present to the Working Group on the work to date.

The Working Group granted permission for representative from the North Belfast Community Partnership to present at a future meeting.

Chairperson

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East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 6th June, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Alderman Copeland (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Bower, R. Brooks,
P. Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Long, Maghie,
F. McAteer and Smyth.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Mr. M. Doherty, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. K. Watters, Neighbourhood Services Integration Manager;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer - Community Provision;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager;
Ms. E. Gowdy, Lead Officer, Open Spaces and Streetscene;
Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager, Plan and Policy;
Mr. C. Campfield, Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Election of Chairperson

The Area Working Group noted that it was required to elect a Chairperson for the coming year.

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – that Alderman Copeland be elected to serve as Chairperson to the East Belfast Area Working Group until the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick and Councillors D. Douglas and S. Douglas.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 28th February and 8th March were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Rodgers and Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in item 9. Request to Present - Glentoran Football Club, in that they were on the Board of Glentoran Football Club and left the room whilst the item was under consideration.

Presentation - Hanwood Trust

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. P. Millar, Chief Executive, Hanwood Trust, and Mr. C. Callacher, Head of Academy from Tullycarnet Community Football Team.

Mr. Millar provided the background of the Hanwood Trust which operated a sports complex, fitness suite, business park and was also landlord for a filling station. He described the usage of the Hanwood 3G Sports pitch and highlighted that Tullycarnet Football Club, the biggest user group, had now outgrown the pitch.

Subsequently, he provided an overview of their proposals for a new pitch on a suitable site in Tullycarnet Park. He advised that a new pitch would provide a positive impact to the area, such as:

- Provide much needed pitch space for other football teams in East Belfast;
- Provide precious time slots for Hanwood to provide to other teams in East Belfast;
- The Pitch would blend into the natural surroundings and would be kept and maintained by TCFC and managed by Hanwood Trust;
- Bring young people of the community together into a Park they never use;
- All current facilities in the Park would complement each other and the green space that was already there;
- Would not disrupt the current users; and
- Would encourage a huge amount of people to visit and use the Park. Players/coaches/supporters.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to the access to the park, existing facilities, suitable space for a new pitch in the park and pitch provision of the area.

Members recalled that council officers had looked at this space in the past in relation to its suitability for a football pitch and due to the gradient and banks it had been deemed unsuitable. Mr Millar noted that they were looking at 3 options as part of the NIHE Place Sharpening Plan and that the park was one of them.

The Programme delivery Manager advised that officers would continue to liaise with the Hanwood Trust to capture its vision and requirements, and highlighted that this would also link into the Pitches Strategy being undertaken by the City and Neighbourhood Services Department.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

Physical Programmes Update

The Programme Delivery Manager provided the Working Group with an overview of the undernoted report:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for East Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1):
 - Belfast Bikes Expansion – Sandown Road Car Park Station – Capital Programme.
 - Pitt Park Redevelopment – Urban Villages Programme.
- SOF Eastside Visitors Centre - Note that the Executive Office has completed their business case process and has advised formally that they are unable to provide support to the Eastside Visitors Centre project under the Urban Villages Initiative.

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the East being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £1.2m under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 22 projects received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 19 have been completed and 1 project is at delivery stage and 1 project is at due diligence stage.

LIF breakdown – East	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)	Projects	Amount/ Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	8 (80%)	£931,902	12 (100%)	£1,161,589

Number of Projects in Delivery	1(10%)	£30,000		
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (10%)	£70,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	10	£1,031,902	12	£1,161,589

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action / Recommendation
ELIF31	Bloomfield FC, Clonduff FC, East Belfast FC and Glentoran Academy, Tullycarnet, Cregagh Wanderers, Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Bredagh GAC – storage facilities	£65,000 (£30k plus £35k reallocation)	On Ground	<p><i>Phase 1 – Complete -</i> Bloomfield FC, East Belfast FC, Tullycarnet FC and Cregagh Wanderers projects, including the Cregagh toilet facility has been installed and completed.</p> <p><i>Phase 2 -</i> Bredagh and Clonduff FC has been signed-off at Due Diligence. Awaiting funding agreement to be signed and likely to be delivered in summer/ autumn respectively. Nettlefield Multi-sports and Glentoran Academy are working to resolve land related issues.</p>	Continue engagement with the groups
ELIF29	Cycling Ireland	£70,000	Due Diligence	Due diligence stage ongoing. Project design and licence arrangements in development. Information awaited from the group.	Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders.

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250,000 investment from Council. In East Belfast 9 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 5 projects on the longer BIF list. Each of the In Principle projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and the funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects:

East	<p>Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k; H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.5m; Bloomfield—£440k</p> <p>Stage 2—Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</p> <p>Stage 1—East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John's</p>
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	Orangefield, Church of Ireland, Tullycarnet Community Support Services—no commitment / on long list
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Outer East	Stage 3 —TAGIT- £434k; Hanwood—£396k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k; Braniel—£390k; Castlereagh Presbyterian Church—£382k
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The table below provides an overview of the remaining projects. Members are asked to note the actions and recommendations.

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF12	Strand Arts Centre	£6,940,069 Comprising: LUF £4m BIF £1,550,000 HF £255,000 (Development Grant), £768,069 (Delivery Grant)	Stage 3 – procurement stage	The application to HF for Delivery funding has been successful. Discussions with DfC on potential funding are also continuing. The project is at RIBA Stage 4. Preparation for contractor procurement is underway with appointment expected by late Summer 2024.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF13	Bloomfield Community Association	£715,009 Comprising £440,000 plus reallocations of £60,009 and £215,000	Stage 3 - Committed – In Principle	The Group is continuing to actively explore additional funding opportunities to meet the shortfall estimated at approx. £100k. An application to DfC has been submitted but no funds are available at present.	Continue engagement with the group.

Outer East BIF Projects

Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF38	Castlereagh Presbyterian Church	£382,000	Stage 3 - Committed – In Principle	Project has now been signed off at Due Diligence. Appointment of design team will take place shortly.	Continued engagement with the group.

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. There is one project under SOF for East Belfast - Eastside Visitor Centre – with an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

Project	SOF Award	Status	Action/ Recommendation
Eastside Visitor Centre	£700,000	<i>Business case stage.</i> The project proposal is for the extension of the existing visitor centre at C.S. Lewis Square. This project has been unsuccessful in securing funding from TEO. The Project Promoter is reviewing options including moving forward with	The AWG is asked to note that the Executive Office has completed their business case process and has advised formally that they are unable to provide support to the Eastside

		a reduced scale project solely with Council SOF funding or continuing to seek other funding opportunities for the original proposal.	Visitors Centre project under the Urban Villages Initiative.
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6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Each NRF project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

On 28 May 2024, the East AWG met to consider recommendations on projects to be moved forward to Stage 3 – Delivery. Any recommendations will be subject to SP&R Committee approval in June and full council ratification in July 2024.

7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new assets. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in East Belfast. Members are asked to note the status and update.

East Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
New Crematorium	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> RIBA Stage 4 Technical Design is complete. Procurement is underway and the tenders are due back in June 2024. Alternative use for existing building is being explored currently.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> In January, SP&R Committee agreed terms of reference for a local inquiry in the event that an objection to a proposed Gating Order is received. Members granted approval for the publication of a Gating Order in November 2023 for certain streets and to proceed with a ten-week consultation for the remaining streets. Committee agreed 51 gates in May and works will progress once ratified by full council in June. Approval will be sought to proceed at more locations in June and September 2024.
Cremated Remains Burial Plots	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case is being developed with CN&S Department and surveys are being arranged.
Sydenham Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case to be worked up with DfI who are at design development stage for the greenway. Ongoing discussion with DfI regarding a partnership approach. There is a separate verbal update being presented to Members at this AWG on Sydenham Greenway.

Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan. Officers had been liaising with the Education Authority on a potential youth facility at the council owned Ballymacarrett site. Representatives at EA have advised that they are developing a business case for capital funding for youth provision at this site for 2024/25 onwards. Officers are continuing to liaise with EA on the way forward.
Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to the Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East project.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	Further expansion: Sandown Rd carpark – complete and operational since April 2024. The contract with existing operator that came to an end in March 2024, has been extended until the end of the year. The tender for a new provider/ operator will be published in Summer 2024.

Henry Jones Playing Fields - In September 2023 SP&R Committee approved an upgrade to the current CCTV system and also the installation of lighting in the car park at the Henry Jones Playing Fields, subject to realignment of spend. The CCTV upgrade and car park lighting works are being taken forward via the Property & Projects Department. Both elements of the project are progressing. Officers await estimates from the contractor on lighting and CCTV and installation will take place very shortly.

8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for a number of government departments on significant capital investment programmes, namely the Urban Villages Initiative (UV) funded by the Executive Office, and number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to East Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

Project	Status and update
Pitt Park redevelopment <i>Council asset</i>	Project completed. Handover held on 31st May 2024.
Hosford Community Homes Inclusion Hub	<i>Project underway.</i> Council is acting as Delivery Partner. Contractor has been appointed and is currently on site. Estimated completion in Spring 2025.
Titanic People Exhibition	<i>Project underway.</i> Council is acting as Delivery Partner. Contractor has been appointed and expected on site imminently. Additional planning application has been submitted for gantry structure. Planning approval received for ground works and structure. Project completion anticipated by Spring 2025.
Portview Exchange <i>Link to NRF 'Portview Exchange'</i>	<i>Business case stage.</i> The Letter of Offer is expected by Autumn 2024 once TEO have completed the business case process.

Pop EastSide- Landmark East	As above at SOF. <i>Business case stage.</i> The project proposal is for the extension of the existing visitor centre at C.S. Lewis Square. This project has been unsuccessful in securing funding from TEO. The Project Promoter is reviewing options including moving forward with a reduced scale project solely with Council SOF funding or continuing to seek other funding opportunities for the original proposal.
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DfC and Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities in East Belfast.

Dfl and DfC – East Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Covered cycle stands Phase 3 – East	<i>Via Dfl Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i> The third phase of this programme will see the delivery of covered cycle stands in locations at Connswater Community Greenway, Victoria Park, Orangefield Park, Braniel Community Centre and Tullycarnet Centre (Comber Greenway) in Summer.

EB Northern Ireland Ltd (Landfill Communities Fund)

One project is receiving capital funding via EBNI in East Belfast:

Project	Status and update
Cherryvale Playing Fields Improvements Pitch 1	The project involves erection of catch nets, spectator fencing and path on one boundary of Pitch 1 at Cherryvale Playing Fields. One ball stop is installed and the remaining ball stop is expected to be completed this month. “

During discussion, in relation to the completing of Tullycarnet Outdoor Gym, one Member questioned if trees would be planted around the apparatus. The Neighbourhood Integration Manager advised this could be discussed with the Parks Team.

In relation to the Container Storage Facilities project (ELIF31), the Programme Delivery Manager explained further the land related issues that were still to be resolved with the remaining groups in Phase 2. The Working Group requested that this would be reviewed by the Working Group at its meeting in September and, if the projects had not been progressed, it would consider the reallocation of the storage units.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the physical programme update for East Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1):
 - *Belfast Bikes Expansion – Sandown Road Car Park Station – Capital Programme*

- *Pitt Park Redevelopment* – Urban Villages Programme
- In relation to the SOF Eastside Visitors Centre - Noted that the Executive Office had completed their business case process and had advised formally that they were unable to provide support to the Eastside Visitors Centre project under the Urban Villages Initiative;
- Noted that the progress of the remaining groups of the Container Storage Facilities project (ELIF31) would be reviewed for potential reallocation at its meeting in September.

Update on Sydenham Greenway (Verbal Update)

The Client Manager provided an update in relation to the Sydenham Greenway and the work being undertaken as part of Phase 1 in delivering the project.

She highlighted that the design had been amended based on the consultation response from the Council, such as the reduction in the pathway width and usage of the existing entrance.

During discussion, the Working Group welcomed the project progression and requested further information in relation to the NI Water Works and the impact on King George V Playing Fields.

Noted.

LDP - Local Policies Plan (Presentation)

The Acting Planning Manager and the Principal Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Emerging Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and set out the Council's growth strategy up to 2035. The Working Group was advised that it mirrored the aims of the Belfast Agenda and set out operational policies against which all planning applications would be assessed. The LPP would set out development zonings and Key Site Requirements and other site specific proposals related to sites and allocations.

The Members were advised that a Call for Sites had closed on 1st March, 2024, which provided an early opportunity for engagement to suggest sites, for example, for housing or commercial retail. It was reported that Belfast was the first authority to do this in Northern Ireland and it had provided an opportunity to draw in a variety of stakeholders, mostly targeting private land assets.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of Lands for Protection within East Belfast, including the Settlement Development Limit, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

During discussion, the planning officers answered a range of questions in relation to the historical zoning of employment and retail sites and the consideration of main shopping areas such as Cregagh/Woodstock Road area.

The Members were advised that officers would plan further workshops in September to discuss the Local Policies Plan with Members in more detail.

Noted.

Request to Present - Glentoran Football Club

It was reported that a request had been received by Glentoran Football Club to present its plans for the new oval stadium to the Working Group.

During discussion, it was agreed that, as many of the Members had already received the presentation and were in support of the plans, that the Working Group would write a letter of support to Glentoran Football Club.

Future Use of Orangefield Pavilion

Councillor Ferguson raised the issue of Eastside Partnership's request to explore options for community ownership of Orangefield Pavilion.

The Lead Officer, Open Spaces and Streetscene advised that officers were aware of the request via the Assets Board and that the Eastside Partnership had been consulted with. Officers were currently awaiting a business case which was being prepared by Eastside partnership in relation to their plans.

The Working Group noted that the request was being considered as part of the assets management process.

Lack of Quorum

The Chairperson's attention was drawn to the fact that, due to the number of Members who had left the meeting, the meeting was now inquorate.

The Working Group was advised that the meeting was inquorate. However, those Members in attendance agreed to meet informally, with any urgent matters which required a decision being forwarded to the appropriate Committee for consideration.

Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update in terms of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) programme across the city. She explained that this followed previous decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth Committees to undertake strategic site assessments of Council owned lands across the city to identify potential for housing led or mixed-use regeneration, either in isolation or in partnership with the private/voluntary sector or other statutory agencies. She referred to the report which had been circulated which highlighted that housing led regeneration had been identified as a corporate priority and a priority within the Belfast Agenda. Following a recommendation of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023, it was agreed to bring emerging proposals in respect of Council assets city wide to respective Area Working Groups.

The Director provided an update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 which included a number of strategic Council owned city centre lands as well as a partnership approach in respect of adjoining public sector lands. Concept regeneration plans, community and stakeholder engagement and planning Pre-Application Discussions had been undertaken in respect of a number of cluster sites. She advised that following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of September 2023, the Council were currently undertaking a Competitive Dialogue procurement process for a long-term partner for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration across these sites, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity. She advised that

recommendations on the outcome of this would be brought to Elected Members later in the year.

The Members were also reminded that it had previously been reported to both the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in September 2023, that a Development Brief for lands in the ownership of the Department for Communities (DfC) and Belfast City Council at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St (the Inner North West Development Brief) had been reissued following input from DfC (as the land owner of part of the lands) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The Members were reminded that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decision, the reframed brief had been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return of 28th June, 2024.

The Director also referred to the Housing Led Regeneration Group which had been established under the Belfast Agenda Community Planning structures, chaired by NIHE CX and included senior officers from BCC, NIHE, DFC, LPS and SIB. She reported that a key task of this group had been to identify and map public lands across the city with potential for housing led regeneration as well as identifying strategic private sector land opportunities and exploring partnership opportunities and identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

As a second phase of the Strategic Site Assessments programme, and as agreed by Council, a comprehensive assessment had been undertaken in respect of Council lands across the city to ascertain the potential for housing led and /or mixed-use regeneration. This had also included working in partnership with other public sector bodies as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Group and including wider public land review and where appropriate to also include private sector land.

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director updated the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work. She advised that the policy context across the various policies and plans included:

- By 2035 to deliver to 31,600 new homes, with 8,000 units within city centre and to increase population by 66,000 people;
- To increase city centre living across all tenure types;
- To identify publicly owned land for housing and mixed use developments;
- To see Belfast transition to an inclusive, low carbon climate resilient economy; and
- To recognise that housing was an equivocal lever for economic development.

She referred to various barriers and challenges associated with demand and housing supply and the potential role for Council. It was highlighted that the potential assessments/options for housing led/mixed use regeneration for various Council owned lands identified through this SSA process in the East of the city were intended to be initial high level options for consideration by the Members to help inform next steps.

The Director advised that officers had been working with Mr K. Carlin, Carlin Planning Ltd to consider potential options for the various lands. Mr. Carlin was welcomed to the meeting. The Director and Mr. Carlin presented the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work.

Given the finite suitability of public lands across the city, the Members were encouraged to advise officers of any lands they considered might potentially have housing led regeneration potential and which could be assessed through the work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group referenced above.

The Members in attendance noted the information provided and that all decisions and proposals would be brought back to the relevant Committee as appropriate.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs)

The Members were made aware of the report which detailed the proposals received from potential providers to deliver summer scheme activities for children with additional needs in East Belfast.

The Members in attendance noted that they were content with the proposals and that the following recommendations would be submitted to the relevant Committee for approval:

Provider	Extent of Support	Age group	
<i>Mencap</i>	Children and young people with a range of moderate learning difficulties.	10-14; 14-18	Detailed proposal provided. £10,000 For daily sessions on six days over 2 weeks, 15 young people per day. First week being for ages 10-14 and the second week being for 14-18. Places offered to east belfast residents on waiting lists not currently in provision
<i>Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club Trust Ltd</i>	engage non-verbal young people, we cater to a range of complex needs both medical and those who are specifically neurodivergent	5-11;12-15;16-18;	Detailed proposal provided. £8,538 for 63 days, 15 participants per day. Places offered to waiting list of young people not in other provision.

Request to Present - Eastside Partnership

The Members present agreed to receive a presentation from the Eastside Partnership at a future meeting.

Additional Item – Pollution Incident

Councillor Smyth requested that, following the pollution incident at a section of the Loop River, a tributary to the Connswater River, in the Montgomery Road/Ladas Drive area, any findings from the DAERA investigation would be shared with the Working Group.

Chairperson



Subject:	Audit and Risk Panel Annual Report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee including Draft Annual Governance Statement
Date:	21 June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS)
Contact Officer:	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</p> <p>Insert number <input style="width: 40px;" type="text"/></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime 	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
<p>After Committee Decision</p> <p>After Council Decision</p> <p>Sometime in the future</p> <p>Never</p>	<input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/> <input style="width: 40px; height: 20px;" type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The Audit and Risk Panel is constituted as a working group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The purpose of the Panel is to provide an independent assurance

1.2	<p>on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. The Panel also oversees the Council's financial reporting process.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To provide a summary to Committee of the key issues that have been considered and discussed by the Panel during the 2023/24 financial year, the assurances received and the areas requiring attention. ▪ To present the Annual Governance Statement for 23/24 for consideration and inclusion in the unaudited statement of accounts which will be certified by the Chief Finance Officer by 30th June 2024 and then subject to NIAO audit. The Statement has been considered by the Audit and Risk Panel and must be approved by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the Chief Executive.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Note the summary of the work of the Panel during 2023/24 as set out at Section 3. ▪ Review and approve the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24 at Appendix A and, in particular, the disclosure of the significant governance issues contained in the statement. ▪ Note the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel on 4 June 2024 at Appendix B.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Summary of the work of the Audit and Risk Panel in 2023/24</p> <p>In March 2023 the Panel approved the internal audit strategy and plan for the 2023/24 year. The plan was designed to allow AGRS to provide independent assurance over the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key financial systems / income generating activity ▪ Key programmes / projects ▪ Corporate priorities ▪ Management of key corporate risks ▪ Meeting external grant funding requirements ▪ Governance arrangements
3.2	<p>During 2023/24, the Panel met four times on a hybrid basis. At these meetings the Panel considered progress reports on delivery of audit plan and issues arising from audit activity, including the findings, assurance levels and recommendations arising from audit work and</p>

the progress being made to implement audit recommendations. It also received regular updates on:

- the Council's financial position, as set out in its financial statements
- reports from the Council's external auditors
- risk management
- business continuity
- fraud, financial irregularity and whistleblowing / raising concerns investigations
- governance related matters
- financial control
- health and safety
- performance management
- staff attendance.

3.3 The key assurances that the Panel received are as follows:

- the Council's **financial statements and annual governance statement**, as prepared by the Director of Finance and their team; this provided a management assurance on the Council's financial position
- the audited accounts and the associated **external audit annual letters for 2022/23** (providing an opinion on the accounts) **and report to those charged with governance** (setting out control issues arising from the annual external audit), as prepared and presented by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. This provided an external assurance on the Council's financial position for 2022/23. (The accounts for 2023/24 are to be prepared by the end of June 2024)
- the **Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Service's annual assurance statement** on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements, based on the findings of audit work completed throughout the year.

3.4 The Panel received assurance from the NIAO regarding their performance improvement audit and assessment for the Council which resulted in a standard, unqualified opinion regarding how the Council has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties.

3.5 In terms of the improvement assessment the Panel learned that the LGA had provided an opinion, that the Council is unlikely to discharge its duties in respect of Part 12 of the Act during 2023-24 as it has not been able to demonstrate a track record of improvement. Regarding this matter, the Panel received a report from management on the

	<p>next steps for the indicators used in the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24, with Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreeing for the Performance Improvement Plan for 2023-24 to be updated and re-published. The Panel also received regular reports on the Performance Improvement activities.</p>
3.6	<p>Where areas for improvement have been identified, these have been reported and implementation of agreed recommendations is actively monitored and reported back to the Panel. The Panel has, on occasions, raised issues where either audit reports have identified significant issues or progress against recommendations has not been satisfactory, with Directors asked, where necessary, to attend the Panel and provide further explanation. The key areas considered during 2023/24 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ internal audits of key areas such as the Belfast Agenda, Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, Budgetary Control and Financial Reporting, Fuel Procedures, Labour Market Partnership, Police and Community Safety Partnerships, Social Value Procurement Policy, Payroll Data Analytics, Cyber Security – Computer Use Policy, Data Migration Process for the new Accounting System, Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd and Visit Belfast. ▪ audits of the management of corporate risks such as Port Health, People Strategy, Customer Focus, Climate Change and Resilience Strategy. ▪ assurance and advisory work over key programmes including the project to replace the Accounting System, the Belfast Region City Deal programme, the new HR system and the In-Cab Technology project .
3.7	<p>The Audit and Risk Panel have also received updates during the year on the Council’s risk management arrangements, including reports on the management of the Council’s key corporate risks.</p> <p>Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement</p>
3.8	<p>The CIPFA publication “Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police” dated October 2022 sets out guidance on the function and operation of audit committees and represents best practice</p>
3.9	<p>In line with the guidance the Panel considered the evaluation of its impact and effectiveness and also the assessment against best practice in March 2024, following their training session in January 2024. This evaluation found the Panel to be compliant with the CIPFA position statement with one minor exception regarding how the Panel is appointed. Council policy is based on nomination of one member from each of the main political</p>

	<p>parties with an external member to provide independence and expertise, rather than on members skills.</p> <p>Annual Governance Statement</p>
3.10	<p>At their meeting on 4 June 2024, the Panel considered the draft Annual Governance Statement for the Council for 2023/24 and, in particular, the significant governance issues contained in the statement.</p>
3.11	<p>The Annual Governance Statement is an important document, and it is important that the Committee is fully aware of its contents. The disclosures in the statement are based upon the Council’s corporate risk register and take into consideration the disclosures made by Chief Officers in their individual annual assurance statements. The Annual Governance Statement also incorporates a summary of the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Service’s annual assurance statement.</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel meeting on 4 June 2024</p>
3.12	<p>In line with usual protocol, the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel meeting are presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.</p>
	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p>
3.13	<p>None</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.14	<p>None</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix A – Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24</p> <p>Appendix B – Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel on 4 June 2024</p>

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Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024

The Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) follows the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2023/24 and comprises the following sections:

- Scope of responsibility
- The purpose of the governance framework
- The governance framework
- Review of effectiveness
- Update on the significant governance issues that were declared last year
- Significant governance issues for the year-end 2024

Scope of responsibility

Belfast City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to make arrangements for continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has prepared an Annual Governance Statement, which is consistent with the principles of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 edition)*. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and meets the requirements of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland 2015) in relation to the publication of an annual governance statement.

The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

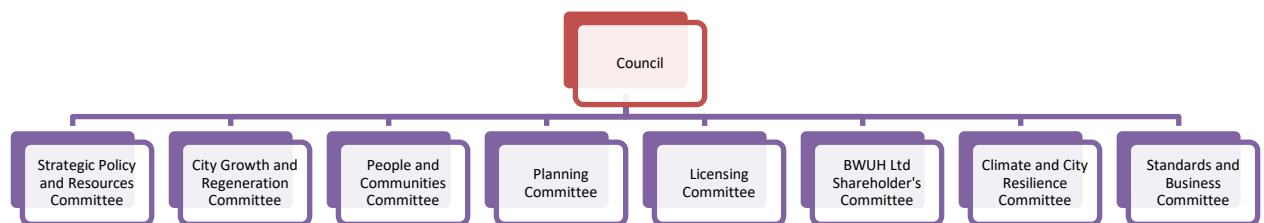
The governance framework continues to be in place at Belfast City Council for the year ending 31st March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Governance Statement

and statement of accounts. The following section sets out the key elements of the governance framework.

The governance framework

The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings) (No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 provides councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means applied up until 6th March 2024. The provision of the Coronavirus Act 2020 which allows councils to hold remote/hybrid meetings was not extended and so members must be physically present at Council and Committee meetings from 7th March 2024 in order to take part in debates and to vote on any issues which may be raised. As working groups and workshops are not decision-making bodies and are not subject to the same legislation, these continue to be held as hybrid meetings.

Our committee structure, which is based on the full council and eight standing committees is illustrated and described below.



Through the work of committees, our Members oversee the work of the council. All committee decisions need to be ratified by the full council except where committees have been granted delegated authority to make decisions.

The full council, which consists of all 60 elected representatives, is the overarching decision-making body.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its corporate plan and other key corporate and cross cutting strategies and policies. It will also ensure effective use of resources and value for money for ratepayers and oversee the Council's relationship with a number of key agencies and partners.

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

The People and Communities Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a

local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

The Planning Committee is responsible for all of the Council's planning functions, except those matters, which are delegated to officers or reserved to full Council.

The Licensing Committee is responsible for the consideration of all matters pertaining to policy and legislation in relation to licensing issues.

The Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd Shareholders' Committee is responsible for making the decisions required by the Shareholders' Agreement and ensure that the company complies with the contract for the operation of the venues.

The Climate and City Resilience Committee is responsible for political oversight of the resilience strategy for Belfast, liaising with Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board who are responsible for monitoring and delivery with the support of Belfast Climate Commission, supporting a targeted approach through existing structures to those issues which pose the greatest risk to the city, its economy and its people. This includes considering the potential implications of climate change for the city of Belfast and for making recommendations to the Council on Belfast City Council's approach to addressing the climate crisis and Council's role and responsibilities at city level.

The terms of reference of the Standards and Business Committee are to: promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council; promote a collaborative working relationship between senior officers and Members; ensure the probity of all the council's proceedings; and review and improve processes in relation to bringing business before the Council, including review of all Notices of Motion, any review of Standing Orders and the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

In addition to the Committees listed in the diagrams above there are 17 Working Groups established which include the Audit & Risk Panel and four Area Working Groups. In addition there is a Party Leaders' Consultative Forum.

The Audit & Risk Panel provides an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. It provides an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance, which is relied upon by the Council, to the extent that it exposes it to risk and weakens the control environment. The Panel reports to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Audit & Risk Panel met four times during 2023/24.

The Council's Code of Governance is based on the seven core principles set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework (2016 edition). How we meet these seven core principles is reviewed and updated annually. A summary of the key elements of our governance framework are set out in the following table:

Our seven principles of good governance

A: Behaving with integrity

- Shared values communicated via corporate plan, community plan and key strategies
- Codes of conduct for Members and staff
- PDP / appraisal process for Members & staff
- Gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest policies and registers in place
- Fraud and Raising Concerns policies
- Good Relations Unit
- Equality and Diversity Framework
- Council constitution, standing orders & scheme of delegation
- Expert professional advice
- Partners and contractors required to comply with relevant policies
- Achieving Through People Framework
- Standards and Business Committee
- Accessibility Statement for the updated website
- Social Value Procurement Policy

B: Ensuring openness

- Council / committee meetings open to the public and agendas / minutes on website
- Belfast Agenda developed via extensive consultation and engagement.
- Corporate plan and annual improvement plan are subject to consultation before agreement
- Statement of Community Involvement for production of the Local Development Plan
- Ongoing consultation and engagement with staff and trade unions
- Corporate communications
- Annual financial report published on the BCC website
- Equality Screening Outcome reports available through the BCC website
- Formal Partnership arrangements with GLL, Active Belfast, arc21, BWUH Ltd, Visit Belfast, Innovation City Belfast
- "Your Say" consultation hub
- Working with Belfast Region City Deal partners

C: Defining outcomes

- Belfast: Our Recovery plan
- Belfast Agenda outlines long term economic, social and environmental benefits and is refreshed every 4 years
- Belfast Region City Deal Investment Plan
- Cultural Strategy
- Corporate plan outlines the annual contribution to the Belfast Agenda
- City centre regeneration & investment strategy
- Physical Investment Programme
- Leisure transformation programme
- Grant funding processes
- Equality Impact Assessments
-

D: Optimising the achievement of outcomes

- Corporate plan aligned to delivery of Belfast Agenda
- Adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan (LDP) - Plan Strategy
- Key partner in the Belfast Region City Deal
- Consultation and engagement processes
- Strategic financial management and reporting framework in place.
- Performance management framework
- Regular reports on progress of our performance improvement plan to CMT and SP&R
- Risk management strategy & framework

E: Developing capacity & capability

- People Strategy
- Achieving Through People Framework
- Benchmarking activity
- Efficiency programme
- Regular performance monitoring of the delivery of improvement objectives
- Learning and development policy
- Health and wellbeing strategy
- Appraisal scheme in place for Chief Officers, Operational Directors / Heads of Service and Senior Managers
- PDPs for officers and Members
- Member capacity building / training
- Continuing Development Programme for members
- Party group briefings

F: Finance, performance and risk management

- Annual Rate Setting process
- Financial Strategy
- Compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code
- Performance management framework
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Capital Strategy
- Risk management strategy
- Corporate risk management framework
- Regular reporting of finance, risk and performance
- Audit and Risk Panel
- Internal audit function / annual internal audit strategy and plan in place
- Recommendations Monitor process
- Data protection policy and procedures
- Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment
- Increased data security controls

G: Transparency, reporting & effective accountability

- BCC website regularly updated
- Publication of key reports including the annual financial report; annual governance statement and; performance improvement report
- Committee support framework to approve papers prior to submission to Members
- AGRS (internal audit) annual assurance statement within the annual governance statement
- Internal Audit effectiveness annually reviewed against public sector internal audit standards, with an independent external review every five years
- Internal / external audit recommendations followed up as part of recommendations monitoring process every six months
- Key governance arrangements in place for the Council's Accountable Body role for the Belfast Region City Deal

The Chief Executive is the Council's designated Chief Financial Officer under the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

We have re-assessed our compliance with the principles of the CIPFA Financial Management Code and have reached the overall conclusion that we are compliant, with improvement still to be made over better integration of strategic plans and resources. The Code outlines three financial management styles – delivering accountability, supporting performance and enabling transformation. Compliance with the Code requires credible proposals to raise financial standards beyond the basic delivery of accountability. The continuing development of the Council's approach to Medium Term Financial Planning will support performance by better alignment of service / corporate plans with financial plans. Planning beyond the annual budget should enable Members and senior management to protect financial sustainability by linking vision, strategy and outcomes. The new financial system was implemented on 1st May 2024. The analytical capability of the system will be explored after the usefulness of initial reports have been reviewed.

Having considered all the principles of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (2014), subject to the implementation of the Corporate Fraud Risk Action Plans, the Council has adopted a response that is appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain its vigilance to tackle fraud.

The CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2019) outlines the five principles that set out the organisation's responsibilities to ensure the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) is able to operate effectively and perform their core duties. The Statement also sets out the core responsibilities of the HIA along with the personal skills and professional standards expected of the HIA. The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS), and the supporting operational arrangements in place, conform to the five principles set out in the CIPFA Statement. This is demonstrated through a self-assessment exercise undertaken by the Head of AGRS. While the principles state that the HIA should not be responsible for preparing the annual governance report, the arrangements within the council, involve AGRS co-coordinating the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement which is then reviewed and agreed by the Corporate Management Team, Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel, before being reviewed by Strategic Policy and Resources committee and signed by the Chair of Strategic Policy & Resources and the Chief Executive.

The Council did not report any breaches of personal data to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) during 2023/24. Two incidents were reported directly to the ICO by data subjects as complaints. The ICO was satisfied that a personal data breach had not occurred and took no further action in relation to either incident.

Review of Effectiveness

The following diagram illustrates the Assurance Framework in place that provides information on compliance with the various elements of the Council's Governance Framework, including performance reports, health and safety reports, finance reports, internal audit reports and risk management report



Continued effort has been put into developing and implementing the key elements of an assurance framework within the Council with the key elements being:

- a process whereby senior managers are required to sign annual assurance statements;
- a process whereby Directors are required to sign quarterly assurance statements;
- embedding risk management and developing the arrangements for oversight of the management of these risks;
- business planning and related performance reporting arrangements;
- an Audit and Risk Panel;
- a professional internal audit function, which has been reviewed for effectiveness against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards; and
- a Health & Safety Assurance Board.

The various in year and year-end reports arising from the Assurance Framework are reviewed and approved by the Audit and Risk Panel and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee annually.

In addition, the review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework is also informed by:

- the annual review and update of the Code of Governance;
- comments or recommendations made by the external auditors during their annual audit; and
- the Head of Audit Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) annual assurance statement for the period ending 2023/24, which gives an opinion on the Council's risk and control environment.

Head of Internal Audit Opinion

As Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS), on the basis of work carried out, I can provide a reasonable assurance regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

We developed our audit plan in consultation with management to ensure that our audit work was focussed on the areas where assurance was most valuable. Member and management agreement of this plan combined with delivery of the majority of this plan signifies members and managers recognition of the importance of receiving independent assurance over the council's risk, control and governance frameworks and provided me with sufficient evidence to support my assurance statement.

My opinion is based on completion of audits in the audit plan for 23/24; programme and project assurance and advisory work undertaken for a number of fundamental corporate IT projects; other advisory work and; quarterly assurance statements from senior management on compliance with risk management and internal control systems.

Specifically my opinion is based on the following:

- Evidence from areas subject to detailed internal audit during 2023/2024, in that AGRS has been able to provide positive statements of assurance with the majority of audits falling into the 'some improvement needed' category - the 2nd tier of assurance in the 4 tier model (see Table 2 at section 3 of this report).
- Provision of assurance and advisory work for major programmes and projects including the new accounting system which went live on 1 May 2024, in addition to real time advisory work on grants / funding processes.
- The results of the recommendations monitor exercises completed in September 2023 and April 2024.

- The work that was undertaken to support management in their quarterly review and update on the management of the corporate risks that could potentially impact on delivery of our corporate plan and priorities.
- The work that was undertaken to complete the review of the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessments and to support management in the development of associated fraud risk mitigation plans.
- The completion of the National Fraud Initiative, with no fraud identified.
- Quarterly assurances from senior management on the management of key risks and maintenance of internal control systems.
- The evidence set out in the review of the Council's Code of Governance and Annual Governance Statement regarding the range of key assurance and governance arrangements that the Council has in place to direct / oversee its activities.

However, some weaknesses and areas for improvement have been identified through audit work. These have been reported in detail to the Council's Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel during 2023/24 through quarterly progress reports. In addition, I have highlighted, where appropriate, where further action is required to implement agreed audit actions. The key issues I would highlight in this statement are as follows:

- While AGRS was able to provide positive statements of assurance in the majority of audits completed in 2023/24, three areas resulted in 'major improvement' assurance levels:
 - Corporate Risk Review – Resilience Strategy
 - Open Spaces and Streetscene
 - Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd
 It is important that the action plans for the above audits are implemented in as timely a manner as possible.
- The most recent recommendations monitor exercise completed in April 2024, showed good progress being made in the implementation of audit actions. It is important that this commitment to ensuring that there is a robust control environment to support delivery of services, programmes and priorities continues.
- Looking ahead, I highlight the importance of the ongoing development of the councils approach to medium term financial planning and adequate and effective programme management and performance management processes to support the delivery of the new corporate plan and priorities for 2024-28. Following the new financial system going live on 1 May 2024, I underline the importance of obtaining assurance over the effectiveness of the controls in operation and to this end our plan for 24/25 sets aside time for this work.

Limitations – the most recent External Quality Assessment (EQA) of AGRS found strong evidence that AGRS is viewed as making a positive contribution to the continuous improvement of governance, risk management and internal control in the Council and conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. One of the recommendations for improvement arising from the EQA was that my annual assurance report should highlight the limitations that result from AGRS' role in supporting the Council's risk management arrangements. In this regard I highlight that AGRS is responsible for assisting the Director in establishing, maintaining and supporting the implementation of the council's Risk Management Strategy. This places limitations on AGRS' ability to assess the overall effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements. To manage these limitations and to preserve the independence and objectivity of AGRS a number of safeguards have been put in place including resource planning to manage boundaries between our advisory and assurance work; self-assessments against best practice and periodic external assurance reviews of the councils arrangements for risk management.

Public Sector Internal Audit Standards - I can confirm that the AGRS Service has conformed to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards during 2023/24. A quality assurance and improvement programme is in place including internal review of work, annual assessment against professional standards, quarterly progress and performance reporting to the Assurance Board and Audit & Risk Panel. An external quality assessment of AGRS took place in 2022 and this confirmed the Service's compliance with professional standards.

Update on the Significant Governance Issues that were declared last year

Five issues were declared last year and three continue to be declared as issues in this year's statement regarding Financial Planning, Digital Information Security and the Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health. Two issues relating to Recruitment Challenges and the Belfast Region City Deal are no longer considered to be significant governance issues for the year-end 2024 and an update on the work that was completed last year to manage these issues is set out below.

Recruitment Challenges

A Strategic Director of City Operations was appointed in November 2023. A Strategic Director of Place & Economy was appointed in January 2024. The recruitment process to appoint a City Solicitor/Director of Legal & Civic Services is underway and due to complete in early May 2024. This will complete the structure of the Corporate Management Team.

The Council continued to undertake a high volume of recruitment activity including campaigns for difficult to fill roles for example security staff, environmental health officers, HGV drivers which provides greater stability across departments.

The Council also held a number of job fairs to increase applicant rates to a wide variety of roles and ran another high volume permanent recruitment campaign for the basic entry role of general operatives which has further increased stability in front line services.

The Council's People Strategy and 3-year action plan was launched in October 2023 with a focus on how we retain, attract and develop staff and upskill our existing talent to have adequate succession plans to fulfil vacancies at all levels including senior management.

The council will continue to undertake recruitment campaigns throughout 2024-25 to create greater stability across council departments.

Belfast Region City Deal

Significant progress has been made during 2023-24 with the BRCD well into delivery. To date 15 business cases have been approved with a combined approximate project value of £660m and 8 Contracts for Funding have been signed for projects with an approximate value of £430m. Over £7m in funding has been drawn down and two full business cases have also been approved.

The contracts for funding for a number of projects particularly in the tourism investment pillar, were subject to delays due to new requirements in relation to subsidy control. The PMO and partners have invested significant resources to deal with this issue including engaging with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and procuring specialist legal advice. As a result two Subsidy Assessments were submitted and both received positive reports from the CMA. Draft contracts for funding for three tourism projects have now been developed and are expected to be signed in the coming weeks.

Partners continue to consider the inflationary challenges as projects progress and in some cases have committed additional funding to projects from their own organisations' budgets. This will continue at individual project level and at programme level the partnership will engage with government in relation to value re-engineering, benefits realisation and the identification of additional funding where appropriate.

Significant Governance Issues for the year-end 2024

The significant governance issues for the year-end 2024 were identified through review of the risks in the Corporate Risk Register and review of the Directors' Annual Assurance Statements.

The most significant issues for the Council are listed below and have been carried forward from last year:

1. Financial Planning
2. Digital Information Security / Digital Strategy
3. Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health

More information on these significant governance issues is provided on the following pages.

1. Financial Planning

The 5-step finance strategy applied in 2020/21 to deal with the COVID-19 issue and extended into the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years was further extended into 2023/24 and reviewed quarterly due to the continuing economic crises. This strategy remained in place for the full financial year.

Members had previously agreed the creation of two additional specified reserves to deal with

- 1) Covid Costs/Income Losses
- 2) Rate Base Losses.

The 5-step strategy allowed the council to manage additional costs/loss of income due to covid via in year budget savings and the use of the Covid Costs/Income Losses specified reserves. As part of the year-end review of the Council's financial position, these will be reviewed taking consideration of the current economic.

During the 24/25 rate setting process income and expenditure were reviewed in detail resulting in new and additional income streams being agreed. This resulted in a rate increase which will provide a sustainable financial position for the Council without the reliance on the 5-step finance strategy introduced in 2021/22.

The challenges faced by the Council over the past few years have been unprecedented and are likely to continue given the on-going global unrest and the resultant economic impacts. As part of the 2023/24 rate setting process, members agreed a strategy to deal with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the 23/24 budgets. To mitigate the impact on the 24/25 rate setting process a significant efficiency programme has been developed to look at cost savings through reviewing category and contract management, maximising income generation opportunities, exploring new and additional income streams and the use of enhanced expenditure controls.

2. Digital Information Security / Digital Strategy

Digital information security continues to be a significant governance issue and is overseen through the Council's risk management processes by the Council's Corporate Management Team. Digital Services has implemented the following additional controls to manage and have better visibility of the growing threats in this area:

- Completion of penetration tests.
- Completion of Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard attestation.
- Ongoing delivery of a Security Awareness programme through regular five-minute online training modules on a range of issues that pose a cyber risk for our network.
- Unannounced tests to help determine where future support is required.
- Implementation of Public Key Infrastructure to enhance network access control.
- Activation of Always-On Virtual Private Network to ensure all homeworking access is managed through our security infrastructure.
- Mobile device management using Microsoft Intune currently being rolled out for all new mobile phones.
- Completion of firewall upgrades.
- Draft Ransomware incident response plan.
- Cloud services access report reviewed by Security Oversight Group.

The Digital information Security programme will continue to focus on priority areas that are most important to enhance the council's cyber security controls, including:

- Cyber security incident response.
- Identity management.
- Cloud strategy.
- Maturity assessment priorities.

Additional actions to be undertaken to further mitigate this key corporate risk in 2024/25 include:

- Complete Corporate Management Team Cyber Security Exercise.
- Complete Ransomware Playbook.
- Carry out external Security Information and Event Management engagement to improve threat detection in the Microsoft 365 environment.
- Implement agreed Cloud security governance.
- Network access control roll out to be completed.
- Following a review of local government pilots complete a new maturity assessment based on the new National Cyber Security Centre Cyber Assessment Framework.

An internal audit highlighted issues with the management of the corporate risk on the strategic approach to the use of data, including future ownership of this risk. CMT has approved the creation of a Data and Analytics Board to be chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services. A new Digital Strategy with the vision to make the best use of digital and data to deliver excellent public services and inclusive growth in the Belfast City Region has been approved by the Corporate Management Team. The main objectives of the Digital Strategy relate to Digital Public Services; Information as an Asset; Digital City Innovation and; Digital Capability. The strategy will now be taken to the Strategic Policy & Resources committee.

ICT capability is an intrinsic pillar of the overall operating model of the Council and it important that we have the right skills within Digital Services and across the Council. Attracting new talent is becoming problematic across the service but particularly in specialist areas such as Cyber Security

and Application Development. Digital Services has established a workforce planning group to review and determine future skills and development needs across the service.

Additional actions that are planned to be carried out to mitigate this risk in 24-25 include:

- Create action plan based on the feedback from the workforce planning group.
- Create a new apprenticeship role in the Infrastructure team.
- Review the use of employment academies.
- Review recruitment practices.

3. Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health

Throughout 2023/24 the Council has continued to work with partners and stakeholders to ensure the Council meets its current statutory duties, while also taking steps to prepare for the phased implementation of Windsor Framework statutory requirements.

The programme of work has focused on securing temporary funding for 2024/25 (currently allocated on an annual basis) and preparing for future review of staffing and operations once a longer term funding model is identified by Government.

The Council has also worked with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to ensure Council requirements are taken into account for the construction of a new permanent and purpose built product inspection facility at the Port, and to ensure any required upgrades and maintenance of the temporary inspection facilities at the Belfast Point of Entry sites including Corry Place.

Further work being taken forward under the programme includes further development of IT systems to streamline processes and joint working.

Details of the phasing implementation of some aspects of the Windsor Framework in 2024/25 and 2025/26 is yet to be confirmed including arrangements for fees and charges.

Some uncertainty remains regarding volumes of checks required and the extent to which businesses may eventually realign trading routes, as this is dependent on the final Windsor Framework arrangements and also the potential impacts of new controls at GB ports under the UK's Border Target operating model for EU goods being imported to GB. The Council are liaising closely with Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, DEFRA and Food Standards Authority to ensure operational readiness.

Further work will be required in 2024/25 and beyond to develop a longer term staffing model, and to secure a sustainable funding arrangement to support the service going forward and IT development for the new facility.

Signed:
Chair Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Signed:
Chief Executive Officer

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Subject:	Tri-Cities Golf Event
Date:	21 st June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance
Contact Officer:	Trevor Wallace, Director of Finance

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sometime in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	Since 2002, the City Councils of Edinburgh, Dublin and Belfast have participated in the annual TriCities Golf Event. The event rotates round each of the three cities on an annual basis. The 2024 event is scheduled to take place in Belfast.

1.2	The Tri-Cities Golf Event originated from a city network named “Cities of the Isles”. The Golf Event was developed to establish strong social capital networks across the cities alongside opportunities for networking, collaboration and engagement on a range of shared challenges.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to host the event to include Hospitality by the Lord Mayor.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The golf competition is between representatives of each Council’s Senior Management Teams, or their deputies, and elected members from each of the city councils. The teams all travel at their own expense and meet their own accommodation costs. No subsequent allowance or expenses of any kind are paid to any of the participants. Each year the host city meets the costs of the green fees for the visitors and a meal in the clubhouse after the match.
3.2	The event dates are 5 th – 6 th September, with the first day of the tournament taking place at Belvoir Park Golf Club and the second at Dunmurry Golf Club.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.3	The anticipated costs of hosting the event are approximately £4,500 provided from existing revenue budgets.
	<u>Equality and Good Relations / Rural Needs Implications</u>
3.4	There are no direct good relations, equality or rural needs implications arising from this report.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None



Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 10 th June 2024
Date:	21 st June 2024
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on 10 th June 2024.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 10 th June 2024 including:
2.2	<p><u>Presentation from Forward South Partnership - Roma Hub and Feasibility Study - for notation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the presentation is included in Appendix 2 for members information.
2.3	<p><u>Good Relations Verbal Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Good Relations Manager advised that officers were still not in receipt of a Letter of Offer from The Executive Office, also the Good Relations Manager informed members that Mears and the Home Office would not agree to present to SCP. The Good Relation Manager suggested a meeting be convened with himself, the Director and relevant Senior Officials in The Executive Office. Members agreed this approach.
2.4	<p><u>Shared City Partnership – Terms of Reference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the updated Terms of Reference for the Shared City Partnership.
2.5	<p><u>PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.</p>
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the 10th June 2024 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Papers of 13th May 2024 • Presentation from Forward South Partnership - Roma Hub and Feasibility Study • Good Relations Verbal Update • Updated Terms of Reference for Shared City Partnership • Peaceplus – Theme 1.1 – Local Action Plan Update

3.3	<p>More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1; and a copy Forward South Presentation are attached in Appendix 2.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.4	<p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.5	<p>The recommendations of the Partnership promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership 10th June 2024</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Forward South Presentation</p>

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SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 10th June, 2024

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillors Duffy (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Abernethy, McLaughlin and Smyth.

External Members: Mr. P. Anderson, Department for Communities;
Ms. B. Arthurs, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. T. Burns, Faith Sector;
Superintendent N. Henry, PSNI;
Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. L. Gunn, Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Mr. M. McBride, Education Authority;
Ms. C. McMenamin, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
Ms. T. Mimna, Good Relations, TEO;
Mr. W. Naeem, Interfaith Forum;
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. G. Walker, Community and Voluntary Sector; and
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Mrs. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. H. Donaldson, Programme Lead PEACEPLUS; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

It was proposed by Councillor Abernethy, seconded by Ms. B. Arthurs and agreed that Councillor Duffy be elected as the Chairperson; and Councillor I. McLaughlin as the Deputy Chairperson to the Shared City Partnership until the date of the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Council.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th May, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Ms. T. Mimna, TEO, declared an interest in PEACE PLUS Local Action Plan Update (item 5) as the TEO was involved in the assessment process for the BCC PEACEPLUS application under IA1.1 and she left the meeting at this stage in proceedings.

Update from Forward South Partnership re Roma Hub and Feasibility Study

Ms. B. Arthurs, Chief Executive, Forward South Partnership (FSP), provided the Partnership with a comprehensive update on the ongoing support that continued to be offered to the Roma community through the Roma Hub. She reminded the Members that the project had initially been supported through PEACE IV and this initial funding had enabled relationships to be developed with Roma communities living in the city. She explained that, through the Hub, support and opportunities were offered which provided an opportunity for personal development and integration for people from the Roma community living in Belfast. She explained that the overall aim of the project was “to support minority ethnic communities in the city, to provide diversity awareness, inclusion and integration opportunities with other communities in the city and this was the same ethos today”.

Ms. Arthurs provided an overview of the work undertaken via the Hub. This included weekly immigration and welfare clinics, a helpline for making referrals to other services such as food banks, liaison with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Education Authority and a drop-in service to support people with form filling or contacting their doctors. The Hub was also a point for the collection of donations of clothing, kitchen appliances and buggies.

She advised that the Hub also hosted weekly English classes in south and east Belfast and also facilitated a weekly women’s group. It also helped to get members of the community involved with wider community events, festivals and intercultural activities, including the annual Holylands Winter Festival and Open Botanic.

She advised that she was pleased to report that the valuable work and support was still possible through and ongoing due to funding that had been awarded from the Lottery Community Fund.

Ms. Arthurs referred to the Feasibility Study Intercultural Hub and Mr. Liam McGarry of McGarry Consulting took the Members through a presentation in relation to this.

The Chairperson thanked the Ms. Arthurs for the valuable work that the FSP was doing with the Roma community throughout the city.

Good Relations - Verbal Update

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Abernethy to his first meeting of the Shared City Partnership since joining the Council.

The Good Relations Manager advised that this would be the last meeting of the Shared City Partnership for Mr. T. Burns from the Faith Sector as this position was rotated annually and both he and the Chairperson thanked him for his contribution to the Partnership.

The PEACE Programme Manager introduced Ms. Helen Donaldson who had recently taken up the position of Lead Officer within the PEACEPLUS team. The Chairperson welcomed Ms. Donaldson to her first meeting of the Shared City Partnership.

The Good Relations Manager reported that both MEARS and the Home Office had declined the Partnership's request to attend a meeting to address queries.

Detailed discussion ensued around the non-attendance and it was agreed that the Good Relations Manager would investigate how to raise this at a more Strategic level.

Updated Shared City Partnership - Terms of Reference

The Working Group was presented with a report which detailed the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Shared City Partnership.

The Members were asked to note that the ToR were last reviewed in August 2019. Since then, the Peace IV Programme had been delivered and would be fully closed off in 2024. In addition, the new PEACEPLUS Programme would be fully operational in the latter half of 2024. These changes in position had been reflected in point 5 of the updated ToR.

The Working Group was advised that officers were keen to ensure that the Partnership was kept informed on the work of other organisations/sectors regarding key issues which might impact Good Relations within Belfast City, and this had been reflected in point 6 of the updated ToR.

The Good Relations Manager drew the Members' attention to the updated ToR, below:

Appendix

Shared City Partnership

Terms of Reference

INTRODUCTION

1. The Shared City Partnership (SCP) was developed from the former Good Relations Partnership, which was established by Belfast City Council to support Council to meet its obligations in the promotion of good relations. This relates to Section 75, part B, which states; 'a public authority is required, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief; political opinion and different racial group.'
2. The SCP was formally established as a Working Group of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and as such, all recommendations of the SCP are subject to the agreement of that Committee and to ratification by the full Council.
3. Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agrees that this Terms of Reference shall govern the operation of the SCP.

PURPOSE

4. The role of the SCP is:
 - To assist the elected political leadership of the Council, staff, diverse civil society interests and partnering agencies to engage pro-actively on all Good Relations issues on behalf of citizens and be a collective voice, promoting a common vision for Good Relations in the City.
5. The purpose of the SCP is:
 - To oversee the closure of Belfast's PEACE IV Local Action Plan and oversee the development and delivery of Belfast's PEACEPLUS Peace and Reconciliation Local Action Plan while also continuing with the core Good Relations agenda for the City including the good relations outcomes linked to the Belfast Agenda and the new Local Development Plan.
 - To oversee the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan and associated District Council Good Relations Programme (DCGRP).

- To provide a challenge function to the council and other represented organisations to ensure good relations is at the forefront of policy and programming development which impacts on the City.
- To promote good relations between people of different religious and political beliefs and different racial groups in every aspect of Council activities.
- To use the Council's influence as a democratically elected body, providing civic leadership to the City, to promote good relations throughout society.
- To promote equality of opportunity in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities, taking into account the needs of persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation, of men and women generally, of persons with a disability and persons without and of persons with dependents and persons without.
- To promote respect and understanding throughout the City by providing support, including the equitable use of available budgets, for appropriate initiatives which celebrate the cultural diversity of Belfast.
- To act as a mechanism to ensure that major Belfast City Council initiatives both revenue and capital are cognisant of their duty in relation to Section 75, Part B.

6. The responsibilities of individual SCP members include:

- Compliance with the Terms of Reference.
- Ensuring they are the most appropriate person to represent their organisational group.
- Keeping the SCP informed of key issues from within their own organisations/sector, which impact on good relations in the city. There will be a standing item added to the agenda at each meeting following core business to include member updates and also a timetable of presentations will be formulated on an annual basis.
- Actively engaging in SCP business informing discussion and decision-making through expert opinion and organisational awareness.
- Acting as the conduit between their organisational group and SCP, canvassing views/opinion, disseminating information and representing the broader interests/views of their group.
- Taking personal responsibility for representing the views of their organisation.
- Following through on agreed action points within agreed timeframes.

MEMBERSHIP

7. The SCP is currently chaired by Councillor Duffy and vice-chair Councillor McLaughlin, nominated by the SCP members. The Chair and Vice-Chair are nominated on an annual basis, following the Annual Meeting of Council, both roles are delivered by Elected Members.
8. The SCP is comprised of the following representatives: Elected Members of Belfast City Council; Statutory Agencies; and a range of external partners.
9. The SCP is an appropriate size to be effective and efficient.
10. Established criteria for members will ensure the SCP achieves a cross-section of representation from the sectors identified with due care being taken to balance the selection in terms of gender, geography, sectoral groupings, size of organisation, and community background.
11. It is critical that members have appropriate skills, expertise and experience on good relations, peace building and reconciliation, and that community interests and needs are represented.
12. A member can resign at any time. If a resignation takes place, the relevant sector/grouping will be asked to nominate a replacement. The Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will be advised of the replacement following discussion with the SCP.
13. The Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will ensure continuity of the panel by seeking to retain up to 50% of existing members to get a balance between experienced and new members.
14. The Members of the SCP are also supported by advisors.
15. Non-Permanent Members or other relevant Council departments who have been invited to attend in an advisory capacity, with non-voting rights and may be invited by the Chair of the SCP to respond to specific agenda items and offer advice as required. Such advisors have the right to participate fully in the discussions of the SCP and to offer advice.
16. The names of the current SCP are included in Annex 1.

SECRETARIAT

17. The Secretariat to the SCP shall be drawn from the staff of Belfast City Council's Democratic Services Unit. The Secretariat is responsible for facilitating meetings of the SCP and for the co-ordination of documentation relating to monitoring reports, agendas and records of meetings.

COMMUNICATIONS

18. All communications relating to the business of the SCP shall be addressed to the Secretariat of the SCP.

MEETINGS

19. The SCP will meet once a month with the exception of July.
20. Extraordinary meetings may be arranged by agreement to take forward matters of interest.
21. An agenda will be agreed and issued (with relevant papers) to members at least one week before the SCP meeting.
22. Any Member may raise any item for inclusion in the agenda.
23. The Quorum for a meeting of the SCP is 6 Members, two of which must be Elected Members.

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

24. Secretariat and Good Relations Manager will have briefed the Chair on issues, including apologies and delegates attending.
25. Meetings will follow the agenda. Any presentations will be delivered at an appropriate point as agreed with the Chair.
26. Contributions from all representatives are welcome. An informal environment should be created in order to encourage debate.

DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The Chair will act primarily as the facilitator for SCP business and, where possible, the SCP will operate on the basis of consensus; with only permanent members having the right to vote.

27. Failure to reach consensus on an issue will be recorded in the minutes and presented to the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
28. All recommendations of the SCP are subject to the agreement of Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and to ratification by the full Council.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

29. SCP members are encouraged to attend all meetings. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. In exceptional circumstances, where non-attendance is unavoidable, the member should advise the Secretariat.
30. If the Member is not available for a particular meeting, the Member may submit written comments on any of the items of business to be considered at a SCP meeting.
31. The SCP will review the membership of consecutive non-attendees - where the Member was not present and no written comments were received for 3 (out of a total of 11) meetings. It will make recommendations to the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to address the issue.

TASK GROUPS

32. The SCP will appoint Task Groups, as it deems appropriate, to consider in more detail specific areas of its responsibility. Task Groups will operate under the direction and authority of the SCP.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

33. A conflict of interest is a situation in which a person has a private or personal interest sufficient to appear to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties as a SCP member.
34. As conflicts of interest can arise in many different situations, members must be vigilant so that any such conflicts can be identified promptly and appropriate action taken.

CODE OF CONDUCT

35. The code of conduct sets out the principles of conduct and ethics expected of the SCP Members which include: Public Duty, Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership, Equality, Promoting Good Relations, Respect and Good Working Relationships (as per NILGA, NI Local Government Code of Conduct).

The Partnership noted the updated Terms of Reference and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that these be adopted.

Peace Plus Belfast City Council Local Action Plan Update

(At this stage in proceedings Ms. Mimna, having declared an interest earlier, left the meeting).

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership Members with an update on the assessment of PEACEPLUS 1.1. Co-designed Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP)

2.0 Recommendations

Members note the contents of the report and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Application Assessment Status

Assessment of the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan is ongoing. Members are reminded of the timeframe as previously reported in May 2024, of considered by TEO on 30th May 2024, and the SEUPB steering committee on 19th June 2024, with a formal Letter of Offer to follow.

A procurement plan and timeframe to mobilise the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is currently being developed in conjunction with Commercial and Procurement Services. Details of the operational plan will be outlined to Members in the next report.

3.2 Staff Recruitment

Both the Lead Officer and Programme Support Assistant are in post and assisting with mobilising the PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. The Finance and Claims Officer and three Project Managers have been appointed, with officers due in post by mid-July. Recruitment for the Monitoring and Data Analyst and the re-advertisement of the Project Officer post is ongoing.

3.3 Capacity Building Programme

Delivery of the Prepare to Procure Capacity Building Programme has concluded with the Consortium Development session delivered on 28th May 2024.

3.4 Feedback from attendees at the sessions has been positive. Attendees have also highlighted the need for a further networking session based on the concept / project working group approach. The networking session is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 11th June at 10am in City Hall and has been promoted both to the stakeholders involved in the co-design process and the wider public.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

As the 13th May 2024 report advised, all expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS LCAP is eligible from the date of application submission, which is 14th December 2023.

Therefore all expenditure is within the existing budget which will be claimed retrospectively from SEUPB.

As the assessment process is ongoing, advice on the drawdown of the £30K advance from SEUPB will be progressed by the Programme Manager once the assessment process has been concluded.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Plan has been submitted for equality and good relations screening as well as rural needs assessment.”

Following a query, the PEACE Programme Manager confirmed that officers were conscious of the forthcoming holiday period and had taken this into consideration when setting the timelines for the respective tenders.

Following a query regarding the proposed timeline for commencement of delivery, the PEACE Programme Manager advised that due to resource pressures there would be a phased approach. Officers were anticipating that delivery of the larger projects would commence first and she provided an indicative timeline of 3 months which would allow for tender and evaluation.

The Good Relations Manager highlighted the huge volume of work and the dedication and commitment from officers that it had taken to get the PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan to this stage and asked that his thanks be recorded to all the staff involved.

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

Any Other Business

Holiday Period

Following a query from a Member, the Good Relations Manager advised the Members of the following key priorities that would collectively help to contribute to a peaceful holiday period, this included information in respect of the beacons programme, small grants initiatives, Day of Reflection and Race Relations week.

Noted.

Chairperson

Forward South Partnership – Common Hub

Feasibility Study (Aug23)

SHORT PRESENTATION 10-Jun-2024

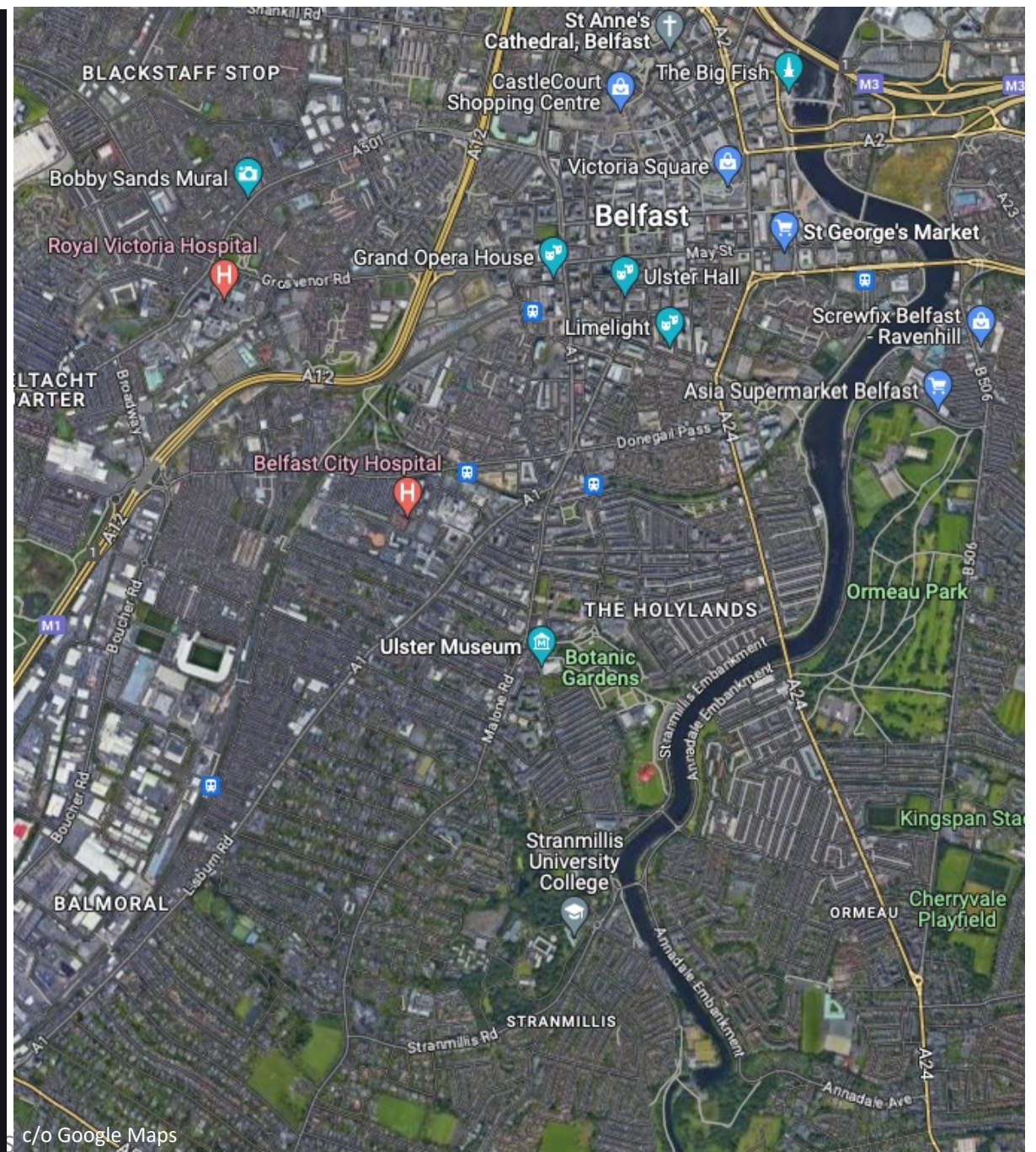


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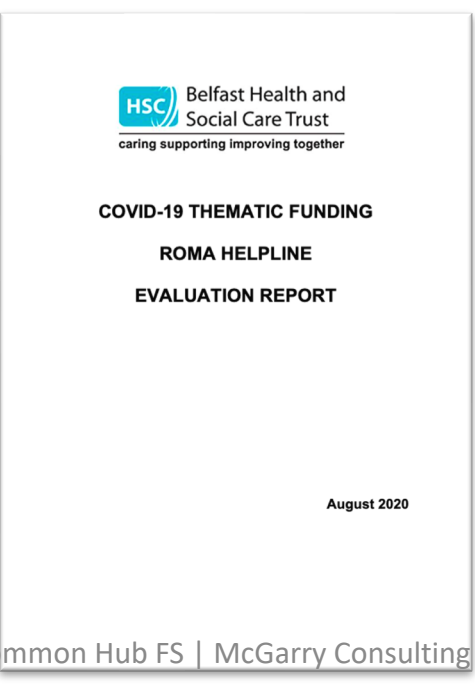
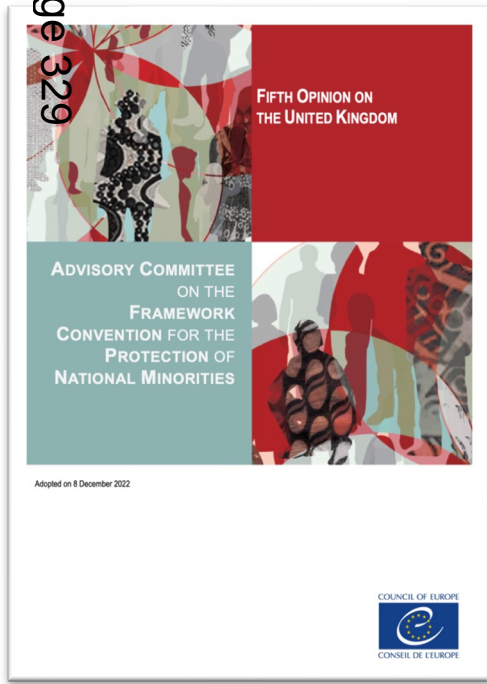
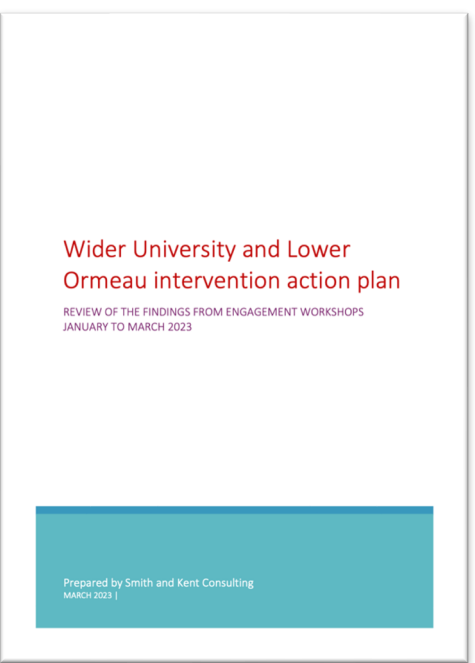
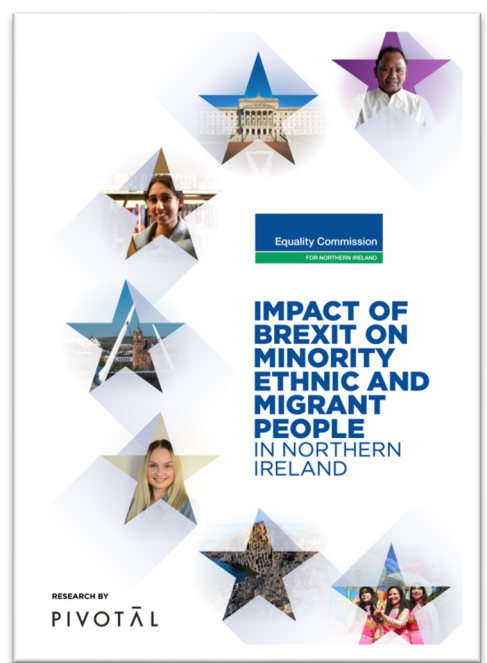


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c/o Holylands Transition Study 2020



c/o Google Maps



“Rights and entitlements for different groups had become much more complicated since Brexit. Many migrants, and public sector organisations, didn’t understand the new immigration (points based) system. Whilst **third sector organisations were swamped. This is confounded by a lack of hard data, and interpreters.** Additional barriers included complex forms, digital skills and access to documents.” [Impact of Brexit Report](#)

‘There are a wide range of **challenges identified for both minority ethnic and migrant individuals in gaining employment, accessing suitable housing, healthcare, education, leisure, political participation, access to justice, safety, economic inclusion, receiving language support, and cultural integration.**’ [Research Summary Report](#)

‘**Communities were identified as a strength. With many enthusiastic about creating positive change.**’ The report recommended moving quickly to foster positivity and build on the momentum. Recommendations included **raising awareness of services newcomers can avail of; longer term more intercultural activity,** more community facilities and spaces [WUA & LO Intervention Action Plan](#)

‘The Roma Helpline is a bridging service to statutory and community services, that is seen as credible to the Roma.’ [Roma Hub Evaluation](#)

7.1 million people are in the UK as part of the EU Settlement Scheme, millions more than expected.

1.2 million people migrated to the UK in 2022.



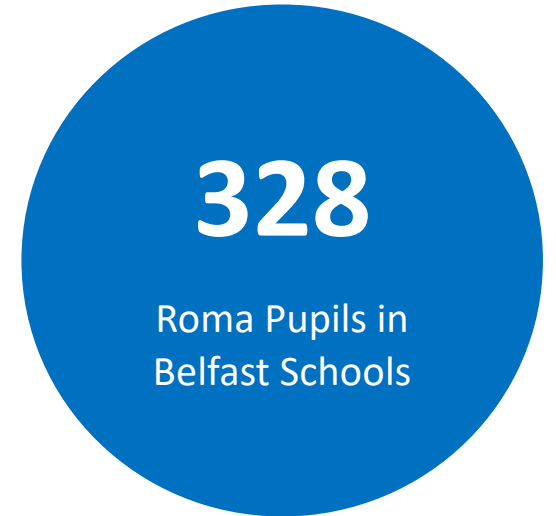
For context 45,000 people crossed the channel by boat in 2022 (3.75% of total)

this needs to be addressed, with long-term sustainable skills & solutions put in place

school pupils from ethnic minorities (Up 1,273%)



Roma population:



botanic: outline area profile

2021 NI Census Data Points	Botanic (pop: 49,727)	Holyland Peak	Botanic A (Belfast City Hall)	NI
Born in NI	66%		40%	87%
Main Language – Non-English	15%		33%	5%
No Religion (or Not Stated)	35%		44% <small>(18% Other Religions)</small>	11%
Other Ethnic Group (i.e. Non-White)	18%		47%	3%
Live in Flats or Terraced Housing	80%	96% <small>(75% in Flats v NI 10%)</small>	97% <small>(77% Flats, 21% owned)</small>	32%
Unemployment	5%	8%	6%	3%
Lived at Same Address (> 1 Year)	64%	38%	50%	92%
Arrived in NI (2011-2021)	25%		55%	6%

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Highlights the different area profiles and the challenges in getting hard data (e.g. Roma population) to base decisions on.

Also, Botanic figures are an average, which means there will be even greater variance at more local levels.

feasibility study findings

A review of reports to date, along with consultations and research as part of the feasibility study, led to the summary findings below:

- **public bodies have invested** in the area over the the last few years but that level of investment appears unsustainable
- there was a **wide variety of formal and informal ‘cultural’ groups** out there with **varying levels of capacity**; there is no single exhaustive list (with any list needing to be a ‘living breathing list’)
- some of the groups are entirely volunteer led but are being **relied upon by as gateways** and/or interpreters for public bodies, in the absence of more recognised channels
- **access to services is a key challenge, not only in terms of language barriers but also in respect of knowing and navigating the system** (which is increasingly moving online and/or to automated telephone system; plus there is often a lack of consistency in personnel). There is also **confusion as to status and terminology** (e.g. refugee, asylum seeker, migrant, newcomer etc)
- being able to **communicate in English** reduces barriers and enables greater interaction, integration and commonality [**NB Tech Advances**]
- groups who want space often **want it at the same times** (e.g. Saturday mornings) and would **prioritise it for the own community** (e.g. language schools, after-schools) above integration
- emerging **trends** (students moving out of the Holylands; high density housing (and housing allocation); immigration challenges – more people coming to the UK and people being moved to

Belfast who arrived elsewhere in the UK; **cost of living increases and funding cuts; racism**) will place the WUA under more pressure

- the pilot **Roma hub** illustrated the challenge (e.g. securing & retaining skilled staff) and successes (e.g. which can deliver support, can be trusted, and **once trusted - be used more**), in running a hub. The **Ukrainian Assistance Centres** in NI also demonstrated how much support newcomers to NI require (and the associated public resources required to meet that need) – [NB Non-Roma Use of Hub, Now Food Bank]
- people felt a **‘common hub’** would be a more inclusive description than a multi-cultural hub
- whilst many people wanted space (from office space, space for language schools and after-schools to large social spaces) it was **not clear how this would be sustainable** or support collaboration
- in the first instance a common hub, should be more **about key services than providing large amounts of space**, which would be more difficult to sustain (at viable venue/office hire rates)
- before pursuing any physical ‘common hub’ there would need to be more work around the **role of key public partners** (e.g. BCC, BHSC, PHA, PSNI) and how they would support services within it
- there is a **lack of hard data** (e.g. with respect to the Roma population), and a **perception amongst public bodies that there is more support out there than is being perceived on the ground**. This shows there is a need for improved evidence gathering (and sharing) and outcome measurement. As well as need for greater communication with more people/organisations on the ground [**Issue with Perceptions; ‘Industry’**]

Victim of racist graffiti urges public to speak up against discrimination

By Jessica Rice

A MAN who was forced to move out of his Belfast home due to racist graffiti daubed on the property has called for the public's support in standing up to racism.

Takura Makoni has lived in Northern Ireland for more than 20 years and in Finaghy for almost five years.

Back in March, Mr Makoni who works with the African & Caribbean Support Organisation in Northern Ireland, openly condemned racist posters around his home that were calling for the Housing Executive to "stop

housing illegal immigrants". Then in April the words "Taura not welcome" were spray painted on the walls of the father-of-four's home.

Mr Makoni said he felt he was targeted for speaking out against the anti-immigration signs.

"It was because I took a stance against the signs that were put up around my home so they targeted my home," he said. "Following the recent vandalism to his home, Mr Makoni stressed that he did not believe it expressed the views of the majority of people in the local area. However, he claimed there is a danger some have become "by-standers" to racism.

He said he will continue to speak out about racism but is urging more people to join him.



Takura Makoni

"How I feel is neither here nor there. It doesn't matter how I feel, it matters how the rest of Northern Ireland feel, are they happy to let something like this continue? Or are they going to decide to do something about it?" he said.

Mr Makoni is instead asking the public to educate themselves on some of the racial stereotypes present in society. He also urged everyone to "take ownership" of the problem in society.

"Just stop an immigrant in the street and say 'hello', that's all you need to do, from there you can learn anything you need," he said. "There is no point running

majority of people need to speak for themselves and tell us how they feel," he said.

"You don't hear from anyone until an incident and then we don't hear from them again after it."

Mr Makoni is instead asking the public to educate themselves on some of the racial stereotypes present in society.

He also urged everyone to "take ownership" of the problem in society.

"Just stop an immigrant in the street and say 'hello', that's all you need to do, from there you can learn anything you need," he said. "There is no point running

from blame station to blame station. We can't say 'this is the police's fault' or 'this is the Housing Executive's fault'.

"I can't cure racism as a victim of racism, it is up to the people to educate themselves. This is the time for action, not the time to be sitting there with folded arms.

"If we want to, we can do something about it. In 1998 everyone – politicians, the police, community groups – all came together because they all had a shared vision of peace in Northern Ireland.

"They were able to achieve their shared vision, so we can do the same."

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'No one should feel intimidated'

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) chief inspector Mark Conway said: "Hate crime hurts communities on many levels and racially motivated hate crime is a priority issue for local police in south Belfast."

He said police have "engaged with the victim after each incident and continue to work with local community representatives and partner agencies to try and find a solution".

He said that officer patrols have been stepped up across south Belfast in recent weeks in response to increased reports of anti-social behaviour.

within the last 12 days...



NEWS

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N. Ireland | N. Ireland Politics

Mum terrified as home targeted in racist attacks



BBC

Odegua said she was worried about her daughter in light of the racist incidents

Brendan Hughes
BBC News NI

Ita Dungan
BBC News NI

7 June 2024

A Nigerian woman living in south Belfast has said she and her daughter are living in fear as their home has been targeted in multiple hate-motivated attacks.

Viewpoint



Ghastly hate crimes are stain on society

BELFAST is known around the world for its tours, with some of the most iconic featuring the many colourful murals adorning gable walls across the city.

Depending on which area of town you're in, different cultures are on display.

But recently a culture no one wished to see has been appearing around Northern Ireland. It is happening in front of schools where children pass, resulting in curious questions for parents and teachers, in town centre car parks and on shop shutters overnight.

Racist, anti-immigration and anti-asylum seeker messages have been daubed across the landscape in various locations. And it's all extremely distasteful. It is not the society the majority of people in Northern Ireland wish to be associated with.

The mentality of those who paint such slogans, images and swastikas in our communities can be summed up by the fact they often can't even spell their hateful words correctly.

Northern Ireland has worked hard to create a diverse society and it is all the richer for it. It's sad that some would seek to rob us of that wealth of culture.

Once again communities are being blighted by those with minds so narrow they do not wish to tolerate anyone who comes from a different culture

or has a different colour of skin. This intolerance may be an echo of the past, of the religious divide we have all grown up with in this country. Time, for some, has simply not moved on, but the world is leaving them behind.

There should be a collective shame that such people are allowed to walk freely among us.

And that shame should be enough for communities to, once and for all, call out those so far out of touch with society in 2024 that they are the ones who will not be tolerated.

The number of hate crime incidents is on the rise. Perhaps that's a good thing as more people are coming forward to report them. Previously there was a fear of reprisal for speaking out against those who wish to bully and coerce their way through life.

But it's still a worrying trend. Only by rooting out those guilty of the threats – and we have seen several over the last few days in Belfast, Newtownabbey and Cookstown – and making an example of them are we going to begin to rid society of them.

There is little deterrent for those responsible for the slogans that stain our towns and cities – usually painted under the cover of darkness – with their words appearing as if they speak for the whole community.

They do not. And that message has to be loud and clear.

£2m

(buy & upgrade)

£58k

(running costs pa)

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The corner site has few windows on the ground floor, but has significant presence and floorspace. It also incorporates 23 Eblana Street (shaded, right)

FORWARD SOUTH FEASIBILITY STUDY



All Saints Church of Ireland



Fitzroy Presbyterian Church



Social Housing



Feasibility Study for Forward South @ 57 Cromwell Road, Belfast

Proposed Site Context

June 2023



ARCHITECTURE
INTERIORS
DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANCY

Unit 1 Ribblesden Court
Molloy
Belfast BT2 8LQ
Tel: +44 (0)28 9241 1222
Fax: +44 (0)28 9241 3834
Email: studio@tatestevenson.com

© Tate Stevenson 2016

Tate Stevenson looked at various design options to make the most of the space.

A concept design is laid out on the following pages. Key points below:

- A lift has been added to ensure accessibility to all floors
- Extra windows provide more natural light, with a new entrance
- Toilets are provided on the first (including changing places toilet) and second floors
- The Roma Hub has open space and a dedicated meeting room
- The FSP office space is on the ground floor near the entrance to leave the first floor more for meeting/office/social space with a variety of sized rooms available. Further flexibility is available via foldable partitions and through dedicate storage spaces on each floor





in summary

Any proposed common hub should focus initially on three key areas:

1. **Access to Services**
2. **Learning English / ESOL**
3. **Shared Services & Support**

how it might be achieved

- **public bodies can work together to** improve peoples’ quality of life (PfG)
- **STEP, in mid-Ulster** provides an example of how such advisory services could be delivered
- A July 2023 [tender for Ageing Well services](#) in Mid-Ulster (£267k contract over 15 months), sets out a Council led (multi-agency) example to commissioning various support services through one contract

proposed benefits

- **Simplified** and trusted approach
- ‘unowned space’, safe & neutral
- Acts as a **‘One-Stop-Shop’** starting point
- Creates **two-way conduit**/communication
- Builds long-term **capacity** & connections
- Creates economies of **scale** (e.g. tech, admin) and inherent **resident lingual mix**

role of FSP & conclusion

- **FSP** is well established in the area
- They set-up, piloted and secured multi-year funding for the **Roma Hub, and have been involved in circa 50 projects in 2022-23,**
- Their current space is not fit for purpose or accessible
- **FSP could offer a common hub: an anchor tenancy, a strong partner network, skilled & experienced staff and good relations knowledge.**
- Requires a partnership approach, agreement on governance and long-term planning for FSP
- Key issues are securing partner buy-in, sourcing capital funding (confirming site), and what happens in the interim

**“People come to the hub
because there’s a relationship
and there’s trust.”**

Belfast Roma Hub

Q&A

end

City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Wednesday, 22nd May, 2024

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

REMOTE MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Aldermen Lawlor and Rodgers;
Councillors de Faoite and Flynn.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of
Legal and Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. M. McCann, Belfast City Innovation Programme Lead;
Ms. C. Campbell, City Innovation Programme Officer;
Ms. B. Murphy, City Innovation Broker,
Ms. K. Mullen, Client Manager;
Ms. A. Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor Beattie (Chairperson).

(Alderman Lawlor in the chair).

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th and 14th February, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation - Immersive Rooms City Hall - Content Framework

The Belfast City Innovation Programme Lead reminded the Working Group of the Smart Belfast Project - 'Belfast City Hall Immersive experience' in collaboration with BT(NI) to establish a world class emotionally engaging immersive experience in the City Hall exhibition to complement and enhance the existing exhibition. He highlighted that this would contribute to the wider aims of Belfast 2024, and the team had also collaborated with the Belfast Stories and Functions Team to determine what the experience might look like.

He advised that the Council was working with Jam Creative Studios to develop the experience, and the Project was also being submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May for consideration, with the plan to develop the concept over the summer months to launch in early Autumn.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. A. Martin-Jones and Ms. L. Warwick to the meeting, representing Jam Creative Studios.

Ms. Warwick explained the development of the concepts and content behind the experience that would be sensitive to the themes of the existing exhibition.

She described how the immersive experience would 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 would use this existing content as a jumping-off point for an experience that allowed visitors to explore these rooms in novel ways.

She advised that each room would be equipped with iPads (while also offering the option for visitors to use their own mobile devices), guiding visitors through the rooms with immersive, augmented reality moments, which would include sound installations, virtual vignettes, designs in 3D, interactive games and Instagram-able wall art.

During discussion, the representatives explained further how the proximity based augmented reality in Room 7 would work and how the flow of visitors would be managed.

One Member suggested that the Working Group could be used for testing the new experience.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information provided and welcomed the forthcoming immersive experience.

Inclusion of new artefact in the City Hall Visitor Exhibition

The Working Group considered a report which sought approval for a new artefact in the City Hall Visitor Exhibition of a replica of Wayne McCullough WBC Bantamweight belt produced by the World Boxing Council to recognize his role as an ambassador for the sport.

The Members of the Working Group approved the inclusion of the new artefact in the City Hall Visitor Exhibition.

City Hall Statues Update

The Working Group was reminded that the unveiling of statues of Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken took place on Friday, 8th March (International Women's Day).

The Client Manager provided an overview of the special ceremony in the grounds of the City Hall, together with the panel discussion, and advised that the events had been extremely well attended by invited guests and by members of the public. She highlighted that it had been one of the most publicised events in terms of press coverage and media attention for the Council in recent years.

The Client Manager highlighted that officers were currently engaging with the Foundry in Dublin to have brass plaques containing QR codes placed on both statues.

The Director of Property and Projects explained that there was a maquette of each of the sculptures from the preliminary design stage and suggested that the Council contact the relevant organisations which had been involved in the process to explore if they wished to display the maquettes.

During discussion, Members of the Working Group thanked the officers for their hard work and successful events.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the feedback received on the commissioning, installation and unveiling of both Mary Ann McCracken and Winifred Carney and the associated programme of events. and agreed that the Council contact the relevant organisations to display the maquettes.

Stained Glass Windows City Hall

The Working Group was reminded that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 23 September 2022, had agreed to the creation of two new stained glass windows at City Hall, in recognition of the Health Service in Belfast and the acknowledgment of the positive role of the LGBT community in Belfast, be moved to Stage 2- Uncommitted on the capital programme.

Furthermore, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 19 January 2024 had agreed that a report on potential options and associated cost for the facilitation of a memorial wall which allows people to remember their loved ones, recognising the pain, and loss caused during the Covid-19 pandemic and the trauma of those bereaved and those still suffering with long covid.

The Director of Property and Projects advised that officers had met with HED in relation to the request for inclusion of two new stained glass windows in the City Hall. HED had considered the replacement of two existing windows in the City Hall with new stained glass windows and had agreed in principle, subject to Listed Building Consent being obtained. This must include a Design and Access statement indicating justification and storage of the original windows. In addition, HED had stated that windows on the first floor should be retained as is with original sash windows with the ground floor corridor locations preferred giving the precedence set by other stained glass window commissions.

She explained that officers had had early engagement with a number of Elected Members in relation to the LGBT window. It was suggested that both windows be taken forward as separate projects with separate procurement processes.

She highlighted that the Working Group was requested to give consideration to the suggestion that officers engage with Families Bereaved through Covid in light of the notion of motion for a pandemic wall and whether the subject matter could be incorporated into the design of the Health Service window.

She pointed out that the Health Service window would be located in the North West corridor. Officers were currently engaging with Corporate Fire Health and Safety Advisor in relation to the fire doors. She advised that changes in legislation had resulted

in fire certificate requirements being superseded by the requirement for a building owner to undertake a fire risk assessment. This could allow these doors to be located open (automated closure solution activated should a fire alarm be raised) to facilitate public access to window in this corridor with the no access barrier being located further along this corridor.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Agreed that the design, manufacture and installation of the LGBTQ and Health Service window be taken forward as two separate projects;
- Agreed that the LGBT window be located in the reception area of the City Hall;
- Agreed the Health Service window be located in the North West corridor of the City Hall in one of the free spaces;
- Agreed that officers engaged with Bereaved Families to Covid Northern Ireland group to ascertain if they would be happy the request for a memorial wall be incorporated into the design of stained glass window for Health Service;
- Noted that it was proposed that the installation of two stained glass windows was Stage 2 - Uncommitted on the Capital Programme to allow procurement to commence with final approval on designs and costs being taken by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee based on recommendations from Installations: City Hall/City Grounds Working Group. This would be subject to planning and listed building consent being obtained and a satisfactory tender being returned. It was recommended that an indicative budget be set to allow for the process to commence in terms of design, fabrication and installation. In line with the three stage approval process Members noted that the final budget will only be agreed upon the receipt of a satisfactory tender;
- Noted that key stakeholder groups be consulted with in relation to the final design for both windows;
- Agreed that design, manufacture and installation should be undertaken separately for both windows, with two separate procurement processes; and
- Agreed that procurement be by way of a two stage open submission process.

Belfast Blitz Memorials - City Hall and Cathedral Gardens (Verbal Update)

The Client Manager provided an update on the installation of a permanent memorial to all of the Fire Service efforts during the Belfast Blitz.

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th February, it had granted approval for officers to seek quotations for the Belfast Blitz Memorial City Hall in order to determine a pre-tender estimate figure with a view to moving the project to the next stage on the capital programme, namely, Stage 3 (Committed); and agreed to the inclusion of the Women's Voluntary Service cap alongside the Fire Service helmets.

In relation to the Fire Service helmets, the Client Manager advised that officers had been contacted by historians regarding the involvement of the Dublin Fire Service in the Belfast Blitz Memorial (City Hall). She advised that there was a potential opportunity to work in partnership on the delivery of the piece and requested that consideration be given to exploring their interest.

She informed the Working Group that the sculptor R. Sander had been commissioned for the permanent Belfast Blitz NI War Memorial in Cathedral Gardens and suggested that the Council approach Dublin City Council for a contribution towards the overarching Belfast Blitz Memorial.

The Working Group:

- Granted approval for officers to engage with the two organisation Fire Brigade Unions Belfast and Dublin; and
- Agreed that the Council approach Dublin City Council in relation to a contribution towards the Belfast Blitz (NI War Memorial) in Cathedral Gardens.

Chairperson

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Cost of Living Working Group

Thursday, 6th June, 2024

COST OF LIVING WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD IN HYBRID FORMAT

Members present: Councillors Bradley, Doherty, Flynn and I. McLaughlin.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Provision;
Mr. C. Tubridy, Hardship Programme Co-Ordinator; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Councillor Bradley,
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin and

Resolved - that Councillor Flynn be elected to serve as Chairperson of the Working Group until the date of the Annual Council Meeting in 2025.

Apologies

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

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Hardship Programme 2023/2024 overview

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty provided the Working Group with a comprehensive overview of the Hardship Programme 2023/2024.

He reminded the Working Group that the Council had agreed, at its meeting on 1st November, 2023, to allocate £1,019,000 through the Emerging Hardship Fund amongst the following three themes: Support to Children and Families, Support for Individuals and Families in Immediate (Emergency) Need and “Enhancing the Capacity of Existing Structures and Programmes”.

The Members were reminded that the design principles of the Programme included that it would be delivered in a way that maintained the dignity of the person accessing support, which targeted those most in need; that any individual accessing emergency support should be offered access to other wraparound services to help

address need on an ongoing basis and to prevent a cliff-edge. The Programme also aimed not to displace or duplicate any services, but rather to add value to what was already in existence, and effective infrastructure was put in place to support delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

The Working Group was reminded that £1,002,852 funding had been allocated as below, under the three themes.

Theme	Partner(s)	Funding Allocation (indicative)
1. Support to Children and Families	Schools via Education Authority	£250,000 (increased to £260,380)
	Sponsored/Community Day-Care (Children 0-10 years age / vulnerable children)	£24,000
	Save the Children	£100,000
	Family Support Hubs (network of 10)	£175,000
2. Support for Individuals & Families in Immediate (Emergency) Need	SVDP	£75,000
	Age NI	£50,000
	Generalist Advice Providers	£20,000
	Trussell Trust	£30,000
	Fareshare	£40,000
3. Enhance Capacity of Existing Structures & Programmes	Winter Wellbeing Community Programmes	£15,000
	Warm & Well Programme	£75,000
	Social Supermarkets	£165,000
	TOTAL	£1,029,380

The Hardship Programme Co-Ordinator provided the Working Group with a detailed overview of the impact of the programme and how funding had been distributed throughout each District Electoral Area.

He explained that the funding through the Schools Programme had included food-based projects, uniform/clothing support, stationery support, period products and holiday hunger. The Working Group was advised that a number of schools were yet to return their monitoring forms and, until those were returned, the final impact could not be determined.

The Working Group was advised that an article detailing the success of the Fund would be published in the upcoming City Matters magazine and that vox pop videos with

a range of delivery partners, including Schools, were being captured and would be posted across the Council's social media.

It was also reported that a Hardship/Anti-Poverty event would be held in the City Hall in October 2024, to showcase the great work taken forward through the hardship programme as well as raising awareness of the type of support services and referral pathways which existed across the city.

The Working Group noted the update which had been provided.

Delivery Partner Updates

The Chairperson welcomed the following representatives from the hardship delivery partners to the meeting:

- Charlene Mitchell (Family Support Hubs)
- Lisa McComish Brennan (Sponsored Day Care)
- Sinead Kelly (Save the Children)
- Colm Crummey (SVDP)
- Paschal McKeown (Age NI)
- Helen Newell (Trussell Trust)
- Edel Diamond (Southwest Foodbank)
- Declan McKillop (Fareshare)
- Hugh McVeigh (National Energy Action)
- Christine McKeown (Ashton Centre)
- Jacqui Frazer (Social Supermarkets)

In turn, they each provided the Members with a short overview of the support which their projects had delivered, along with some constructive feedback and lessons learned.

The Lead Officer, Community Provision, provided the Working Group with an outline of the Winter Wellbeing programme which had been delivered through 17 of the Council's Community Centres as well as 7 independent Community Centres.

During discussion, a number of the representatives highlighted that they had worked closely with other delivery partners, ensuring effective signposting towards the help which was needed by those they had been supporting. They also highlighted that the scale of demand for support was unprecedented and an all-year round challenge for many.

A number of the delivery partners mentioned the short timeframe in which they had to work in terms of funding committed, however, they stated that the feedback from users had been fantastic. In respect of any future Hardship Programme, they requested that more flexibility be allowed in terms of what the money could be spent on. The Lead Officer, Community Provision, pointed out that a number of the conditions of funding had been imposed by the Department for Communities as part of the letter of offer.

The Members thanked the representatives for their contributions and for their hard work across the City and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Consideration of a 2024/2025 Hardship Programme

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised the Working Group of the current financial position in respect of a potential Hardship Programme for 2024/2025. The Members were reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in April 2024, had agreed to commit 25% funding to 21 Social Supermarket projects. She pointed out that there was still no certainty around funding from the Department for Communities for Social Supermarkets or for Hardship Funding for 2024/2025.

Noted.

Consideration of Future Funding Framework

The Hardship Programme Co-Ordinator outlined that officers would be seeking Members' support for the development of a funding framework with would support a more strategic approach to commissioning hardship support and enhancing capacity of existing structures and programmes to support children and families, older people and those in emergency need.

He outlined that the development of such a framework would enable procurement to be planned and would allow funding to be distributed at pace to organisations with the experience and capacity to deliver necessary support services, as well as providing Audit and Governance assurance.

The Working Group was advised that the feedback from delivery partners stated that annual recurrent funding throughout the year was needed and would have more of an impact.

Noted.

Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held in September, with the date to be agreed with the Chairperson.

Chairperson