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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Monday, 1st July, 2024 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of Council (Pages 1 - 12)
5. Official Announcements
6. Change of Membership on Committees/Outside Bodies/Position of Responsibility
7. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 13 - 68)
8. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 69 - 110)
9. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 111 - 154)
10. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 155 - 166)
11. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 167 - 188)
12. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 189 - 202)
13. Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 203 - 206)

The Members of Belfast City Council are hereby summoned to attend.

John Walsh

Chief Executive

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Council

ANNUAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Monday, 3rd June, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan);
The High Sheriff (Councillor S. Douglas); and
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillors T. Brooks and McCusker.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Long declared an interest in item LA04/2024/0168/F within the Planning Committee minutes, in that he was the applicant.

Councillor Bunting declared an interest in the item “2024 Summer Community Diversionary Festivals (SCDF) Programme” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that the organisation for which she was secretary, had applied for funding under the Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT).

Alderman Copeland declared an interest in the item “2024 Summer Community Diversionary Festivals (SCDF) Programme” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that her daughter worked for the GVRT.

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in the item “2024 Summer Community Diversionary Festivals (SCDF) Programme” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that the organisation for which she worked, Feile an Phobail, had applied for funding.

Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in the item “Invite to participate in Building Cultural Networks Convention on Cultural Expression” in that he worked for one of the organisations on the steering group.

As none of the abovementioned became the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy),
Seconded by Councillor Beattie and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 7th May, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Casement Park

Councillor Doherty stated that a Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) delegation would be visiting Belfast the following week to review plans for the hosting of the European Championships in 2028. He highlighted that the progress with the redevelopment of Casement Park was urgent and that the Executive needed to engage with the UK Parliament to expedite the re-build.

Condolences

Councillor Lyons extended his condolences to the family of Gerry Dawe, a great Irish poet, who had recently passed away. The Lord Mayor agreed that a letter would be sent to his family on behalf of the Council.

Welcome

Councillor Long and the Lord Mayor welcomed Councillor Abernethy to his first Council meeting and wished him well in his new role.

Congratulations

Councillor McCormick congratulated the East Belfast Football Club on winning the Northern Amateur Premier Division title for the first time in 30 years.

Alderman Lawlor and the Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor McCormick and his wife on the recent birth of their daughter, Sofia.

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

World Bicycle Day

Councillor Nelson advised the Council that it was World Bicycle Day and that Sustrans was running its Active Travel Challenge in June and he encouraged as many people as possible to sign up.

Little Amal

He also paid tribute to the officers and the Belfast 2024 Team who had contributed to the successful events which had been held across the City for “Little Amal”, a 12-foot puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian refugee child, which had been really positive.

Appointment of Positions of Responsibility for 2024/2025

The Chief Executive drew the Council’s attention to a report which identified the persons who had been selected by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to hold the following Positions of Responsibility in year two of the current Council term:

Internal Positions of Responsibility	Councillor
Lord Mayor	Councillor Murray
Deputy Lord Mayor	Councillor McCormick
Chair – SP and R Committee	Councillor Murphy
Deputy Chair – S P and R Committee	Councillor Whyte
Chair - City Growth and Regeneration Committee	Councillor Nelson
Deputy Chair City Growth and Regeneration Committee	Councillor I. McLaughlin
Chair - People and Communities Committee	Councillor Verner
Deputy Chair - People and Communities Committee	Councillor Garrett
Chair – Licensing Committee	Alderman Rodgers
Deputy Chair – Licensing Committee	Councillor Smyth

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

Chair – Planning Committee	Councillor Carson
Deputy Chair – Planning	Councillor T. Brooks

Chair Climate and City Resilience	Councillor R. M. Donnelly
Deputy Chair Climate and City Resilience	Councillor McCabe

Chair Standards and Business	Councillor Lawlor
Deputy Chair Standards and Business	Councillor Magee

Chair Waterfront and Ulster Hall	Councillor Ferguson
Deputy Chair Waterfront and Ulster Hall	Councillor Bower

The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the positions of responsibility as set out above.

Request to Film Proceedings

The Chief Executive advised the Council that a request to film parts of the Council meeting had been received from a number of media outlets.

The Council acceded to the request.

Expressions of Thanks

The Lord Mayor reviewed his year in office, which he stated had been one of the greatest honours of his lifetime. He stated that he had been privileged to have been invited to visit all four corners of the City and to celebrate the diversity within it. He paid tribute to the huge number of young people that he had met during his time in office and to those who were working to make the City better for everyone. He thanked his Political Party for nominating him to the role and his family, particular his wife, Bridgeen. He thanked the Deputy Lord Mayor, the two High Sheriffs which he had worked alongside, his staff, other Members and Council staff for all of their support and wished the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor every success for the year ahead.

The Deputy Lord Mayor referred to a number of memorable events from her year in office and paid tribute to the Lord Mayor, the High Sheriff, her Political Party, her family and Council staff for the valuable assistance which they had provided. She stated that she had been grateful to have worked with a number of important charities during her time in office, including Outburst Arts, Friends of the Earth, the Womens Resource and Development Agency

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

and DKMS blood stem cell donation. She wished the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Mayor well in their forthcoming term of office.

Tributes

Representatives of a number of Political Parties paid tribute to the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord for the manner in which they had fulfilled their duties during their year in office.

Installation of Lord Mayor

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that it had, earlier in the meeting, approved the Positions of Responsibility for 2024/2025 and that Councillor Murray had been nominated to serve as Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Murray was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2025 and he subscribed to the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

Councillor Murray thanked his Political Party for nominating him to serve as Lord Mayor. He stated that he was honoured to be the first openly gay Lord Mayor of Belfast. He outlined his main priorities for the forthcoming year, which included a focus on breaking down barriers within the City and helping those who were homeless. He paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor for the manner in which they had carried out their duties. He stated that he was looking forward to the year ahead and to working with the Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff.

(The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray, in the Chair.)

Installation of Deputy Lord Mayor

The Council was again reminded that earlier in the meeting Councillor McCormick had, under the Positions of Responsibility for 2024/2025, been nominated to serve as Deputy Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor McCormick was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2025 and he subscribed to the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

He paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, thanked his Political Party for nominating him to serve as Deputy Lord Mayor and outlined his main objectives for his term in office. He stated that he was looking forward to the year ahead and to working with the Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff.

(The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick, in the Chair.)

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

Appointment of Members to Committees for 2024/2025

The Chief Executive drew the Council's attention to a report which identified the following persons who had been nominated by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to the Council's Standing Committees for 2024/2025:

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

1	Sinn Féin	Chairperson	Councillor Ryan Murphy
2	SDLP	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Carl Whyte
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ciaran Beattie	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tina Black	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ronan McLaughlin	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Róis-Marie Donnelly	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Joe Duffy	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Matt Garrett	
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Micheal Donnelly	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Frank McCoubrey	
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ian McLaughlin	
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Fred Cobain	
14	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Bradley Ferguson	
15	Alliance	Councillor Michael Long	
16	Alliance	Councillor Jenna Maghie	
17	Alliance	Councillor Sam Nelson	
18	Alliance	Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown	
19	SDLP	Councillor Séamas de Faoite	
20	Green	Councillor Áine Groogan	

People and Communities Committee

1	Democratic Unionist Party	Chairperson	Councillor Nicola Verner
2	Sinn Féin	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Matt Garrett
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor Maskey	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Micheal Donnelly	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor JJ Magee	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tina Black	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Claire Canavan	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Róis-Marie Donnelly	
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tomás Ó Néill	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ruth Brooks	
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ian McLaughlin	
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Fred Cobain	
14	Alliance	Councillor Christine Bower	

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

15	Alliance	Councillor Jenna Maghie
16	Alliance	Councillor David Bell
17	Alliance	Councillor Hedley Abernethy
18	SDLP	Councillor Paul Doherty
19	SDLP	Councillor Gary McKeown
20	Green	Councillor Anthony Flynn

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

1	Alliance	Chairperson	Councillor Sam Nelson
2	Democratic Unionist Party	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Ian McLaughlin
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Joe Duffy	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Séanna Walsh	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tina Black	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ronan McLaughlin	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor McKay	
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor Maskey	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Tracy Kelly	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman James Lawlor	
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Andrew McCormick	
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Davy Douglas	
14	Alliance	Councillor Fiona McAteer	
15	Alliance	Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown	
16	Alliance	Councillor Eric Hanvey	
17	SDLP	Councillor Séamas de Faoite	
18	SDLP	Councillor Dónal Lyons	
19	Green	Councillor Brian Smyth	
20	TUV	Councillor Ron McDowell	

Licensing Committee

1	Ulster Unionist Party	Chairperson	Alderman Jim Rodgers
2	Green	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Brian Smyth
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Pádraig Donnelly	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor McKay	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Nichola Bradley	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Brónach Anglin	
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tomás Ó Néill	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Tracy Kelly	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Davy Douglas	
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Jordan Doran	
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Dean McCullough	
14	Alliance	Councillor Fiona McAteer	

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

15	Alliance	Councillor Hedley Abernethy
16	Alliance	Councillor Tara Brooks
17	SDLP	Councillor Gary McKeown
18	IND	Councillor Paul McCusker
19	TUV	Councillor Ron McDowell
20	PBPA	Councillor Michael Collins

Planning Committee

1	Sinn Féin	Chairperson	Councillor Arder Carson
2	Alliance	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Tara Brooks
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Matt Garrett	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ryan Murphy	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor JJ Magee	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Bronach Anglin	
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Geraldine McAteer	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Dean McCullough	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman James Lawlor	
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sammy Douglas	
13	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Jordan Doran	
14	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Bradley Ferguson	
15	Alliance	Councillor David Bell	
16	Alliance	Councillor Eric Hanvey	
17	Alliance	Councillor Hedley Abernethy	
18	SDLP	Councillor Carl Whyte	
19	Green	Councillor Áine Groogan	
20	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Jim Rodgers	

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

1	Democratic Unionist Party	Chairperson	Councillor Bradley Ferguson
2	Alliance	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Christine Bower
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Clíodhna Nic Bhránair	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Caoimhín McCann	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Geraldine McAteer	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Áine McCabe	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Tomás Ó Néill	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Conor McKay	
9	Sinn Féin	Councillor Claire Canavan	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Nicola Verner	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ruth Brooks	
12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sammy Douglas	

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

13	Alliance	Councillor Jenna Maghie
14	Alliance	Councillor David Bell
15	SDLP	Councillor Paul Doherty
16	Green	Councillor Anthony Flynn
17	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Sonia Copeland
18	PBPA	Councillor Michael Collins
19	TUV	Councillor Ron McDowell
20	IND	Councillor Paul McCusker

Climate and City Resilience Committee

1	Sinn Féin	Chairperson	Councillor Róis-Marie Donnelly
2	Sinn Féin	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor Áine McCabe
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Séanna Walsh	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Bronach Anglin	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Micheal Donnelly	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Nichola Bradley	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Geraldine McAteer	
8	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sarah Bunting	
9	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Ruth Brooks	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Sammy Douglas	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Frank McCoubrey	
12	Alliance	Councillor Michael Long	
13	Alliance	Councillor Tara Brooks	
14	Alliance	Councillor Christine Bower	
15	Alliance	Councillor David Bell	
16	SDLP	Councillor Dónal Lyons	
17	SDLP	Councillor Paul Doherty	
18	Green	Councillor Anthony Flynn	
19	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Sonia Copeland	
20	PBPA	Councillor Michael Collins	

Standards and Business Committee

1	Democratic Unionist Party	Chairperson	Alderman James Lawlor
2	Sinn Féin	Deputy Chairperson	Councillor JJ Magee
3	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ronan McLaughlin	
4	Sinn Féin	Councillor Micheal Donnelly	
5	Sinn Féin	Councillor Ryan Murphy	
6	Sinn Féin	Councillor Nichola Bradley	
7	Sinn Féin	Councillor Geraldine McAteer	
8	Sinn Féin	Councillor Pádraig Donnelly	
9	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Tracy Kelly	
10	Democratic Unionist Party	Alderman Dean McCullough	
11	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Andrew McCormick	

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

12	Democratic Unionist Party	Councillor Davy Douglas
13	Alliance	Councillor Fiona McAteer
14	Alliance	Councillor Jenna Maghie
15	Alliance	Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown
16	SDLP	Councillor Séamas de Faoite
17	SDLP	Councillor Dónal Lyons
18	Green	Councillor Áine Groogan
19	Ulster Unionist Party	Alderman Jim Rodgers
20	IND	Councillor Paul McCusker

The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the Council's Standing Committees for 2024/2025, as set out above.

Change of Membership on Outside Bodies

The Chief Executive advised the Council that notification had been received from the Alliance Party indicating that it wished Councillor Abernethy to replace Councillor McMullan on:

- the Fairtrade Steering Group;
- the Shared City Partnership; and
- the Eastside Partnership.

He also advised the Council that notification had been received from the Democratic Unionist Party indicating that it wished:

- Councillor R. Brooks to replace Councillor Bunting on the Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor;
- Councillor Verner to replace Councillor D. Douglas on the Community Planning Partnership; and
- that it wished to give up its position on ARC21 as it was unable to nominate a Member who could attend during working hours.

The Council approved the aforementioned changes.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th and 31st May, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Verner,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 2nd May, be approved and adopted.

**Blanchflower Stadium –
Preferential Use Agreement**

At the request of a Member, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Needs Based Assessment, which would be brought back for the Committee's consideration, would include an analysis based on gender.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite
Seconded by Smyth and

Resolved - That the decision under the heading "Update on Events Social Value Levy Fund" be amended to provide that, in relation to the Ormeau Park fees, discussion be held between the Councillors representing the Botanic, Titanic and Lisnasharragh District Electoral Areas before going to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 2nd May were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson
Seconded by Councillor Duffy, and

Resolved- That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th and 29th May, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Murphy, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Annual Meeting of Council,
Monday, 3rd June, 2024**

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor Kelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 23rd May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Doherty,

That the decision under the heading "Official Announcements", be rejected.

On a vote by show of hands, six Members voted for the amendment and forty-eight against, and it was accordingly declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 23rd May were thereupon approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st June, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, R. McLaughlin, Nelson
and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Portfolio Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors de Faoite, M. Donnelly, McDonough-Brown and I. McLaughlin.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd, 24th and 31st May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd June, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Duffy, Groogan and Garrett declared an interest in item 5c – Update on Hardship Programme in that they worked for or were associated with organisations which received Social Supermarket Funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

2023-24 Year End Finance Report

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report on the year-end financial position for 2023/24, together with the Quarter 4 finance report and year-end treasury position.

The Committee:

- noted the report and agreed the year end position;
- agreed the creation of a specified reserve for the Leisure VAT claims repayment;
- agreed to a facilitated workshop on financial context setting; and
- noted the Year-End Treasury Management Report 2023/24.

Area Working Groups Update
June 2024 East NRF

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the special meeting of the East AWG of 28th May, including the recommendations of the AWG which were:

- i. To note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. To note the information on the Stage 2 projects;
- iii. To recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to *Stage 3 - Delivery* in East, with the allocations as outlined:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

- EastSide Property Belfast Ltd. - Eastside Container Hotel, £950,000
 - Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre - Portview Exchange, £600,000
 - East Belfast Mission – Hosford Community Homes, 335 Newtownards Road, £300,000
 - Dundela FC – Development of Sporting Hub at Wilgar Park, £500,000
- iv. To note the Stage 3 process; and,
- v. To note the approach regarding feedback and support to those groups that are not progressing to Stage 3 – Delivery.

It was agreed also that a report on a review of the funding allocations be submitted to the Committee in March, 2025.

City Centre Regeneration Scheme

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the targeted acquisition of a strategic property in Belfast city centre and provided an update on the Assembly Rooms.

The Committee:

- i. Agreed that a conditional offer be made to acquire the city centre property referenced in the report on the basis as outlined and, subject to the offer being accepted by the vendor, to acquire the property on terms to be agreed by the City Solicitor and the Director City Regeneration and Development; and noted that completion of any acquisition would be subject to title/legal due diligence.
- ii. Noted that, if the Council acquired the property, a further detailed report would be brought back on the future use proposals for the property.
- iii. Noted the update in relation to the Assembly Rooms and that a without prejudice /conditional offer for acquisition is being made to the owners based on a valuation undertaken by LPS.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Report - Response received from DfC
re Remote Meetings Regulations**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 19th April, 2024, it had 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.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

The Committee was advised that a response had been received from Mr. Anthony Carleton, Director Local Government and Housing Regulation, Department for Communities.

In his response he advises *“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.”

Noted.

Governance

**Local Government Commissioner for
Standards Annual Report 2022/23**

The Committee noted the Local Government Commissioner for Standards Annual Report for 2022/23.

Member Development Proposed Changes June 2024

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present and seek approval of the proposed changes to the current approach to elected member development.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The committee is requested to:

- **Approve the implementation of the proposed changes as set out below at 3.4.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 In addition, all members were invited to attend a briefing on the changes on 24 April 2024.

3.4 **Summary of proposed changes**

The proposed changes to the Member Development process are summarised as follows:-

- 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.**

- 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

- 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)**
- 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.)

6. Change to the Personal Member Development Budget

- 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 Further detail on the proposed changes is attached at Appendix 1.

Feedback from members on proposed changes

3.6 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.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

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.

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

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications to this report.”

The Committee approved the implementation of the proposed changes.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25

The Director of Dity and Organisational Strategy submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

"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 The Committee is asked to:**

- 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

Background

- 3.1 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.**
- 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.

Consultation exercise and findings

- 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:
- 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 Draft Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25

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.

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.

- 3.9 **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.**

3.10 **Financial and Resource Implications**

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.

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

There are no direct equality, good relations or rural needs implications of the PIP 2024-25.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

City Innovation update

The Committee considered the following report which had been submitted by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services:

“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 The Committee is asked to:

- 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 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:**

3.2 (1) Belfast Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator

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.

3.3 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.

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 (2) Belfast Sejong Innovation Twins programme

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.

- 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 **(3) Barcelona Smart Cities World Congress**

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.

- 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.
- 3.17 **Financial and Resource Implications**

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.

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

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Hardship Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report which provided an update on the Hardship Programme 2023/24:

“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:

- 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.

Implementing 2023/24 Hardship Programme

- 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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

Task	Target Date
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 and Resource Implications

3.13

- 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.”

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

The Committee:

- i) noted the contents of the report, including the update on the implementation and impact of the 2023/24 Hardship Programme;
- ii) noted the current budget position in relation to the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2024/25, which sought to support those most impacted by poverty and the cost-of-living crisis;
- iii) agreed the proposed funding framework to be adopted to support the implementation of a Hardship Programme in 2024/25 (subject to the availability of funding);
- iv) agreed that a report on the recent discussions with DfC, and any pending letter of offer, regarding 2024/25 funding for Social Supermarkets, be submitted to the special meeting to be held on 28th June; and
- v) noted that future consideration would be given to possible funding opportunities for the Hardship Programme aligned to in-year budget position discussions within Committee.

Apprenticeship Report

The Committee was reminded that initial proposals on an apprenticeship programme had been presented for its consideration in February and it was agreed that a further report be submitted detailing how the proposals could be financed. Subsequently, 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.

Two apprenticeship opportunities had been 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).

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, which shows the reduction in annual salary costs of around £10,000.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

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

Following further discussion with City and Neighbourhood Services, the department had 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, and can also increase the chances of an apprentice completing the training programme. Peer support for the Digital Services apprenticeship will be provided by the service’s two industrial placement students.

The revised annual cost of 2 Fleet Technician and one Digital Service’s apprentice was approximately £99,000, that was around £61,000 for the 2024/25 financial year. The Director of Finance had 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 would be incorporated into the medium-term financial plan. Therefore, the Committee was being asked to approve the recruitment of an additional Fleet Technician apprentice.

The Committee noted the update provided and approved a third apprenticeship opportunity.

Diversity Summit Sponsorship

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to sponsor the Diversity Mark Summit 2024 which was taking place at Titanic Belfast on 8th October, 2024.

The Council was one of the founding signatory organisations to the Gender Diversity Charter in 2017. Now known as “Diversity Mark”, this membership organisation provides support to employers to make and demonstrate progressive improvement in creating an inclusive and 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.

The Committee agreed to provide sponsorship in the sum of £2000 which would be met from the existing Organisational Development budget.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report includes a review of recently completed and underway physical projects, along with requests for approvals relating to the Capital Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **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** –
 - **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 *Stage 3* –

Committed 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 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Physical Programme Half Year Update

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.

3.2 Awards and recognition

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.

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.

3.3 Recently completed projects:

- 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;
- 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 Physical projects underway:

- 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.

3.6 Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

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 IT Programme – C&NS Case Management Solution

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.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial – 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.

Resources – Officer time to deliver as required

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Assets Management

The Committee:

i) Land at Orchardville Crescent – Disposal

approved the disposal of lands at the rear of houses 20 to 56 Orchardville Crescent to the adjoining homeowners.

ii) Land at Ladybrook Park – Disposal

approved the disposal of lands at the rear of houses 26 to 40 Ladybrook Park to the adjoining homeowners.

iii) Retail Unit at Belfast Castle – New Lease

approved a new 6-year lease of the vacant basement level retail unit.

iv) Benview Community Centre – New Licence

approved a new 1-year licence agreement for the use of a portion of Benview Community Centre as a play centre and for use of storage container.

v) Cregagh Youth and Community Centre – New Licence

approved a new licence to Irish Rugby Football Union (Ulster Branch) for their occasional use of the overflow parking area adjacent to Cregagh Youth and Community Centre.

vi) Cliftonville Playing Fields – Disposal of land to rear of 13 Glenard Brook

approved the assignment of BCC's long leasehold interest in a portion of land that has been encroached on to the rear of 13 Glenard Brook.

vii) North Foreshore – Financial Provisions

noted that the Council would enter into a performance deed with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to document revised financial provisions required under North Foreshore Waste Management Licence.

viii) North Foreshore – Licence to Occupy

approved the Council entering into a licence to occupy with Renewable Power Systems and Dargan Road Biogas Limited.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

ix) Brook Leisure Centre – Licence Agreement

approved a licence agreement with Colin Gaels Gaelic Athletic Club to install and position a storage container at Brook Leisure Centre.

Area Working Groups Update

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the 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, including the following:

Members of the West AWG agreed to recommend the following allocations for the additional £93,878 for West Belfast under NRF:

- £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.

#In considering the minutes of the South Area Working Group of 20th May, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor RM Donnelly,

That the minutes be approved and adopted, subject to the amendment of the minute under the heading Physical Programme Update to provide that the additional Neighbourhood Regeneration Funding of £53,893 be allocated to the Solas New Build Project.

On a recorded vote, ten Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was declared carried:

For 10	Against 4
Councillors Murphy, Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain, RM Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett and R McLaughlin.	Councillors Groogan, Maghie, Nelson and Whyte.

Update on Sporting Pitches Investment

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that work was ongoing to progress the Belfast Pitches Strategy. A report outlining the background to the need for development of the Strategy, an indicative timeline for commissioning and an overview of the Terms of Reference had been presented to People

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

and Communities Committee in August 2023. It was expected that a draft strategy would be presented to Committee in March 2025.

As part of that work and in the interim period of producing the Pitches Strategy, officers were committed to continuing to work on an area-by-area basis to identify, agree and secure quick wins at our existing sites.

Following confirmation of a recurring budget of £500,000 for pitch improvements, officers had identified the following facilities and associated works for immediate progression in the 24/25 financial year:

- **North - Mallusk Playing Fields**

The creation of an additional two full-size GAA pitches to include all relevant GAA posts, ball stops, nets and including the conversion of a shale area to grass. This would create a total of four full size GAA pitches at that site. A planning application had been submitted and it was expected that this work would be completed by February 2025;

- **East - Henry Jones Playing Fields**

Work was underway to install ball stops and spectator fencing at this GAA pitch. A planning application had been submitted and work was expected to be completed by February 2025;

- **West - Falls Park**

Installation of ball stop netting for the GAA pitch. Recommended for approval by planning on 18th June with work expected to be completed by September 2024;

- **South - Strangford Ave Playing Fields**

Work was underway to convert one full-size soccer pitch into three small-sized soccer pitches and to reinstate a second disused full-size soccer pitch. This would maximise soccer provision at this site and cater for the displacement of SBYL soccer from Mallusk Playing Fields. This work would be completed by September 2024.

Further scoping work was underway at all existing sites to create a stand-by list of ready to go projects as and when budget becomes available. Further details would be brought to committee in due course.

In addition to these infrastructure improvements at Council facilities, officers were also working to identify partnership opportunities to secure community access to facilities owned by the Education Authority or by other sporting clubs. Work was ongoing in this regard, with a number of exploratory conversations and site visits underway.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

As part of that work, an opportunity to secure the continued use of Ashfield Boys' High School as an intermediate soccer pitch for St Matthew's FC had arisen at a cost of £30,000 per annum. The Committee was therefore asked to consider this funding request which would be met from the pitches budget.

The Committee noted the update on improvements to pitches across the city, granted approval of £30,000 to be met from the pitches budget to secure the use of Ashfield Boys' High School as an intermediate soccer pitch for continued use by St Matthew's Football Club; and noted also that this would be for a one-year period pending the development of the pitches strategy.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

**Audit and Risk Panel Annual Report to
Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
including Draft Annual Governance Statement**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"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 on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. The Panel also oversees the Council's financial reporting process.

1.2 The purpose of this report is twofold:

- **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 The Committee is asked to:

- **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

Key Issues

Summary of the work of the Audit and Risk Panel in 2023/24

- 3.1 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:

- 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 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 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 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.**
- 3.6 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:**

- 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 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.

Compliance with the CIPFA Position Statement

- 3.8 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
- 3.9 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 parties with an external member to provide independence and expertise, rather than on members skills.

Annual Governance Statement

- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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.

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel meeting on 4 June 2024

- 3.12 In line with usual protocol, the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel meeting are presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.**

3.13 Financial and Resource Implications

None

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

None.”

The Committee:

- Noted the summary of the work of the Panel during 2023/24 as set out at Section 3 of the report.
- Approved 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.
- Approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel on 4 June 2024 at Appendix B.
- Agreed that a report be submitted to the August meeting on the compliance rates for the processing time for both major and local Planning Applications.

Tri-Cities Golf Event

The Committee was advised that the Council had, since 2002, participated in the Tri-Cities Golf Event between Belfast, Dublin and Edinburgh. The event rotated around each of the three cities on an annual basis, with the 2024 event set to take place in Belfast.

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.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

The golf competition was 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. The anticipated costs of hosting the event were approximately £4,500 provided from existing revenue budgets.

The event dates are 5th – 6th September, with the first day of the tournament taking place at Belvoir Park Golf Club and the second at Dunmurry Golf Club.

The Committee agreed to host the event to include Hospitality by the Lord Mayor.

Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3); and
- approved Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the Council (Table 3):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Procurement of a contractor to provide tours and operate the visitor centre in City Cemetery	Up to 3 years	£195,000	S Toland	To fulfil objectives and outcomes set by the Heritage funded restoration project for City Cemetery
Commvault Cloud Backup & Recovery for Microsoft 365 Enterprise	Up to 3 years	£90,000	P Gribben	To provide backup and recovery capabilities for the council's Microsoft 365 data
Provision of colourful floats, professional performers, costume hire and design, musicians and community engagement	Up to 3 years	£285,000	J Greer	To successfully curate and deliver the 2025 St Patrick's Day parade in

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

workshops in the St Patrick's Day Parade 2025				Belfast with option to extend the contract up to a further 2 years if 2025 proves successful.
Provision of a city centre music festival / programme over the St Patrick's Celebrations period.	Up to 3 years	£270,000	J Greer	There is a requirement of a city centre music festival / programme over the St Patrick's Celebrations period 2025 to increase dwell time during the festivities beyond the Parade element. Option to extend up to a further 2 years if 2025 proves successful.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Art of Reconciliation for Belfast 2024	Up to 4 months	£50,000	J Greer	BCC is delivering a number of direct commissions that align key strategic objectives and programme delivery. Féile an Phobail, in partnership with Belfast International Arts Festival and East Side Arts presents an International story of art and reconciliation, exploring locally international	Feile an Phobail	2

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

				experiences of the transformative role of the arts in dealing with complex issues around legacy, conflict and reconciliation.		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T1939 - Routine inspection, maintenance and repairs of roll-on/roll-off containers and static compactors Lot 1 - Inspection, Repair and Maintenance of Roll-on/Roll-off Containers Lot 2 – Inspection, Repair and Maintenance of Static Compactors	Up to 4 years	Additional 4 month and £30,000	D Sales	Currently finalising a procurement for the purchase of new skips and compactors and the outcome of that procurement will have an impact on the specification and requirements for this tender process depending on the type of equipment that is purchased.	Lot 1 - MacNabb Bros Waste Management Lot 2 - Benagh Engineering and Motor Works Ltd

Table 4: Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the Council

Title of Contract	Duration	Estimated Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Receipt, Processing, Treatment, Recycling and Disposal of Street Sweepings Waste: Lot 1	Up to 7 years	£2.03m (est. if full 7 years was utilised)	D Sales	Contract for the acceptance and processing of street sweeping waste. The contract includes obligations to recycle waste and to report key	Contract managed by arc 21

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

				performance information and details of all final destinations for the outputs after processing.	
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STA/ Direct Award Reasons

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

Funding requests

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of two requests for support as follows:

- 1. A request from the Belfast Hills Partnership for an increase in the level of funding support from Council**

- 2. A request for support for the provision of toilet facilities at Fullerton Park on 12th July from the County Antrim Grand Orange Lodge**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Committee is asked to consider the requests as detailed below.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast Hills Partnership

Members may be aware that a report was presented to the June 2024 meeting of People and Communities Committee outlining a request for additional funding support from Belfast Hills Partnership (attached at Appendix 1). Given the associated financial implications, it was agreed that the request would be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for decision.

- 3.2 Since its inception in 2005, Belfast City Council has been a key partner within the Belfast Hills Partnership. This funding has enabled the organisation to grow and develop from a small team of three individuals to today's team which consists of 6 full time members of staff and 9 part time staff bodies which allows the partnership to deliver a wide range of programmes within the Belfast City Council area including:**

- Habitat & species surveys & improvements
- Environment education for young people
- Volunteering opportunities
- Addressing anti-social behaviour including fly tipping and wildfires
- Tree propagation & planting
- Community support & engagement
- Information provision
- Health walks

- 3.3 The April 2011 meeting of the former Parks and Leisure Committee approved an annual funding allocation to the Belfast Hills Partnership of £36,900 which has since been included in revenue budgets.**

- 3.4 The Belfast Hills Partnership have highlighted consistent rising costs, which they advise they have tried to absorb internally by seeking to cut costs where possible – however, they are now in a position of seeking support from funding partners to continue delivering their services. Whilst NIEA have confirmed that they will increase their funding to BHP by**

37%, the Partnership is approaching their Council partners to seek additional funding.

- 3.5 Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council have confirmed that they have agreed an increase of 30% on current funding. It should be noted that each council provides funding in proportion to the land area owned by each Council within the Belfast Hill's Area and this arrangement will continue with these latest funding revisions.
- 3.6 The Belfast Hills Partnership currently receives £36,900 from Belfast City Council and have requested an increase of 30% (£11,070) to £47,970.

Request from Co Antrim Grand Orange Lodge

- 3.7 A request has been received from the County Antrim Grand Orange Lodge for support in providing portable toilets at Fullerton Park at the annual Twelfth of July event. Following discussion at the Party Leaders' Consultative Forum meeting held on 13 June 2024, it was agreed that the request would be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for decision.
- 3.8 Committee are asked to consider providing £1,656 to the County Antrim Grand Orange Lodge to provide toilets for this event.

3.9 **Financial & Resource Implications**

Belfast Hills Partnership

Belfast Hills Partnership are requesting an additional £11,070 alongside the current allocation of £36,900.

Members should note that if Committee is minded to approve this request, that monies would be considered from in-year underspends, with the increase for future years to be considered as a growth proposal.

County Antrim Grand Orange Lodge

- 3.10 The County Antrim Grand Orange Lodge have requested £1,656 for provision of portable toilets. If Committee is minded to approve this request, funds will be met from within existing departmental budgets.

3.11 Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment

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

Belfast Hills Partnership

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the request in order to allow officers to check if the organisation was able to make an application under the discretionary funding.

County Grand Orange Lodge

The Committee approved the funding of £1,656 for the provision of portable toilets.

Equality and Good Relations

Shared City Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 10th June 2024, including:

Presentation from Forward South Partnership – Roma Hub and Feasibility Study - for notation

- Copy of the presentation is included in Appendix 2 for members information.

Good Relations Verbal Update

- The Good Relations Manager advised that officers were still not in receipt of a Letter of Offer from The Executive Office, 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.

Shared City Partnership – Terms of Reference

- The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the updated Terms of Reference for the Shared City Partnership.

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

**Consultation on Equality Impact
Assessment of the Department
for Communities Budget Allocation**

The Committee noted that a draft response would be submitted to the August meeting.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of the Party Group Leaders
Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 13th June.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
British Heart Foundation NI	17 September 2024	British Heart Foundation NI Supporters' Day to acknowledge supporters of BHF and update them in future plans. Numbers attending – 100	C & D	Current rate free as charity	No hospitality
Northern Ireland Tenpin Bowling Federation	22 September 2024	Adult Triple Crown Presentation Evening - Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches, and entertainment and Trophy presentation with the nations competing to win the Triple Crown shields and overall trophy, along with the All-Events	C & D	Current rate free as voluntary organisation	No hospitality

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		medal winners individually. Numbers attending – 100			
Community Relations in Schools	25 September 2024	Buddy Up! Celebration Event of 5-year project about peacebuilding with schools' pupils. Numbers attending – 80	C	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception
The Open University	25 November 2024	Celebration Event of British Academy funded research project - exploring the important role that theatre has played in establishing peace in Northern Ireland and in helping our communities to move forward. Numbers attending – 70	C	Current rate £300	No hospitality
British Psychological Society	3 December 2024	'Cultivating Connections' drinks reception for Sport & Exercise Psychologists attending their 3-day conference taking place in Hilton Hotel. Numbers attending – 100 - 120	A & B	<i>Commercial charge to be negotiated by City Solicitor</i>	No hospitality

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st June, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Confucius Institute at Ulster University	5 February 2025	Chinese Year celebration – Year of the Snake – cultural event of speeches, prize giving and a range of musical / dance performances. Numbers attending - 200	B & C	Current rate £300 as not charity or voluntary	No hospitality

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City Hall/
City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 22nd May.

Minutes of the Cost-of-Living Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Cost-of-Living Working Group of 6th June.

All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 7th June.

Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 28th June, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Whyte (Deputy Chairperson, in the chair); and
Councillors Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite
R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and
Nelson.

In attendance: Mr. J Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Beattie,
M. Donnelly and McDonough-Brown

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan and Garrett declared an interest in item 3 – Update on Social
Supermarket Fund in that they worked for or were associated with organisations which
received Social Supermarket Funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under
discussion.

Restricted Items

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

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

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 28th June, 2024**

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

City Centre Development

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in relation to city centre development issues:

The Committee noted:

- i. the approach to the acquisition/vesting of the Tribeca site, following its previous decision on 19th February 2024, including the initial next steps set out in the report;
- ii. the powers of vesting available to the Council and the considerations outlined in the Council seeking a vesting order; and
- iii. the draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Members Working Group as agreed by the Committee on 19th April 2024.

City Centre Built Heritage

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted a report which provided an update in relation to the city centre built heritage.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the Assembly Rooms;
- ii. agreed that officers commence a phased process which would address a range of feasibility considerations, including an end use and funding strategy for the Assembly Rooms, utilising specialist support as appropriate; and that a scoping session be held with Party Group Leaders to fully inform this. The Committee noted that the phasing of this work was contingent upon the owner's position in relation to the sale of the building to Council; and
- iii. noted the update in relation to Built Heritage as set out in the report and in the context of the issue raised in advance at the Committee in December 2021.

Regeneration Framework

The Committee considered a report which sought agreement on the use of a Regeneration Framework as a tool to support and assist the prioritisation of catalytic regeneration projects, investment and a pipeline of projects for future funding applications/opportunities, including assessing readiness and to help inform the medium-term financial planning of the Council.

The Committee agreed the proposed use of a Regeneration Framework, alongside the Place Based Growth Proposition (as previously reported to the Committee on 24 February 2024), as a tool to support and assist in the prioritisation of catalytic regeneration projects, investment, and a pipeline of projects for future

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 28th June, 2024**

funding applications/opportunities, including assessing readiness and to help inform the medium-term financial planning of Council.

**Request for Council to act as Sponsor
for the Active Communities Network**

The Committee acceded to a request from the Active Communities Network for the Council to act as a sponsor for the acquisition of a city centre property.

Discretionary Payments

The Committee noted a report which provided an update on the eligibility and assessment criteria and the scoring matrix for funding from the Discretionary Payments Scheme.

Social Supermarkets

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

This report is to provide Members with further detail on Department for Communities (DfC) funding for Social Supermarkets in 24/25 and to seek their views on whether any level of council funding should be provided to allow increased allocations to successful applicants. The report follows discussion at SP&R meeting on 21st June and a request for further written detail on the issue.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the recent advice from the Department of Communities regarding the 24/25 budget for Social Supermarkets and consider which option they wish to proceed with as outlined in 3.3.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members may recall that at the April committee meeting SP&R agreed to provide £122,627 to fund 21 Social Supermarket Projects (up to 70% of their requested budget) in the absence of a Letter of Offer from DfC to fund this area of work. This allocation was made from the 24/25 Hardship Programme.

3.2 On 18th June DfC advised in writing that BCC will receive £672,687.77 funding for 24/25 Social Supermarket Fund. This is approximately £260k more than was granted last year. No Letter

of Offer (LoO) has yet been received for this funding, the department has indicated verbally and in writing that the LoO will be issued by end of June 24.

- 3.3 This allocation is significantly more than Council was anticipating and would provide budget for awards of up to 85% of the recommended level to successful applicants. Members are asked to consider if they wish to make awards at this level using only DfC funds or if they want to retain a council contribution which would allow awards at 100% of the recommended figure to be made. These options are outlined below and further detail on awards is provided in Appendix 1.

- Option 1

The Social Supermarket Fund will be funded solely through DfC funding and this would allow 21 groups to receive 85% of their allocated funding award. The allocation of £122,627 from the Hardship Programme which was made to the Social Supermarket Fund 24/25 in the absence of DfC funding should be diverted back. This would provide a total budget of £223,400 for the 24/25 Hardship Programme.

- Option 2

Provide £113,057 from Hardship Programme to Social Supermarket budget 24/25. This would allow 21 groups to receive 100% of their recommended allocation and would provide a budget of £110,343 for the 24/25 Hardship Programme.

- 3.4 Members should note that any recommendations will be subject to formal receipt of a Letter of Offer from DfC.
- 3.5 Members may also note that it is challenging for funded groups to plan delivery of projects without clarity on the final allocation that they will receive. Whilst organisations welcome additional financial support they have highlighted the need for an early indication of their budget to ensure that resources are directed towards the times of greatest need.

3.6 **Financial & Resource Implications**

There is currently £223,400 allocated identified from underspends for a Hardship Programme in 2024/25. However, any commitment to provide Council funding to Social Supermarket Projects will reduce the available budget for the Hardship Programme.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

An Equality Screening and Rural Needs Assessment was undertaken for the delivery of the 2024/25 Social Supermarket programme.”

Proposal

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin.
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

That the Committee agrees to adopt option 2 as set out in the report.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

That the Committee agrees to adopt option 1.

The Committee agreed to vote by show of hands on which of the two options they supported.

Eight Members voted for option 2 and two Members for option 1.

Accordingly, the Committee adopted option 2, that is:

To provide £113,057 from the Hardship Programme to the Social Supermarket budget 2024/25, which would allow 21 groups to receive 100% of their recommended allocation and would provide a budget of £110,343 for the 2024/25 Hardship Programme.

Safer Neighbourhood Officers - City Centre

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members on the following matters;

Recruitment of 2 additional Safer Neighbourhood Officers to work as part of the existing team within the Community Safety Unit (CSU) until 31st March 2025

2.0 Recommendation

Members are also asked to:

Approve the recruitment of 2 additional Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs) until 31st March 2025

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Following ongoing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), crime and vulnerability issues within the city centre, including several high-profile incidents, the most recent posted on social media on Friday 21st June, which received almost 1 million views, an emergency meeting was held on Tuesday 25th June.

3.2 The Lord Mayor and Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, alongside directors within City and Neighbourhood Departments met with representatives of the business community from Belfast City Centre to discuss ongoing issues and concerns linked to ASB, crime and vulnerability issues.

3.3 The discussion focused on several actions required to assist in addressing the complex issues presenting themselves within the city centre, alongside ongoing work by teams operating in the city centre from Belfast City Council, Police, community & voluntary organisations and the business community.

3.4 One action discussed was the recruitment of additional Safer Neighbourhood Officers to increase the footprint and profile within the city centre.

3.5 The Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs) have been in operation since April 2013. The SNOs are a frontline engagement & enforcement service whose primary role is to help address issues of community safety concern and associated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) by:

- providing a BCC presence through deployment of high visibility foot patrols
- offering guidance, support, and advice on community safety issues
- challenging low-level anti-social behaviour
- enforcing laws relating to on-street drinking and environmental crime
- helping to reduce crime and fear of crime

- 3.6 The SNOs have experience in engaging with vulnerable people in the City Centre and have training in de-escalation techniques, conflict management and first aid. Officers regularly work alongside outreach teams and the PSNI to refer high risk individuals to specialist services whilst reducing problematic behaviours in order to provide reassurance to members of the public and businesses. SNOs are also trained to administer Naloxone to revive individuals suffering from an opioid overdose and remove inappropriately discarded sharps from across the city daily. They are also an integral part of the Complex Lives programme.
- 3.7 The SNO's over the past number of weeks have seen an escalation in a range of issues within the city centre where they have had to intervene with on-street drinking, vulnerable people in risk taking behaviour, administer naloxone to several people, tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and the removal of inappropriate sharps.
- 3.8 Belfast City Council have received supportive statements from:

PSNI

'The SNOS provide an invaluable service to Belfast City Centre and are regarded as one of the PSNI's key partners in ensuring the City Centre is safe and prosperous.'

The enhanced footprint provided by SNOS in the run up to Christmas 2023 was welcomed by Police and certainly made the City Centre feel and indeed look safer – a sentiment which has been shared by many retail partners.

The SNOS are committed to safeguarding and signposting the most vulnerable in our society and often work in collaboration with City Centre Police around this – their enhanced presence in the run up to Christmas certainly did ensure that many of our community with addiction issues were given additional support during what can be a difficult time of the year.

Ultimately, the City Centre is unique and at times, complex location to Police – the support provided by the SNOS is invaluable and City Centre Police look forward to building on this evolving relationship.'

3.9 EXTERN

‘Our outreach team work closely with the SNO staff. We work together when a service user is under the influence and is at risk of participating in anti-social behaviour to deescalate and make safe the situation. Staff work together supporting each other’s services daily for positive support of our service users. Such is the relationship when we put the call out in December the SNOs swiftly attended and were first on the scene at an incident where one of our staff had been assaulted.’

3.10 Complex Lives Manager

The Christmas period is a difficult time for the individuals known to Complex Lives, it can be a time of hardship and loneliness with many seeking comfort from one another in the City Centre. This inevitably brings challenges to those services managing risk and safety in the area and therefore the enhanced presence of the Safer Neighbourhood Officers has been a vital and valuable resource. The SNOs are a compassionate and knowledgeable team who have not only taken the time to get to know our individuals but as a consequence have been instrumental, as part of the wider Complex Lives Multi-disciplinary Team, to improve the health and wellbeing and accommodation solutions for the most chronically homeless in Belfast. Working together as one larger team the communication between the Outreach Services in Belfast has improved greatly.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

Additional Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs) until 31st March 2025 at a cost of £34,088 per post, x 2 posts = £68,175. Posts to be funded from departmental underspend and/or realignment of specified reserves.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee approved the recruitment of 2 additional Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs) until 31st March 2025.

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 28th June, 2024**

Use of the City Hall Grounds

The Committee noted that the City Solicitor would be exercising her delegated authority to allow the use of the City Hall Grounds for a small event to coincide with the illumination of the City Hall on 9th July.

Standing Order 14 - Committee Minutes to be submitted

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, that the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 1st July for ratification.

Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 11th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Verner (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,
Bunting, Canavan, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McKeown,
I. McLaughlin and Ó Néill.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager.
- Also attended: Councillors T. Brooks and Ferguson.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Black, Cobain and Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd May were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd June.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Canavan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in respect of item 5(e) Social Supermarkets - response from the Department for Communities (DfC) in that they worked and/or were associated with organisations which were in receipt of funding. However, as the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Presentation

Lagan Valley Regional Park

The Committee noted the details of a presentation by Dr Andy Bridge, Manager, Lagan Valley Regional Park, during which he raised a number of issues caused by dog owners and/or dogs at the Giant's Ring historical site and monument. He also made comment in relation to the access difficulties and damage to the trail.

The Chairperson thanked him for attending and he left the meeting.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

Leisure Centre Reinvestment and Improvement Projects Update

The Committee noted a report which provided an update on reinvestment and facility improvement projects delivered during 2022 and 2023, which had been delivered within the leisure management contract arrangement.

Following a query by a Member in relation to the Whiterock Leisure Centre, the Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that he would look at the matter and speak to the Member directly.

Large Promoter request for use of Boucher Road Playing Fields

The Committee was advised that the City and Neighbourhood Services Department had received a request from a promoter to use the Boucher Road playing fields for a minimum of 1 show and a maximum of 6 shows during a 4-week period beginning mid-August until mid-September in 2025, 2026 and 2027.

The Committee granted authority to the applicant to hold up to 6 concerts at Boucher Road Playing Fields during a 4-week period between mid-August and mid-September in 2025, 2026 and 2027 and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure the following:

Negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around ‘set up’ and take down’ periods, and booking amendments, subject to:

- The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council’s satisfaction;

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

- The promotor carrying out appropriate resident and community engagement;
- The promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence
- A review clause, which allows for consideration of any issues during previous events.

The Committee noted:

- that events that sought multiple year approval would be subject to annual review and delegated to the Director of Neighbourhood Services authority, under the scheme of delegation, approval to remove the permission for subsequent years based on officer recommendation if necessary;
- the fee for the use of Boucher Road playing is detailed in the departmental pricing schedule and is subject to change as part of the annual pricing review; and
- that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial team.

Blanchflower Pitch Usage

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th March 2024, it had decided to move forward with 'Option 3' which was to ask officers to devise a 'fair and equitable' allocation of pitch bookings amongst local community clubs and Glentoran FC for the 3G pitch at Blanchflower Stadium. This decision was again reinforced at the 2nd May meeting and ratified at the Council meeting on 1st June.

Accordingly, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which proposed an allocation model for members consideration, following the completion of an information gathering exercise with all the clubs which had expressed an interest in obtaining access to the pitch.

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Ferguson addressed the Committee and he submitted minor amendments to the allocation model which he asked the Committee to accept.

The Committee approved the allocation model, subject to the amendment submitted by the Member, and agreed that officers would be in contact with clubs to offer those slots, with effect from 1st July 2024.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

The Committee also granted delegated authority to the Strategic Director to re-allocate or rearrange slots in the event of clubs not wishing to progress with the bookings proposed at Committee.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

Pavement Parking

The Committee was reminded that Councillor Tara Brooks had proposed a Notice of Motion on Pavement Parking at the Council meeting in October 2023, as follows:

'That this Council notes that inconsiderate pavement parking affects everyone in Belfast, but disproportionately children, people with visual impairments, mobility aid users, neurodiverse people and people with prams or pushchairs; and therefore it is essential that the Council plays its full role in reinforcing the message that pavements are for people and it is never acceptable to park in a manner which forces people off a footway and into the road. This Council acknowledges the challenges in solving this issue but resolves to work towards stopping vehicles from blocking pavements through inconsiderate or dangerous parking, including by undertaking a public information campaign about the negative impacts of pavement parking in its forthcoming communications'.

During discussion, Members made the point that, while they were in support of the context of the motion, they would not be supportive of the Council resourcing the functions for which other organisations had responsibility and enforcement powers.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that officers consider the request set out in the motion in conjunction with Corporate Communications, the PSNI and the Department of Infrastructure, both of which had responsibilities regarding enforcement, and identify any costs and resources required and that a report be brought back to the Committee.

Committee/Strategic Issues

**Consultation response –
Rethinking our Resources**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to present to Members the draft Belfast City Council response to the DAERA public consultation on 'Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI'

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to review and agree the draft Belfast City Council response to the recently published DAERA public consultation on 'Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI'.
- 2.2 Members are asked to note the new closing date of the consultation, of 27 June 2024, at 17:00 and to acknowledge that the BCC draft response, if approved by Committee, will not be ratified by full Council until after the closing date and that this will be highlighted on our response notification to DAERA.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will recall, from the Committee meeting on 9th April 2024, that The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) recently published a consultation titled 'Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI' seeking views of key stakeholders. A link to the Consultation can be found here [Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI Consultation | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk/consultation/daera-ni-consultation-rethinking-our-resources-measures-for-climate-action-and-a-circular-economy-in-ni)

At that meeting, members:

- noted the contents of the consultation document,
- agreed a workshop to formulate a Belfast City Council response on the key items within the consultation,
- agreed to support a request via the Council Waste Forum for a time extension, in order to consider a full and proper response to the consultation.

- 3.2 Following the Committee meeting of 9th April 2024, a member's workshop was arranged and delivered by staff from Resources and Fleet, on Thursday 18th April. The workshop was designed to gain consensus with members on the consultation response and in particular on identified key topics.

The members workshop set the legislative backdrop to the consultation and highlighted that the main purpose of the consultation is to work towards meeting legal requirements and the statutory targets contained within the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 and the Waste and Contaminated Land Order (NI) 1997.

Subsequent meetings have taken place with members unable to attend the workshop on the 9th April.

Members Workshop 18th April 2024

3.3 At the workshop, six key themes arising from the consultation proposals were highlighted and presented to members for discussion and recommendations agreed. These were:

1. Restriction of Household Residual Waste Capacity
2. Dry Recyclables and Food Waste
3. The Concept of 'QualiTEE'
4. Non-Household Municipal Waste (NHM)
5. Household Recycling Centres and Commercial Waste
6. Enforcement Measures

The key proposals and findings for each theme are as follows:

1. **Restriction of Household Residual Waste Capacity**

3.4 **To restrict the residual waste capacity for households to a maximum of 90 litres per week, delivered either via a 180-litre bin collected fortnightly or a 240-litre bin collected every 3 weeks.**

This proposal would have the potential to:

- move materials up the waste hierarchy, especially diverting from residual bin to recycling, resulting in better environmental and economic outcomes.
- make improvements to recycling rate and contributes to targets.
- deliver efficiency savings given comparative costs of recycling treatment versus residual treatment.

However, it could also lead to possible displacement of residual waste to recycling centres. Also, its success relies upon adoption of behavioural change.

The recommended responses under this theme agree with the proposal. Since 2014, Council policy has been that replacement residual bins are 180-litres capacity (Public Consultation on Waste Framework 2017/18, demonstrated a clear favour in terms of restricted bin capacity rather than reduced frequency of collection)

It is highlighted in the draft response is that the Council's exception policy should be applied – i.e. assessment carried out on household basis; 6 or more people in a household and medical waste which results in more residual waste.

It is also highlighted that the proposed implementation time frame of 2 years would be challenging and this initiative, like many others

within the consultation document, would require central government financial support (containers, delivery, communications).

2. Dry Recyclables and Food Waste

3.5 Provide a consistent range of materials collected from every household and apartment in Northern Ireland.

This would ensure that a common set of materials would be collected across all households and all Councils. This would avoid confusion and lead to improved consistency and quality of materials.

However, it is worth noting that approx 70,000 households are currently without a glass collection in Belfast and providing glass collection to additional households within a two-year period could prove challenging. Whilst we would be in support of the recommendation of a core set of recycling materials, the draft response highlights that the implementation period of 2 years would be challenging and would require central government financial support (containers, delivery, communications).

3.6 *Additional materials to be added to the core set over time, with flexible plastic packaging to be collected from households by the end of the financial year 2026/27.*

This proposal would increase the range of materials, improving tonnage and reducing waste in black bins and reduce confusion over plastics and contamination. However, there would be a need for additional resources and containers depending on the degree of separation required. It could also be problematic at properties with communal collections where space is a limiting factor.

The draft response recommends that the proposal should be accepted in principle, but the most suitable method of collection of flexible plastics should be informed by best practice/pilots such as the Flex-collect pilot in GB which will report its findings in Spring 2025.

Also, the list of materials should be kept under active review, apply to all households and other items e.g. batteries and small electrical appliances could be included in the future, subject to inclusion in an Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme (EPR) which would result in the manufacturers of these items paying for the collection, treatment and disposal of these items collected from the kerbside. The default position for collection of dry recyclables from households is in four separate streams:

- (i) fibres (paper/card),
- (ii) plastics,
- (iii) metals,
- (iv) glass separately from each other in the dry recycling collection within 2 years.

It is noted that under this proposal, increased segregation at source could lead to better quality and a significant reduction in contamination delivering increased recycling rates.

However, within our current kerbside recycling schemes in Belfast, it has been demonstrated that plastics and metals can be collected comingled without any detriment to quality.

Significant financial and resource support from central government and external sources as EPR would be required to deliver the service changes associated with these proposals if implemented.

The Council draft response disagrees with this proposal as plastics and metals can be collected co-mingled without degradation of quality and in addition the two-year timeframe would be extremely challenging to deliver the level of service change required as well as the requirement to secure funding resources for same.

3.8 Quality of recyclate for reprocessing is important and needs to be improved through changes to collections and clear measures should be set to describe quality. 4 options presented to be ranked.

This would ensure that more secondary materials are collected, of better quality and supporting local processing, jobs and a more circular economy. It would also reduce confusion over plastics and contamination.

The segregated, kerbside sort scheme provides quality material but requires additional crews, containers and vehicle resources, generally attracting additional costs. This also requires behavioural change/buy-in to be successful and communications are vital.

The following is the proposed ranking order:

- 1) Option A – ‘three stream’ (as per 4,700 homes in Castle DEA)
 - Glass
 - Paper/Card
 - Metals and plastics
- 2) Option C – ‘two stream: glass out’ (as per 22,000 households in outer city on blue bin scheme with separate box for glass collection)

- Glass
- Comingled paper, card, metals and plastics

3) Option B – ‘two stream: fibres out’

- Paper/Card
- Comingled metals, plastics and glass

4) Option D – ‘fully co-mingled’

- Comingled glass, paper, card, metals and plastics

The draft response also notes that there should be an exemption from the regulations in order to mix plastics and metals.

3.9 Changes to bring about weekly food waste collections to all houses and apartments Provision of free caddy liners and mechanisms used in terms of liner provision.

This proposal could lead to the diversion of food waste from black bins. Also, increased frequency of collection tends to deliver higher capture rates. DAERA assert that separation of food and garden waste could save money in the future depending on processing i.e. changing food waste from In-Vessel Composting (IVC) to Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and having separate seasonal collection arrangements for the garden waste and treated by windrow composting at a lower cost than both in-vessel composting and anaerobic digestion. Free of charge provision of caddy liners would ensure no barriers to participating. However, there would be significant resources and money involved to move all households, including apartments, to weekly food waste collections.

The draft response agrees in principle with this proposal as WRAP studies indicate higher capture rates through weekly food waste collections. However, any time frame for implementation must take account of existing contractual arrangements which councils have in place, and which would likely delay full scale roll-out until post 2030.

The Council's draft response agrees that caddy liners should be provided free of charge with the mechanism of provision left to each individual council to determine.

Recommended rank order of collection methods for the collection of food waste would be.

1. A separate weekly collection of food waste with additional arrangements for garden waste

2. A fortnightly mixed food and garden waste collection.
3. A weekly mixed food and garden waste collection.
4. A separate fortnightly collection of food waste with additional arrangements for garden waste.

3.10

3. The Concept of 'QualiTEE'

Existing legislation asserts that to achieve the high-quality recycling necessary for a Circular Economy and to ensure we can reprocess as much as possible, the core recyclable waste streams must be collected separately from each other. The exceptions to this default position are where separate collection is not Technically feasible, would entail disproportionate Economic costs, or would not deliver the best Environmental outcome.

DAERA note that amendments to the Waste and Contaminated Land Order (WCLO) set out that any exceptions to the default separate collection position must produce recyclables of a comparable Quality. This is unique to Northern Ireland (NI). This presents an opportunity for NI to set a high standard for the UK in terms of recycling and reprocessing as well as leading the way in transitioning to a Circular Economy.

However, increased segregation generally equates to more cost (e.g., separate glass or paper/card collections). It generally results in increased collection containers at households which may prove problematical for smaller households. If implemented in full, this scenario would eventually lead to the cessation of the blue bin system as a collection method as the Council would migrate to a multi-stream collection scheme. There is a proposed exemption for separate collections of metals and plastics and Councils will be required to provide the regulator with written assessments seeking exemptions to separate collection on the grounds of technical, environmental or economic factors.

Within the Council's draft response, it is noted that the Concept of QualiTEE is new to Councils. It was not discussed in depth at Council / DAERA workshops prior to the consultation being launched and Councils therefore need more engagement on the detail to fully understand its implications.

Within the proposals Councils would have the ability to gain exemptions on collection methods under one of the four criteria. As currently understood, the QualiTEE principle appears to be quite loose and an assessment could be readily prepared seeking an exemption under one of the grounds, thus undermining one of the key aims of the policy i.e. improved quality and supporting the local circular economy. Therefore, more consultation on this issue in particular is required with Councils.

Finally, there are also concerns that the QualiTEE principle will be used as a measurement for the packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) payments. However, as the QualiTEE principle is 'unique' to NI there are uncertainties and concerns as to how this will be applied when NI Council performance is benchmarked against GB counterparts when it comes to the EPR payments scheme. The Council's draft response seeks to draw this concern to the attention of the regulator.

3.11

4. Non-Household Municipal Waste (NHM)

The main proposals for Non-Household Municipal Waste covers Waste that is not generated by households but is similar in composition to waste generated by households. It covers waste generated by businesses and industry (including Belfast City Council) but there are exemptions. Many of the themes mirror those of household collections and include:

Proposals for segregation as per household collections

- Segregation of residual and dry recyclables
- Collection of Flexible plastic
- Food waste – revisions to Food Waste Regulations 2015

Anaerobic Digestion to be the preferred treatment method for separately collected NHW Food Waste

Proposals to review and investigate options to support NHW sector (incl. Waste Zoning)

The response is generally in favour of the proposals as they would ensure consistency between what people recycle at home, work and school etc. There is a strong potential to increase both the quality and quantity of recycling services if there were stronger controls on Non-Household Municipal Waste. In addition, the proposals support the core principles around the Circular Economy. Other upcoming legislation around Digital Waste Tracking will include NHM in data reporting and align the reporting of waste by businesses to the same standards of household waste reporting.

It is recognised that there may be barriers for businesses, e.g., timelines, storage, practical solutions, operational issues, contractual issues, costs, communications, staff training, contamination and carbon impact.

The proposals could have implications for Belfast City Council as a commercial waste collector, Written assessments would be required regarding the management of waste generated by MHM.

There could be operational constraints (containers, vehicles, contracts, resources etc.). Notably there may be changes to charging mechanisms as Belfast City Council currently charge by volume and this may have to change to charging by weight. This might affect both commercial kerbside collections and any commercial waste presented at Household or Commercial recycling centres, subject to the proposals being implemented.

Although the response is generally in favour of many of the proposals it also highlights concerns for the Council both as a producer and carrier of Non-Household Municipal Waste, the timeframes envisaged for change, implied costs for infrastructure and the need for much greater NHM sector engagements.

In some areas such as waste zoning and exception arrangements, the response states that the proposals require more detail.

3.12

5. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) and Commercial Waste

To establish commercial waste, bring sites and/or to increase access to HWRCs for businesses, public bodies and other organisations to encourage more recycling and better waste management.

This proposal would be of benefit for smaller organisations without formal waste collection arrangements or companies with limited storage space to demonstrate environmental credentials.

The draft Council response disagrees with this proposal as it stands in relation to the current HWRC sites and infrastructure due to the current capacity and location of the sites. It would be possible to agree on separate commercial waste sites as measurement and charging on these sites could be controlled, but any additional sites must be properly funded. Given the current legislation, shared sites remain open to abuse by commercial operators declaring that the waste is household waste and therefore non-chargeable. Legislative change is required so that the Council can determine which waste arriving at a HWRC is commercial and therefore chargeable.

It is unclear at this stage whether additional commercial waste will necessarily increase recycling rates at sites as commercial operators could dispose of residual as well as recycling waste. In the absence of legislative change, tailored administration solutions would be required (fair use policy/tonnage restrictions, permit systems, booking systems) It is clear that the proposals, if adopted, could significantly increase costs to Council without

proper charging mechanisms. It is clear that this NHM Waste will inevitably need to be measured and tracked.

3.13

6. Enforcement Measures

Through collaboration with Councils, we will set out proportionate and robust guidelines for compliance and enforcement that enable Councils to enhance their waste and recycling services (Article 21 - Waste and Contaminated Land Order)

Amendments will be made to Article 5 of the Waste and Contaminated Land Order 1997 to ensure compliance with the post-consultation requirements to segregate a core set of dry recyclables and food waste by obligated businesses and the wider NHM sector.

The Council's response agrees in principle with the proposals. Council invests considerable resources in encouraging residents to do the right thing and recycle correctly. However, there are limited options in terms of enforcement when repeated non-compliance is encountered.

Domestic Fixed penalty notice amount of £200 was thought to have been acceptable but should be reduced if paid sooner. Likewise, a Commercial Fixed Penalty Notice amount of £700 was seen as acceptable but reduced if paid sooner. Taking members comments on board the response will emphasise that FPNs should be a measure of last resort. To ensure consistency it is recommended that DAERA introduce guidance that will support enforcing authorities to meet their statutory obligations. It is anticipated that should these enforcement actions be the responsibility of Councils; additional resources will be required to meet these obligations.

DAERA recognise that there is a responsibility on the NHM waste sector to step up and play their part and not leave the heavy lifting to residents only. The environmental targets will not be achieved without the full participation of the NHM waste sector.

3.14 Regional responses

In addition to the BCC response, Council Officers have attended meetings organized by arc21 and NILGA/Council Waste Forum in May 2024 to inform coordinated responses by those organisations. Because of the differing approaches to collections and the management of waste by the eleven separate councils the proposed responses are generic, and some questions / proposals will not be responded to as there was no consensus

from the participant councils. This proposed response sets out the Belfast position in respect of this consultation.

3.15 Financial and Resource Implications

The outcome of the final consultation may result in changes to how the Council will collect and manage its waste both from a household and non-household waste perspective. As such there will be financial implications both in terms of capital and revenue. The response highlights these issues and requests that this cost of change is fully supported by DAERA and other external sources such as EPR.

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

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

XL Bully legislation - response from DAERA

The Committee was reminded that, at the People and Communities meeting held on 9th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to enquire as to what impact the new legislation in respect of XL Bully Type dogs would have on local councils and animal welfare charities, and what resources would be allocated to deal with those impacts.

The Committee was informed that a response has been received from the Director of Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division on behalf of the Minister.

In his response he advised that Department officials were continuing to engage with the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group (NIDAG) on the implementation of the policy, this included ascertaining what additional costs would be incurred for councils as a result of the new restrictions. This work was currently ongoing and, in the weeks ahead as the exemption scheme was finalised, consideration would be given as to what financial assistance the Department could provide.

He assured the Members that the Minister was acutely aware of the impacts on councils and had publicly expressed his desire to work with councils to support them, where possible, within the Departmental budget. He was conscious that there might be some organisations within the animal welfare charity sector that could be impacted because of the restrictions, however, he noted the Department had no legislative powers to intervene or provide financial assistance. Historically, the Department had not funded any animal welfare charities directly in the past, nor did it have any budget to do so in the future.

Finally, the correspondence stated that the Department for Communities remained responsible for policy and strategy relating to the voluntary and community sector and

provided advice to charities on sustainability and does offer targeted funding initiatives, which are open to qualifying organisations.

The Committee noted the response.

Update on XL Bully safeguarding measures

The Director of City Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To provide a further update to Members about the new safeguarding measures for XL Bully breed type dogs in NI and in particular the amended timeline for introduction and additional details regarding finance and resource implications.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Timeline

Members will be aware that on 5th March 2024 DAERA Minister Andrew Muir announced his intention to introduce new safety measures for XL Bully breed type dogs in Northern Ireland as DAERA believe it is the most appropriate way to protect public safety.

- 3.2 The proposed legislative timeline is outlined in Appendix 1 and includes:**

- 1st Stage – May 2024: Subordinate Legislation; The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Type) (Northern Ireland) Order 2024; This was approved by the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee on 23rd May 2024, and will be put forward for consideration at the next scheduled Executive Committee meeting on 6th June 2024. Subject to its approval, the intention is to make the legislation on 7th June 2024, to come in to operation on 28th June 2024.**
- 2nd Stage – July 2024: The Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) (Northern Ireland) Order 2024.**
- From December 2024 it will be illegal to own an XL Bully dog without an exemption certificate.**

- 3.3 Although the proposed legislation mirrors current legislation in the rest of the UK, the application process in Northern Ireland will differ significantly from that in the rest of the UK as it will be managed by local councils. DAERA is also currently reviewing sections relating to the transfer of ownership and the revocation of exemption certificates.
- 3.4 When the legislation comes into effect in Northern Ireland, it will be illegal to breed, sell, gift, exchange, abandon an XL Bully type dog, or permit it to stray. DAERA is liaising with a number of interested groups including The Dog Control Coalition and Veterinary Northern Ireland (Vet NI) on the new safeguarding measures for XL Bully breed type dogs.
- 3.5 Judicial Review
- A dog owner and the campaign group 'Don't Ban Me, Licence Me' are taking legal action against the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and were given permission to take an appeal to the High Court against the UK-wide ban on the XL Bully breed.
- 3.6 Guidance
- DAERA will develop guidance and practical support to allow owners to understand the impending legislative changes, including how to identify an XL Bully breed type dog using the current Defra Conformation Standard developed by the UK Government.
- 3.7 It remains the case that owners are responsible for controlling their dog, both at home and in public. DAERA have published advice and guidance on 'responsible dog ownership' and 'sharing your house with a dog' and it is intended that this information will also be included in upcoming messaging on XL Bully type dogs.
- 3.8 Owners will be required to self-assess their dog using the XL Bully breed conformation standard and where the dog meets a substantial number of the characteristics outlined, it will be considered an XL Bully breed type.
- 3.9 Guidance is also available for enforcement officers applying the XL Bully breed type conformation standard.
- 3.10 Self-Certification/Exemption Scheme
- Owners of XL Bully type dogs will be required to self-assess their dog using the conformation standard developed by Defra. An application may be made to local councils for an Exemption

Certificate within a specific timeframe. After this period, it will be illegal to own an XL Bully type dog in Northern Ireland.

3.11 Details of the exemption scheme are yet to be finalised; however, it is anticipated that the application window for exemption certificates will be open from mid-summer until the end of December 2024, providing almost five months for applications to be submitted.

3.12 If an owner believes their dog to be an XL Bully type dog, they should start to prepare for the safeguarding measures being introduced which will broadly mirror those already in place in the rest of the UK.

3.13 Compensation Scheme

DEARA also propose to introduce 'The Dangerous Dogs (Compensation and Exemption Schemes) (Northern Ireland) Order 2024. This will mean a compensation scheme will be available should the owner of an XL Bully breed type dog not wish to adhere to the exemption measures and no longer wishes to keep their dog. Dog owners may voluntarily surrender their XL Bully type dogs for euthanasia, and receive financial compensation of £100, plus £100 towards Vets costs.

3.14 Valid compensation claims will be processed fully by DAERA and the closing date for all claims is to be confirmed.

3.15 Communications/Awareness campaign

DAERA, in conjunction with local councils, will ensure that communications are issued in advance of the restrictions coming into effect, including details of the steps required to comply and enable the XL Bully dog owners to prepare for the changes. The main priority is to ensure that as many dogs are exempted as possible, within the specified cut off time, to avoid the scenario of having to exempt dogs via the Court process. We will liaise with colleagues in Communications, Marketing & External Affairs.

3.16 Finance and Resource Implications

The previous Committee Report dated 2nd May 2024 provided details of the potential impact of this new legislation on our Dog Wardens, Animal Welfare Officers, Digital Services, Business Support and Finance staff, Legal Services, Kenneling and External Affairs, Communications and Marketing.

3.17 It is recognised that the implementation of the pending legislative controls for XL Bully breed type dogs will be at an annual net cost

to Councils going forward. Councils are liaising with DEARA through SOLACE NI and the Northern Ireland Dog Advisory Group (NIDAG) regarding the most cost effective way of delivering this service and future funding requirements for Councils to undertake these additional responsibilities.

3.18 DAERA is liaising with the Department of Finance (DoF) on these financial impacts which include: Administration of self-certification exemption process; Upgrade/development of existing IT systems; Bespoke training of dog control (and animal welfare staff) across councils; Kenneling costs; and Legal expenses associated with enforcement activities.

3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Dilapidated Buildings - responses
From DfC, DoF and DAERA

The Director of Planning and Building Control reminded the Members that, at the People and Communities Committee meeting on the 9 April 2024, it was agreed to write to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) urgently seeking the Minister to bring forward a Dilapidation Bill.

In addition, the Committee had agreed to write to the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department of Finance (DoF) seeking the allocation of a package of funding to assist councils to more effectively tackle the problems associated with Dilapidation.

Accordingly, letters from the Committee were issued to all three recipients on 17th May 2024.

She reported that DAERA had responded on the 21st May 2024 recognising that the existing legislation used by councils in respect of dilapidation was dated and geographically fragmented. The response sets out that a draft bill had been prepared which aimed to consolidate and enhance existing legislation and improve the cost recovery ability of councils. Subject to the agreement of the Executive, the Minister was intending to introduce the Bill to the Assembly after the summer recess this year. It was anticipated that the Bill would provide councils with a modern and fit-for-purpose regime, including clear powers to tackle dilapidated and dangerous buildings and neglected sites.

DfC had responded on the 31st May 2024 setting out that the Department did not currently have any funding programme which would assist councils to be more effective in tackling the problems associated with dilapidation. Whilst the Department had previously operated the Urban Development Grant Scheme, it was not currently open for applications.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

Further, the response sets out that the Executive had an agreed 2024/25 budget, and the Minister would be allocating this funding against existing commitments and Ministerial priorities.

Finally, the DoF had responded on the 29th May 2024 setting out that the issue of dilapidated buildings was an area where the Minister had specific interest as the Minister responsible for rating matters. The response sets out that bringing dilapidated buildings back into use can play a key role in growing the overall taxbase and can have a restraining effect on the overall poundage levels within the system.

The response sets out the rating system for dilapidated buildings that are still usable and those that are truly derelict. Further, the response sets out that the Back in Business scheme had been restored at the Assembly which would incentivise the use of long-term vacant retail space.

The response stated that, whilst there is a 50% rating liability on properties that are dilapidated but still usable as a unit, there is no such approach for those properties that are truly derelict as they are removed from the rating system entirely. The Minister is of the opinion that refurbishment of such property is probably a matter better addressed through carefully thought-out proposals for capital spend directed at regeneration, and that any business case brought forward at Executive level to advance proposals of this nature would be considered.

The Committee noted the contents of the responses received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Department for Communities and Department of Finance as well as ongoing work within the Council which would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Social Supermarkets - response from
The Department for Communities (DfC)**

The Committee was reminded that in April this year it had considered a report which had provided an update on the outcome of an open call for applications to the Social Supermarket Fund. The report advised members that a full Letter of Offer had not been received by the Department for Communities (DfC) and that the level of budget required to support all recommended applications exceeded the available budget.

The Members had asked that the issue be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and that communication be issued to the DfC. A letter was issued and a response had been received by the Council.

The Members were also advised that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee recommended the issue of 25% of funding to 21 organisations which were recommended for funding from the Social Supermarket Fund. That Committee had also granted delegated authority for the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue funding up to 70% of the total recommended amount to all 21 organizations when the full Letter of Offer was received from DfC. Those groups had now received communication from the Council advising of their award.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

The correspondence from DfC notes that the departmental budget for 2024/25 had not yet been agreed, but that 25% funding based on 2023/24 allocations had been issued to councils. The letter also noted that many councils had communicated a need for further funding for this area of work and that the outcome of the financial exercise would be communicated as soon as possible to enable financial planning for 2024/25.

Noted.

Belfast Hills Partnership - Request for Funding

The Committee was advised that, since its inception in 2005, Belfast City Council had been a key partner within the Belfast Hills Partnership (BHP). The April 2011 meeting of the former Parks and Leisure Committee had approved an annual funding allocation to the Belfast Hills Partnership of £36,900, which had since been included in revenue budgets.

This funding had enabled the organisation to grow and develop from a small team of three individuals to today's team which consists of 6 full time members of staff and 9 part time staff bodies which allows the partnership to deliver a wide range of programmes within the Belfast City Council area which included:

- Habitat and species surveys and improvements
- Environment education for young people
- Volunteering opportunities
- Addressing anti-social behaviour including fly tipping and wildfires
- Tree propagation and planting
- Community support and engagement
- Information provision
- Health walks

BHP have highlighted consistent rising costs, which they have tried to absorb internally by seeking to cut costs where possible – however, they are now in a position of seeking support from funding partners to continue delivering their services. Whilst NIEA have confirmed that they would increase their funding to BHP by 37%, the Partnership was approaching their Council partners to seek additional funding.

It was reported that Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council had confirmed that they had agreed an increase of 30% on current funding. It should be noted that each council provides funding in proportion to the land area owned by each Council within the Belfast Hill's Area and this arrangement would continue with these latest funding revisions.

Belfast Hill Partnership currently received £36,900 from Belfast City Council and had requested an increase of 30% (£11,070) to £47,970.

The Committee noted the request for additional funding from the Belfast Hills Partnership and agreed that the request be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, given the associated financial impacts, as part of the process to allocate from year end underspends.

Stadia Community Benefits Initiative

The Operational Director, City and Neighbourhood Services, submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To advise Committee of progress with the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative (SCBI) for 2023/2024 .**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to note progress to date**

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 The Council has been undertaking the Leisure Transformation Programme to renew its Leisure facilities across the City. This Programme has been influenced by the Partnership opportunities presented by the NI Executive Stadia Programme.**
- 3.2 The Council, Department for Communities (DfC) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) have recognised the opportunities presented by the Stadia Programme, have committed to work together to maximise these benefits, and have agreed to establish a Stadium Community Benefits Initiative as part of the Belfast Community Benefits Initiative (‘the Project’) to implement and deliver agreed objectives including promoting equality, tackling poverty, and tackling social exclusion within the Belfast area.**
- 3.3 In March 2016 the Council, DfC and IFA signed an agreement which sets out their respective commitments to the project. As other major stadia are developed in Belfast it is anticipated that other sports governing bodies shall become parties to the agreement. At its April 2018 meeting People and Communities committee agreed that Council would work with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) within the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative and recognised their significant planned investment in Gaelic Games in the city to support their Gaelfast strategy. GAA activities became fully incorporated into the action plan at the start of financial year 2019-2020, with Gaelfast staff imbedded into the governance structure at the Delivery Board and the Policy and Performance Group.**
- 3.4 The agreement is for a period of ten years with financial commitment from Council and IFA in place to the end of March 2026. Delivery is managed through monthly meetings of the Delivery Board, which reports quarterly to the Policy and Performance Board. Financial and performance reports will be presented to Council and other partners’ Boards as necessary.**

3.5 The Policy & Performance Group is responsible for agreeing the Benefits Realisation Plan and associated annual targets. Work was undertaken to ensure the end benefits/outcomes are aligned to partners' strategies. To measure the progress of this the Council and the IFA have developed a range of indicators/intermediate benefits which are monitored through programme delivery:

- a. Number of coaching sessions provided
- b. Number of coaches engaged in delivering coaching
- c. Number of sessions improving club governance
- d. Number of volunteering opportunities
- e. Participation opportunities for under 16s
- f. Female participation rates
- g. Number of people completing skills development programme
- h. Number of sessions for under-represented groups
- i. Number of sessions for school and youth groups
- j. Community group usage of stadia
- k. Number of clubs attaining club-mark
- l. Educational opportunities
- m. o. Number of programmes targeting ASB
- n. q. Improved collaborative working
- o. r. Number of disabled participants
- p. s. Number of older people participating

The policy and performance group held their meeting on Thursday 9 May 2024 to review performance for 2023/24 and to be updated in terms of the programme for 2024/25

3.6 Following the completion of a baseline assessment in early 2017, workplans are developed each year. The Action Plan for 2024-2025 has been produced by the partners and includes a mixture of sports specific programmes with both National Governing Bodies and collaborative initiatives delivered jointly by both the sporting organisations.

3.7 Performance

Delivery during 2023/2024 has now been completed and details of the IFA and GAA specific activities are included at appendix (i) and appendix (ii)

The programmes and performance indicators for 2024/2025 have been agreed by the Policy and Performance Group.

3.8 Financial Implications

In accordance with the Council's obligations under its DfC Funding Agreement for the Olympia Regeneration Project, the Council has committed a sum of £100,000 per annum for a minimum of ten years, so that a minimum of £1,000,000 is contributed in total to the Project.

In relation to 2023/24 partners reported a full spend in line with programmes delivered.

The budget spend for 2024/2025 has also been approved by the Policy and Performance Group.

3.8 Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no additional impacts related to this report."

The Committee noted the progress to date.

Food Service Delivery Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The Food Standards Agency, in their monitoring and oversight role, require all NI District Councils to prepare an annual Food Service Delivery Plan which sets out the Council's key functions and planned activities for delivery of food hygiene, food standards and other food safety related responsibilities.

1.2 This report presents Belfast City Council's draft Food Service Delivery Plan for the 2024/25 year and seeks Committee approval of the draft plan so that it can be submitted to the Food Standards Agency for review.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to approve the draft Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan 2024-2025

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Council's Food Safety Unit works with local businesses to build compliance with Food Law and to ensure that food produced and sold in Belfast is safe and can be trusted. This not only protects the consumer and public health, but also protects and

enhances the reputation of the City, our local businesses and their competitiveness, thereby supporting economic growth.

- 3.2 Food related illness costs the local economy, individual businesses and the consumer- people may suffer from food poisoning and food related illness, potentially resulting in hospital admissions for some patients, and costing the Belfast economy through work related absences and consumer claims.
- 3.3 To protect consumers, the Council is required to implement a programme of planned food hygiene and food standards inspections for food businesses across the city. These inspections are programmed based on food safety risks presented by the businesses. Food sampling programmes are also delivered throughout the year, and the Council responds to and investigates food complaints as well as cases of food borne illness.
- 3.4 The Food Hygiene Rating Act (NI) 2016 requires businesses to display their food hygiene rating, improving the opportunities for consumers to make informed choices and encouraging improved compliance. Currently at least 84% of food businesses are rated as 3, 4 or 5 (broadly compliant or better). See Appendix 2 for ratings breakdown.
- 3.5 Work to ensure allergen requirements placed on food business are being adhered to, forms an important element of the Food Safety service, and aims to protect consumers who have food allergies from harm. It is estimated that around 2 million people living in the UK have a food allergy. Following a number of high profile cases resulting in fatalities, new legislation has been introduced since 2021 regarding the adequacy of labelling requirements for food that is prepacked for direct sale (PPDS) i.e., food that has been packed on the same premises from which it is being sold. Our officers monitor compliance and offer support to businesses during their inspections.
- 3.6 The Council's imported food control function continues to facilitate trade while ensuring food safety and public health is protected by undertaking official controls at Belfast Port. From the 1st October 2023 the Windsor Framework introduced the Northern Ireland Retail Movement Scheme (NIRMS 'green lane' scheme) to facilitate qualifying traders to move retail goods from GB to NI. Whilst DAERA oversee the NIRM's arrangements, both DAERA and local Councils undertake official controls on other food products arriving at NI ports that are destined for, or at risk of entering the EU (red lane). For Belfast City Council this includes controls on fish products, high risk food not of animal origin, plastic kitchenware from China and Hong Kong, and organic products. Work to finalise processes, infrastructure and a longer-term

sustainable resourcing model for these services will continue to require input from the Port Health service in the 2024/25 year. The Port Health service continues to work closely with the Food Standards Agency, DAERA, DEFRA, other government departments, local businesses and other stakeholders to ensure adequate arrangements are in place to facilitate trade and protect consumers.

3.7 Key Issues - Food Service Delivery Plan

Each year, the Council produces a Food Service Delivery Plan which sets out the activities, techniques and approaches to be taken during the year to support businesses in ensuring food safety, food standards and to promote informed healthy choices. The Plan provides the basis on which the Council's regulatory activities are monitored and audited by the Food Standards Agency, and it is a requirement that it is presented to the Council for approval.

- 3.8 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a key role in overseeing local authority regulatory activities to ensure that official controls are delivered. Powers to enable the FSA to monitor and audit local authorities are contained in the Food Standards Act 1999. A detailed Framework Agreement on local food law enforcement has been produced by the Agency, in conjunction with local authority representative bodies, to provide guidance on how regulatory service plans should be structured and what they should contain. The Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan for 2024/25 has been drafted in line with the framework requirements..**
- 3.9 The Framework Agreement described above requires that Food Service Delivery Plans should be submitted to the relevant Member forum, in this case the People and Communities Committee, for approval. This is to ensure local transparency and accountability.**
- 3.10 A summary of the key work activities completed in the last year and profiling the work of the unit is included for information in Appendix 1. A summary of current food hygiene ratings is included in Appendix 2. The Food Service Delivery Plan for 2024/2025 is included in Appendix 3.**
- 3.11 Members should note that during the Covid pandemic (between 2020 and 2022), food hygiene and food standards inspection programmes were significantly impacted, as visits were paused due to business closures during periods of lock down, and subsequent restrictions on social distancing etc. The FSA worked with Local Authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland**

during 2022/23 to develop recovery plans for food safety services, setting priorities for service recovery at that time. Belfast City Council's Food Safety team successfully achieved the key milestones and objectives for 2022/23 and 2023/24 which were designed to focus interventions on the highest risk businesses, bringing these back into the routine inspection programme. In 2023/24, significant progress was made towards returning to normal inspection frequencies for the vast majority of businesses across the range of high, moderate and low risk categories.

- 3.12 The FSA recovery plan approach ceased on 31st March 2023. This change has renewed the expectation for Local Authorities to return businesses to their normal inspection frequencies, as laid out in the Food Law Code of Practice. The FSA have however acknowledged that a backlog of inspections still remains among many Local Authorities and have advised that a pragmatic and risk-based approach should continue to be adopted where this is needed. Belfast City Council's Food Service Delivery Plan for 2024/25 reflects this approach and the inspection programme prepared by the Council's Food Safety team aims to return the vast majority of businesses to normal inspection frequencies. For some businesses in the very lowest risk category the service will also utilise alternative enforcement strategies to ensure these businesses continue to address food safety issues, while ensuring business risk profiles are up to date.
- 3.13 FSA will be continuing its work in 2024/25 to modernise the delivery models for Food Standards and Food Hygiene regulatory inspection programmes, to ensure inspections and resources are better targeted based on risk, while reducing burdens for businesses and Competent Authorities where possible. A new Food Standards Delivery Model is to be introduced this year. For food hygiene, FSA have indicated that following feedback from a pre-consultation exercise in 2023, implementation of changes to the Food Hygiene delivery model has been postponed until the Food Standards delivery model is introduced later this year. Councils will be further consulted on proposed changes to the Food Hygiene delivery model as the models evolve.
- 3.14 Financial and Resource Implications

The Food Standards Agency provides some grant funding to help support these services on an annual basis to all District Councils in NI. This funding is allocated based on population size of each District as well as the profile of food businesses located within each area. In 2024/25 the funding allocated to Belfast City Council remained relatively consistent at just under £300,000 (£298,481)

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

The remaining resources required for this core service are included within the City and Neighbourhood Services existing budgets and no additional resources are anticipated.

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

None.”

The Committee approved the draft Belfast City Council Food Service Delivery Plan 2024-2025.

**Epizootic disease – Memorandum
of Understanding with DAERA**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on revisions to the open-ended Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with DAERA in relation to Epizootic Disease and available Council resources as outlined in Appendix A to the report. The MoU had originally been approved at the People and Communities Committee in June 2017.

The Committee:

1. noted the revisions within the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU);
2. noted the updated resources in Appendix A to the report;
3. agreed to continue with the open-ended MoU;
4. agreed that the Operational Director, City and Neighbourhood Services signs the agreement; and
5. noted that DAERA had delivered Epizootic training which officers had attended on 22nd May.

Update and Minutes of Reference Group on Older People

The Committee noted the report and approved and adopted the minutes from the Reference Group on Older People meeting held on 19th March 2024.

Belfast City Youth Council - Joint Workshop

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided Members with an update on the recent workshop of the People and Communities Committee and the Belfast City Youth Council which was held on 21st May 2024.

Summer Schemes for Children with Additional Needs

The Committee was reminded that a report proposing enhanced summer scheme provision was brought to the February 2024 meeting of the People and Communities Committee and an amount of £80,000 was agreed to support provision across each of the four areas of the city with decisions to be approved through the Area Based Working Groups. The funding was subsequently approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22nd March.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

Officers had attended the February/March Area Based Working Groups to discuss any potential models suggested by elected members and to engage around local organisations which might be in a position to enhance provision over the summer period. Officers then engaged with the sector and presented recommendations to the May/June Area Based Working Groups.

The table below represents the approved providers recommended by the North, West and South Area Working Groups. Approval from the East Belfast Area Working was not received for those Groups due to not having a quorum at that stage of the meeting.

Accordingly, the Committee was requested to approve the following recommendations of the North, West and South Area Working Groups and the preferred option for the East:

Area, Date of meeting	Provider	Amount
South, 20 May 2024	Sólás	£12,480
South, 20 May 2024	Belvoir ASD Support Group	£7,520
North, 28 May 2024	174 Trust	£6,725
North, 28 May 2024	Cedar Lodge School	£13,771
West, 5 June 2024	Kids Together	£9,100
West, 5 June 2024	St. Gerard's School	£8,100
West, 5 June 2024	Snowflakes	£2,800
East, 6 June 2024	Ledley Hall Trust	£8,538
East, 6 June 2024	Mencap	£10,000
		£78,584

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Operational Issues

Requests for Events in Parks

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

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

- **Belfast Rathayatra 2024 (Festival of Chariots) – Crescent Park**
- **Climate Craic 2024 – Ormeau Park**
- **Belfast No 6 Royal Black District Chapter Parade – Woodvale Park**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to grant authority to the applicants for the proposed events on the dates noted; subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City & Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organisers:

- i. resolves all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;**
- ii. meets all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and**
- iii. shall consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.**

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

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

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

3.2 Iskcon Belfast Charity (Hare Krishna Temple) - Belfast Rathayatra 2024 (Festival of Chariots) – Crescent Park – Saturday 3 August 2024

Iskcon Belfast Charity (Hare Krishna Temple) have requested the use of Crescent Park for their Belfast Rathayatra 2024 event. ISKCON Belfast promotes spiritual and cultural activities in Belfast and surrounding areas. They hold worship services, spiritual discourses, meditation sessions, and educational programs on Vedic wisdom. The charity also organises festivals, cultural events, and community service initiatives to foster spiritual growth, inner peace, and social harmony. They have requested permission to be allowed to carry out charity collections. They are a registered charity with their number being NI 102942

- 3.3 Key dates for the event are: Main Event – Saturday 03rd August 12.30pm to 6pm
- 3.4 The event is The Ratha Yatra, or Festival of Chariots, is a grand Hindu festival celebrated worldwide. It involves the procession of large, elaborately decorated chariots carrying deities, particularly Lord Jagannath (an incarnation of Lord Krishna), along the streets. It's celebrated with great enthusiasm and devotion, attracting millions of devotees in the UK & Ireland. The event organiser requests permission for the event to pass through Crecent Gardens as part of the event.

Climate Craic CIC - Climate Craic Festival 2024 – Ormeau Park – Saturday 14 September 2024

- 3.5 Council have received a request from Climate Craic CIC to host their annual Climate Craic Festival at Ormeau Park on Saturday 14 September 2024. The group have requested permission to be allowed to carry out collections on the day of the event to help fund next year's festival along with other community initiatives.
- 3.6 They are a nonprofit community incorporated company. They are a registered charity with their Charity Number being NI687640.
- 3.7 The purpose of the festival is to promote and raise awareness around the climate and how the community can help improve this. The event will have creative acts, performers, market & food stalls along with musicians to create a fun and enjoyable atmosphere. There is no cost to attend the event.

- 3.8 **Key Dates for the event are:**

Set Up – Saturday 14 September – 9am
Main Event – Saturday 14 September – 1pm to 6pm
De-Rig – Saturday 14 September - 10pm

- 3.9 **Belfast No 6 Royal Black District Chapter – Woodvale Parade – Woodvale Park – Sunday 25 August 2024**

Council has received a request form Belfast No 6 Royal Black District Chapter for a section of their parade on Sunday 25 August 2024 to pass through Woodvale Park and lay two poppy wreaths at the war memorial in the park.

- 3.10** The proposed route for the event is as follows:
- 3.11** At 2.15pm the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter will depart from West Belfast Orange Hall, Shankill Road. The parade will consist of 7 Districts + 4 bands, approximately 250 participants.
- 3.12** At approximately 2.20pm the will parade enter Woodvale Park at the Woodvale Road entrance and proceed up through the park, pausing to lay 2 poppy wreaths at the war memorial. The parage will exit the park on to the Ballygomartin Road by 2.40pm.
- 3.13** The group have confirmed that the return route of the parade will not be passing through Woodvale Park and that the PSNI have been informed along with an 11/1 parade notification being submitted.
- 3.14** **Financial and Resource Implications**
- There are no known financial or resource implications with this request.
- 3.15** **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**
- There are no known implications with this request.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Request to use Dundonald Cemetery
for Somme Commemoration**

The Committee approved the use of Dundonald Cemetery to facilitate the event, subject to the event organisers adhering to operational requirements of the Council.

**Tree Establishment report and 'Tree
Cities of the World' Accreditation**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

- “1.0** **Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update Members regarding the progress on several key actions associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy since its launch on 5 October 2023.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the progress on several key actions with the Belfast Tree Strategy.**
- 2.2 Members are also asked to agree to the publication of the Tree Establishment report and to note the council's achievement on obtaining Tree Cities of the World accreditation.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Belfast Tree Strategy was produced with the aim of managing and improving the city's tree-scape over the next ten years, focussing on protecting, enhancing, and expanding the Council's woodlands, hedges, and trees, connecting people to nature, and ensuring that they continue to be a major asset to everyone who lives in, works in, and visits Belfast city.**
- 3.2 The Belfast Tree Strategy objectives are to deliver 37 key actions over the next decade with an independent review of the strategy occurring in December 2024, and thereafter, once every three years until 2033. The 37 key actions have been broken down into three main categories:**
- **Trees and Urban Forest Structure**
 - **Community framework**
 - **Sustainable Resource Management Approach (See appendix 1)**

Since the launch of the Tree Strategy on 5 October 2023, the Council has achieved several key actions to date:

- 3.3 1. Tree Establishment Planning – The Council has completed a comprehensive tree opportunity mapping exercise. (See Appendix 2.) The Tree Establishment report aims to address several key objectives associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy and which looked at areas such as, existing tree canopy cover, tree equity, species suitability and investigated potential space(s) for new tree planting in both soft and hard landscapes and linking into the Council's One Million Tree initiative.**
- 3.4 It must be noted however that all the sites highlighted in the report indicate 'potential' tree planting locations but would first require site investigations to establish if trees can actually be planted due to the presence of underground utilities, planning restrictions, or if the landowners have a budget to plant and maintain new trees.**

- 3.5 Canopy cover across Belfast averages 18.6%, as measured by Google satellite data. This ranges from 20.8% in urban and suburban areas, to 15.0% in rural areas. The Ward with the highest tree cover in Belfast is Bellevue, with 43.9% tree cover and the lowest is Ardoyne with just 4.6%. The average tree canopy cover for Northern Ireland is 11.8%.**
- 3.6 Achieving 30% canopy cover for Belfast is possible by 2050, provided tree planting continues at a consistently high rate by all the key landowners across the city. However, one issue worth highlighting, is that Ash Dieback threatens 11.3% of the overall existing tree population, which could cause the current tree cover to drop significantly.**
- 3.7 2. Tree Risk Management – The Council has moved from a five year to a three-year health and condition tree inspection cycle for all semi-mature to fully mature park trees and on behalf of the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) the Council has moved from a five year to a two-year health and condition tree inspection cycle of all the Department for Infrastructures young mature to fully mature street trees.**
- In making these changes to the tree inspection cycles, it will ensure that Council identify any potential hazardous trees and take the appropriate action, however it must be noted that there is no such thing as a ‘safe tree’.**
- 3.8 3. International Reputation – On 21 March 2024, Belfast City Council received confirmation that our city had achieved ‘Tree Cities of the World status’.**
- 3.9 This accreditation has been awarded by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations to 200 recognised cities in countries such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, India, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States. This is the first time Belfast city has been included, due mainly to the council’s commitments under the Belfast Tree Strategy.**
- 3.10 The Tree Cities of the World accreditation is awarded to cities who have:**
- (i) a policy/strategy which governs the management of its trees**
 - (ii) it has an updated tree inventory system**
 - (iii) It has a dedicated annual budget to manage its trees, and which is linked to a tree management plan, and**
 - (iv) A city which celebrates the importance of trees and works closely with its residents in the planting and maintenance of its tree population.**

- 3.11 This accreditation will be applied for on an annual basis, similar to the Green Flag award programme, but on an international platform.**

3.12 Financial and Resource Implications

Resourcing of staff and additional tree budget will be necessary if the Council is to achieve the 37- Key Actions associated with the Belfast Tree Strategy over the next 10 years and maintain its position on the world stage as a 'Tree City of the World'.

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

None."

The Committee noted the progress on several key actions with the Belfast Tree Strategy; and agreed to the publication of the Tree Establishment report and to note the council's achievement on obtaining Tree Cities of the World accreditation.

Unadopted Alleyways Update

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 Following the P&C Committee workshop on the 26th February 2024, Members requested that a paper summarising the main findings be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee. This paper sets out the main findings from the workshop for Members to consider.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked:

- To note the contents of the report and to consider approval for officers to engage with statutory partners regarding the feasibility of a pilot project on unadopted alleyways; and**
- To note that a paper will be presented to a future meeting of People and Communities Committee on the feasibility of a pilot programme, including the potential costs for delivery.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members and key stakeholders attended a workshop on the 26th February 2024 to discuss the issues, challenges, and options**

for progression to address the maintenance, repair, and management of issues related to and ongoing with unadopted alleyways across the city.

- 3.2 The workshop was attended by People and Communities Committee members, Belfast City Council officers and representatives from the Department of Infrastructure, Housing Executive, Choice Housing, and Connswater Housing Association. There was no representation from the Department for Communities and the Department of Justice (NI). Apologies were received from DoJ following the meeting and they have indicated a willingness to participate in any future work. DfC have indicated through discussions with elected representatives that they are also willing to participate in any future work.
- 3.3 Following a short presentation from officers and other statutory partners, the Committee Chair opened the floor for discussion from members and stakeholders. The following issues and challenges were identified.

Key issues and Challenges:

- General standard of unadopted alleyways includes a significant state of disrepair, poor standard of cleanliness, significant safety issues, poor practices adopted-fly tipping/dumping and health and safety issues including sharps/ vermin.
- Accessibility for residents, transport, front -line council services etc
- Identification and ownership of alleyways. It was recognised that establishing ownership through various approaches would be difficult and would require a collaborative approach to mapping these areas.
- Problems exist with other areas like walkways and would need to be included.
- No accountability/framework in place to enable the hazards encountered to be progressed.
- Health and Safety concerns that restrict progression and have significant impact for residents, staff, transport, and those requiring access.
- Poor engagement with and lack of support to local communities/community groups impacted upon by un-adopted alleyways.
- No funding in place to support interventions required. A request for all agencies to consider the allocation of resources to deal with the risks posed by these areas.
- Risk based approach to interventions will be needed Safety implications and hazardous conditions will impact upon the

viability of local communities to intervene- the space would need to be safe before this approach could be considered.

- Legacy issues pertaining to historic ownership, use and planning and development within these areas.

3.4 Partner Input

A request for DfI to outline the standard required and to consider a review of its related policy for the adoption of alleyways was requested. The DfI representative committed to providing this detail once investigated within DfI.

The housing associations present - Choice and Connswater, committed to look at available resources and work collaboratively with parties that are able to support in maintaining and progressing issues related to unadopted alleyways that remain an issue, within the association's residencies.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive representative committed to providing an assist with mapping and identifying unadopted alleyways in conjunction with council, DfI and other parties to ascertain a true picture of boundaries, ownership, and location of unadopted alleyways. This approach may also assist with identifying previous owners and establish an ability to track the ownership of alleyways. The Housing Executive representative also noted that the mapping resource is facilitated through a digital online service and that this could be utilised to support the mapping exercise.

3.5 The workshop asked for consideration be given to the formation of a multi-agency working group be established to deliver the following:

Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with all key stakeholders that will outline current responsibilities in relation to unadopted alleyways, resources available to address the problems and how key stakeholders will work together.

1. To complete a mapping exercise in conjunction with key partners and statutory bodies to ascertain ownership, boundaries and clarify unadopted alleyway locations across the city.
2. Resources permitting a small Pilot scheme is devised to test locations for improvements. Agreed locations to be identified and prioritised through risk ranking. Alleyways posing major/significant safety concerns suggested as first priority.

- 3. Agreed to liaise and actively communicate with communities and CVS organisations willing to participate in restoring and maintaining alleyways within residential areas and consider how these groups can be supported.**
- 4. All partners to review current budgets to establish what monies can be sourced to deliver improvements.**

It was accepted that given the size of the issue significant resource will be required to deliver this work.

3.6 Next Steps

If Members are agreeable, officers will engage partners and will present a report to a future meeting of the People and Communities Committee on the feasibility of a pilot scheme, including the costs associated with delivery. The work to consider all points listed in section 3.5 above.

3.7 Financial and Human Resource Implications

Whilst funds are available to officers to engage with statutory partners regarding the proposed pilot, Members are asked to note that there are currently no funds available for delivery of the pilot, and that any request for funding would need to proceed to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for consideration.

3.8 Equality Impact/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee noted:

- the contents of the report and granted approval for officers to engage with statutory partners regarding the feasibility of a pilot project on unadopted alleyways; and
- that a paper would be presented to a future meeting of People and Communities Committee on the feasibility of a pilot programme, including the potential costs for delivery.

**Parks Opening Hours Pilot and Forth Meadow
Community Greenway Consultation**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members on a proposed community consultation on the opening hours pilot for Falls, Woodvale and Ormeau Parks, and on the future opening hours of Forth Meadow Greenway.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report.**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 Access to open spaces provides multiple benefits to the health and wellbeing of residents and is a vital component of creating sustainable and healthy communities. Belfast City Council has the responsibility of managing, maintaining and keeping these spaces safe for citizens, including managing access through gate locking to negate health and safety risks including ASB.**
- 3.2 As well as our own experience, research has shown that keeping parks open facilitates better use by communities and has the potential to reduce antisocial behaviour - for example with Connswater Community Greenway where the main ‘spine’ is lit and accessible 24/7. However, although some of our open-space sites are accessible at night, for the most part a ‘dawn to dusk’ opening hours pattern is followed with times changing as daylight lengthens or shortens.**

Committee Background

- 3.3 Following Notices of Motion relating to the provision of artificial lighting in parks and a request to review the hours that our parks are open to the public, Members will recall that People and Communities Committee agreed to recommendations of a report on Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces – Opening Hours Pilot at its meeting on 3rd March 2020 which referred to a pilot for 24 hour opening for Ormeau, Falls and Woodvale Parks over the summer months. This report is attached at Appendix 1.**

Unfortunately the pilot was not delivered due to the COVID pandemic and the associated restrictions which impacted officers’ ability to consult with local groups at that time.

- 3.4 A further report on Proposed Improvements to Parks and Open Spaces was considered by People and Communities Committee at its meeting 10 November 2020 (report attached at Appendix 2).**

Members noted the substantial financial implications associated with the installation of lighting in all parks, and the lack of funding to support such a request. They also noted the new lighting investment that had occurred at a number of our open spaces in recent years, and agreed that officers would recommence work on the Opening Hours Pilot.

Current Status

- 3.5 Since 2020, lighting has been added along the main spines of a number of new and existing open spaces including Páirc Nua Chollan, Lower Shankill Park and Marrowbone Millennium Park. Along with Forth Meadow Greenway and the Connswater Greenway, the Council now provide over 22km of lit pathways. Further lighting improvements are planned as part of the redevelopment Ballysillan Playing Fields through the Urban Villages Programme.
- 3.6 One of the 'Opening Hour Pilot' sites, Falls Park, has recently benefited from new lighting as part of the 12km Forth Meadow Greenway (FMG) Peace IV funded scheme in north and west Belfast. Now that the final section of the scheme has completed the proposed consultation on FMG opening hours will be an opportunity to consider deviating from the existing 'dawn to dusk' opening hours for each of the park sites along the greenway and the connecting sections. Consultation is required to ensure that the benefits and other impacts on residents and users, are considered at a local level.
- 3.7 ASB in some parks across the city remains a concern with an ongoing Static Park Warden Pilot currently demonstrating some success at Páirc Nua Chollann, Dunville Park and Woodvale Park. Members will be aware of the recent agreement for its expansion into Falls Park to counter ongoing ASB problems on the site.
- 3.8 Given the Forth Meadow Greenway consultation will seek views on the opening times for Falls Park, it is now an opportune time to test the viability of extended opening hour options for the other two pilot sites at Ormeau and Woodvale. This will enable the collation for each of the site's residents, users and partners views, including concerns, and also to take on board learning from any Static Park Warden Pilots, diversionary programmes, and interagency operational interventions at these sites. The pilot approach at Ormeau Park also provides an opportunity to further consider the development of lighting options. This also presents an opportunity for the Council to maximise the potential benefits from DfI's forthcoming delivery of a pedestrian/ cycle bridge over the Lagan River, connecting the site and local area to the city centre via the Gasworks (2027).

Next Steps – Consultation Timeframe and Methodology

- 3.10 It is proposed that a consultation and engagement plan for the Opening Hours Pilot will be developed over the summer and carried out in the autumn in parallel to the consultation and engagement exercise to consider opening hours of FMG (park sites and connections).
- 3.11 It is anticipated that a report detailing the outcome of both consultations will be brought back to People and Communities Committee for Members' consideration before the end of the year.
- 3.12 In line with what was agreed previously by Members for the 'Opening Hour Pilots' in addition to an online survey it is proposed that a series of local Information Sessions will take place to inform users and residents of the pilot proposals for each site with feedback captured on views and concerns of stakeholders. In addition to Members and Council's Legal Services, the PSNI and other partners will be consulted. A similar approach will be taken forward for Forth Meadow Greenway.

3.13 **Financial and Resource Implications**

It is not clear at this stage what the budget implications would be in relation to any future extended opening pilots and changing the opening hours of the Forth Meadow Greenway. It is anticipated this will come at additional cost to the Council. These costs are not currently in revenue or capital estimates.

Following the consultation phase a report will be brought to Members and this will provide further information on this.

3.14 **Equality or Good Relations Implications /
Rural Needs Assessments**

There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report."

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that consideration be given to adding Belmont Park to the pilot project.

Request for Dual Language Street Signage

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Wolfhill Avenue South, Legnavea Place, Rosapenna Parade, Somerdale Gardens, Whitewell Crescent, Cliftonville Street, Dungloe Crescent and Somerton Road.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 11th June, 2024**

**Request for naming of new street including
Dual Language Street Names**

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of the following new streets in the city:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Gilchrist Meadows	Off Edenderry Road, BT8	KMBC Ltd
Black Ridge Walk	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Green	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association

The Committee noted also that delegated authority had also been given to the City Solicitor to exercise her delegated authority in relation to the approval of the erection of dual language street nameplates for the following applications submitted by the developer:

Proposed English Name	Non- English Name	Location
Black Ridge Walk	Siúlán Dhuibhise	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11
Black Ridge Green	Faiche Dhuibhise	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Request from Colin Gaels - shipping container at
Brook Leisure Centre - Councillor M. Donnelly to raise**

At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Committee agreed that officers investigate request from Colin Gaels and look at the possibility of locating a container at the Brook Leisure Centre.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 12th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
Councillors Black, De Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Kelly, Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe, McDowell,
McCormick, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McKay,
Smyth and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. O'Donnell; Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager;
Mr. A. Cairns, Zoo Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Alderman Lawlor and Councillors Hanvey and McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 8th and 29th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd June.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in that the organisation she worked for was associated with the funding under item 5.b) St. Patrick's Day Review and Recommendations and left the room while the item was being discussed.

Presentation

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. O'Neill and Ms. M. Doyle, representing the Renewed Ambition Partnership, to the Committee.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

Mr. O'Neill described the membership and explained the objectives of the Partnership, namely to:

- Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region;
- Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland;
- Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government;
- Support delivery of the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment by attracting collaborative partners; and
- Support delivery of our shared ambition and drive inclusive, sustainable growth.

He provided an overview of its partnership with anchor institutions, key developers and professional agencies, together with its pillared programming of: Research; Programme; Engagement and Advocacy; and Media and Communication.

The representatives highlighted the significance of partnership working for continued investment, together with research which had been undertaken by Ernst and Young on the viability of Belfast as an investment proposition. Mr. O'Neil described the development of bespoke digital Belfast Region investment guide and a targeted digital marketing campaign, together with showcase events and conferences attended.

They advised the Committee of their next steps, which included taking forward their objectives, working collaboratively to support place-based growth proposition for Belfast and wider region; Positively showcasing and positioning the city region as a place for investment; and Positively positioning the city to attract inclusive investment to deliver regeneration and development across the city.

During discussion, the representatives described the benefits of investing in Belfast and answered a range of questions in relation to the benefits of attending conferences, social engagement, the potential for an anchor community organisation to be included in the partnership, a sub-group for community engagement, and procurement plans.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update

Following the presentation, the Director of City Regeneration and Development introduced the following report for Members consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- **Update members on the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme.**

- Seek approval to extend Council's involvement in the BCRPP to 2024 / 2025 .

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note a presentation will be made at Committee from representatives from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP).
- Approve that Officers continue to support the delivery of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the BCRPP and in line with Council's procurement processes.
- Approve the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private sector partnership contribution towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme.
- Approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Members will recall that this Committee agreed in May 2024 to receive a presentation from representatives of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) in June 2024. The purpose of this presentation is to update Members on the 2023 / 2024 programme of work and proposed 2024 / 2025 activities, including priority issues and objectives for the Partnership moving forward.**
- 3.2 The BCRPP, formerly Renewed Ambition Partnership (RAP), is a joint public-private initiative that is delivering a programme of work aimed at ensuring Belfast is positively positioned to continue to attract inclusive investment to unlock and development, regeneration and infrastructure required to deliver on our inclusive growth ambitions.**
- 3.3 BCRPP is supported by public, private and key anchor institution partners. Partners comprise of Belfast City Council, Belfast City Region Deal Partner Councils, Invest NI, Belfast Harbour, Translink, Housing Association representation, Queens University Belfast, and representatives from the local**

development community bringing forward regeneration and development projects.

- 3.4 For the past nine years Council has played a lead civic role in supporting this joint public private sector approach aimed at ensuring Belfast is positively positioned to attract external capital investment required to deliver on our sustainable and inclusive growth ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda. This sets bold ambitions and economic development priorities for the city aimed at delivering inclusive growth. It aims to create a liveable and connected, vibrant and competitive city through prioritising housing-led regeneration; connectivity, active and sustainable travel; and future city centre and wider city regeneration and investment. It is recognised that a collaborative partnership working approach between the public and private sector is key to successfully delivering on these ambitions, with the BCRPP being an important delivery mechanism. The BCRPP is also an important tool within our wider 'Position the City to Compete' proposition which seeks to build on the city's reputation as a unique destination for investment, tourism, development and supporting inclusive economic growth. Members will be aware that 'Positioning the City to Compete' is a key programme of work within this Committee's work plan as agreed at a special meeting of CGR Committee in May.
- 3.5 It has been estimated that c £7.5bn investment is required to deliver the Belfast Agenda growth ambitions, therefore working collaboratively with the private sector to attract external investment is critical. It is also worth noting that approximately 80% of the Council's income comes from the district rate. Increasing the rates base therefore through further development and regeneration activity will support delivery of Council's corporate priorities.
- 3.6 This Committee received a presentation on the 2023 Regeneration Tracker in April 2024. This provided an overview of regeneration and development activity which took place in 2023. It noted the overall positive trajectory of development and regeneration activity since 2015 and how this positively contributes to the wider region including economic growth, job creation, access to services and cultural and recreational amenities. However it had also highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities to future regeneration and development activities, with a particular focus on increasing city centre living, city wide housing-led regeneration and unlocking major regeneration schemes.

3.7 Party Group Leaders (or nominees) and senior officers participated on a study visit to Manchester and Leeds in April 2024. Discussions with elected representatives and senior officers from both cities highlighted the importance of having a long-term vision and supporting strategies, and strong public and private sector partnership working to secure external funding to bring forward development and deliver on growth ambitions. Both councils noted that the key to successful regeneration and development was not always direct delivery, but councils using their strong convening role in attracting external investment and supporting private sector delivery. They also emphasised the importance of city national and international marketing activities in developing long term relationships with international brands and investors, and how this assisted in securing both long term patient capital and partners who have bought into the city's values and vision. They highlighted the economic benefits of this partnership approach to bringing forward development and regeneration. This included supporting graduate retention, attracting FDI and providing employment opportunities.

4.0 Main Report

4.1 The 2023 / 2024 programme commenced on the 1 September 2023 and is delivering a structured programme of work focussed on the key pillars of Research; Events; Advocacy and Engagement; and Communications aligned to securing investment and regeneration for Belfast and the wider city region. The presentation to Committee by the BRCPP Taskforce will provide an overview of the programme and highlights including:

- Development of Marketing collateral to reinforce positive messaging around Belfast and the city region. This includes updating the Belfast Region Investment Guide and creating a digital interactive version which is a key marketing asset at showcase events and wider marketing tool, producing monthly newsletters and securing media coverage highlighting positive news stories.
- Organising a Dublin Investment Showcase event which was delivered in conjunction with Urban Land Institute (ULI) to showcase the Belfast City Region investment opportunity to a ROI investment and development market with positive engagement and a strong interest in the Belfast market, notably the Residential sector.
- Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2024 which comprised of attendees from 15 organisations

including Belfast Harbour, Invest NI, Titanic Quarter and private sector developers attending as part of the Belfast City Region delegation.

- Belfast City Region presence at UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiF) 2024 which comprised of attendees from 13 organisations, including partner BRCD Councils, key developers and professional services firms.
- Advocacy and engagement activities to unlock development and barriers to delivery including to support delivery of the place-based growth proposition for Belfast; housing-led regeneration; and engagement with Planning in relation to the Local Development Plan – Plan Strategy and the emerging Local Policies Plan.

- 4.2 It is recognised that the BCRPP public private partnership approach is an important lever as part of our wider 'Positioning the City to Compete' proposition. It complements other city region partnerships including Belfast Region City Deal and Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor; and is aligned to council-led activities to accelerate city centre living, city innovation, connectivity, resilience / net zero and EDU activities.
- 4.3 Participation in the BCRPP programme has delivered a number of benefits in terms of working to achieve our corporate and city level strategic priorities. Members will be aware of the on-going focus on accelerating city centre living and the advanced stages of Council's competitive dialogue process which is seeking a long-term Private Sector Partner to deliver residential led, mixed use developments to support growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda. Showcasing this opportunity through BCRPP activities has undoubtedly played a key role in terms of positively positioning this proposition within the investment and development market. It has been clear that participation generally as part of the BCRPP programme has generated interest in wider regeneration, development and investment opportunities across the city.
- 4.4 There has been strong interest in Belfast from the investment and development market with positive engagement at showcase events and subsequent requests for follow up presentations and inward visits to Belfast. There has been a number of follow up meetings in Belfast over the past months, with more planned in the coming months from investors, developers and occupiers including:

- Major housing / residential developers who have not to date delivered projects in Belfast / NI
- Real estate investment trust (REIT) with a strong interest in residential developments
- End-use occupiers including FDI companies, commercial / leisure operators, innovation hub operators and Food & Beverage operators

4.5 Proposed approach to 2024 / 2025

The Partnership is governed via a Taskforce comprised of representatives of the public and private sector. The Taskforce has endorsed continuing the Partnership into 2024 / 2025. The presentation from the BCRPP Taskforce will set out the core objectives and proposed workstreams for the 2024 / 2025 programme.

4.6 For the Council the key aims and objectives of being part of the BCRPP Partnership and contributing to the programme include:

- Securing investment required to assist with delivery of our growth ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda and aligned to corporate priorities, noting the wider economic benefits these investment delivers and that from a council perspective increased investment and development activity also results in increased rates generation and delivering on corporate priorities.
- Strengthening additional support and advocacy for the Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast.
- Maximising the benefits of the Belfast Region City Deal investments
- Securing investment in the built environment on a city-wide basis to maximise opportunities to create jobs, support inclusive economic growth alongside enhancing physical and social infrastructure across the city.
- Securing investment in key city infrastructure schemes including waterfront regeneration, connectivity, net- zero and innovation related projects.

4.7 Council plays a key role in both the strategic and operational management of BCRPP including the development, management and delivery of the Programme of Activity. Members are asked to approve Council continuing to take on this role, with officers supporting the 2024 / 2025 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the BCRPP

Partnership, and in line with Council's procurement processes.

- 4.8 The BCRPP is supported and funded by public, private and key anchor institution partners, with external funding forming the majority of the overall programme delivery budget. Members are asked to note the proposed approach to the 2024 / 2025 Programme and approve the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration & Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership contribution towards the delivery of the 2024 / 2025 Programme.
- 4.9 Council has participated in the 'Team Belfast' attendance at MIPIM since 2016. MIPIM is the world's leading built environment conference and exhibition attended by approx. 20,000 public and private sector representatives from across the globe, major European and UK cities including London, Manchester, Newcastle, Cardiff, Liverpool. It provides an opportunity for Belfast and the wider city region to position itself to a global audience and attract the interest of institutional investors, developers, occupiers and funders in the context of bringing forward sustainable development to create a well-connected and culturally vibrant, sustainable city and region. Following positive feedback from MIPIM 2024 the BCRPP has endorsed a Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2025 in line with the approach taken by other UK Cities, and its inclusion within the wider BCRPP Programme of activity for 2024 / 2025. The BCRPP Partnership feel that in order to successfully showcase Belfast and the wider City Region it requires the civic leadership and attendance by Belfast City Council. Members are asked to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public private BCRPP budget.
- 5.0 Financial and Resource Implications
- 5.1 The BCRPP is delivered as a public private sector sponsorship fund and is supported by a range of public, private and key anchor institutions who contribute financially towards the 2023 / 2024 programme, with external and private sector funding forming the majority of the overall programme budget. It is anticipated that the majority of the 2024 / 2025 programme budget will again be funded through external funding.

- 5.2 Council has previously agreed to contribute of £80,000 towards the 2023 / 2024 Programme, and subject to Members agreement it is proposed that Council contribute £80,000 (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership investment towards the delivery of the 2024 / 2025 programme.**
- 5.3 Approval is sought for attendance of senior officers at MIPIM 2024. Travel costs for Council attendance at MIPIM 2024 to be met from within existing and approved departmental budgets. All other costs related to these events would be met from the 2024 / 2025 BCRPP programme budget.**

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

None associated with this report.”

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor McCormick

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership to request that they consider establishing a sub-group of the partnership for community engagement with a focus on social value and defer consideration of attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme until a report was submitted to the Committee in August to outline the tangible benefits of the conference.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Noted the presentation from representatives from the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP);
- Approved that officers continued to support the delivery of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the BCRPP and in line with Council's procurement processes;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

- Approved the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private sector partnership contribution towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme;
- Agreed to write to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership to request that they consider establishing a sub-group of the partnership for community engagement with a focus on social value; and
- Deferred consideration of attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme until a report was submitted to the Committee in August to outline the tangible benefits of the conference.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following six items was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

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

Vacant to Vibrant Scheme

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which sought approval for the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the recent receipt and assessment of applications.

She also outlined the recommendations for the next steps for the Vacant to Vibrant programme following engagement with Members and explained further the proposed research and development work.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant Programme;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

- II. Agreed to the recommended grant awards as outlined within Section 3.15 of the report;
- III. Noted the update on the next steps of the Vacant to Vibrant Programme; and
- IV. Agreed to the recommendations for the Vacant to Vibrant next steps as outlined with Section 3.28 of the report.

Update on Placemaking and Active Travel Projects

The Committee was provided with an update on the delivery of placemaking and active travel projects including Grey to Green, Active Travel Enablers and Developer Contribution led schemes.

During discussion, one Member questioned the rationale for determining the boundary maps of the existing schemes, such as the North West Masterplan. The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that this could be examined across the projects.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the update in relation to externally funded Tactical Regeneration activity;
- II. Noted the relocation of the Queen's Quay kiosk, originally proposed for Castle Place, to DfC owned lands at Queen's Quay and the proposed transfer of ownership of the Queen's Quay kiosk to Maritime Business Trust;
- III. Noted the update of the Public Realm Improvement Works delivered via Developer Contributions; and
- IV. Agreed that a future report would be brought to the Committee to outline the rationale around red line boundaries including the city centre boundary and various programmes and projects and how this might be looked at going forward.

Bad Debt Write Off

The Committee authorised that the outstanding account of £10,668.52 be written off, in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations, as outlined in the report.

Belfast Zoo - Quarter 4 Performance Update

The Committee considered the quarterly update on the performance at the Zoo, across the following areas:

- Visitor Services;
- Animal Collection;
- Marketing and Events;
- Education Services; and
- Financial performance.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

The Committee noted the Zoo performance update report for the period January to March 2024.

Belfast Bikes - Quarter 4 Performance Update

The Director of Economic Development updated Members on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in Quarter 4 (January 2024 to March 2024) of year 9 of operation.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the limitations of user data and engagement but this could be discussed with the new operator. He also advised that data on vandalism of the Bikes could be explored.

He pointed out that finding suitable locations for the installation of new bike stands could be difficult but engagement was undertaken beforehand.

The Committee:

- noted the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for Year 9 Quarter 4 (January to March) financial year;
- noted the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion;
- noted the update that tender will be prepared for procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme;
- noted the current status of appointing a new sponsor for the Public Bike Hire Scheme; and
- approved the usage of free memberships, free ride vouchers and ride credits for marketing activity.

Markets - Quarter 4 Update

The Director of Economic Development provided a quarterly performance and financial update for the period to end March 2024. He advised the Committee of the future plans for the coming quarter and noted that additional updates would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on city markets – with a focus on St George's Market; and;
- Noted the priority actions for the coming quarter and note that further updates on progress will be brought back to future meetings of this Committee.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development and the Development Manager provided an update to Members on the ongoing activities as part of the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Project including stakeholder engagement, workshops, partnership working and highlight upcoming milestones.

The Committee was reminded that, in March 2022, the Council was invited to participate in a three-year Horizon Europe consortium funding application from the Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) fund to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions. As reported in November 2022 and March 2023, the City Regeneration and Development and Climate teams were successful in joint bid of €204,250/£176,024 to further an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience. It was noted that Belfast was a pilot city within the Horizon UP2030 project which would focus on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework and toolkit and the use of climate tools to support analysis, mapping and engagement in city neighbourhoods.

It was reported that, as agreed at the Committee in March 2023, the geographic area of the UP2030 pilot covered an area bounded by May Street and Shaftesbury Square, and the Gasworks and Great Victoria Street, and adjacent city centre communities in the Market, Donegall Pass and Sandy Row, and to include the area bounded by the M1, the Inner Ring and Divis Street, which aligns with A Bolder Vision, Net Zero Roadmap, and provided a holistic mix of local communities, city centre living, commercial and tourism and hospitality. However, it was impressed that, whilst this work was undertaken within a defined boundary, the purpose was to produce a framework that could be adapted and used within all communities and districts to set forward net zero tailored approaches, attract funding and deliver climate adaption plans tailored for the uses of that specific district.

The Development Manager advised that the primary focus of UP2030 was on the development of a Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework that was shaped around three thematic areas: active travel, greening and retrofit. These themes linked across to the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience.

She highlighted that Cities accounted for 70% of the global CO2 emissions and consumed 78% of the world's energy. The UP2030 project was about recognising the role cities play in achieving net zero by 2050, and the sequence of actions and transitions that would be required by 2030 to ensure this target ambition is met. The '5UP' approach guides the work of the project and the considerations required for the development of a framework for creating a net zero neighbourhood:

- UP-Dating: Identifying the needs and barriers, and reviewing the processes, planning codes and policies that should be urgently updated to create future proofed NZ neighbourhoods;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

- UP-Skilling: Building capacities to upskill the entire stakeholder ecosystem, from city departments to urban practitioners to the construction industry, through to citizens;
- UP-Grading: Considering the transformation at the suitable physical scale;
- UP-Scaling: Scaling solutions and integrating them across sectors by shaping governance arrangements and matching financial resources; and
- UP-Taking: Sharing knowledge and learning through the project to create long-lasting communities of practice.

The Development Manager informed the Committee that the project commenced in February 2023 and would run until December 2025. She pointed out that it was driven by robust project milestones and constant engagement across the consortium that was made up of 46 partners, with Belfast one of 11 pilot cities and only UK city.

She described the progress to date, together with the key milestones achieved, stakeholder engagement and workshop delivery.

She highlighted that data collection and analysis had provided another layer of understanding of the UP2030 area and helped identify further needs, challenges and opportunities for net zero led regeneration to future proof the area and communities.

The Committee:

- Noted that Belfast, represented by Belfast City Council, was a pilot city within the Horizon Europe UP2030 project which was focused on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework using technical tools and support that were provided through the UP2030 consortium including analysis, mapping and engagement;
- Noted the update on the ongoing UP2030 Net Zero neighbourhoods project, with further updates to be brought back to Committee as this progressed; and
- Noted that an update report on UP2030 was also being brought to the Climate and City Resilience Committee (13th June).

Positioning Belfast to Compete

St Patrick's Day Review and Recommendations

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on**

- St Patrick's Day Celebrations 2024
- forward planning for 2025

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report
- Note the Year 2 award for Féile an Phobail
- Note the approach to Lot 2 for retendering
- Agree to a funding allocation of £30,000 to Conradh na Gaeilge as per 2024 which will be drawn from existing budgets.
- Agree the way forward in respect of the Parade, with officers recommending option 2.
- Agree to officers arranging a member workshop to review lessons learnt.
- Agree the proposed allocation of £300,000 from pre-agreed departmental budgets for the St. Patricks Day Festival to be allocated as below,
 - Parade/Pageant - £95,000
 - City Centre Weekend Music Programme - £90,000
 - Cross City Music Showcase (£50k) – Awarded for year 2 to Féile an Phobail
 - Conradh na Gaeilge - £30k for delivery of Seachtain na Gaeilge
 - Marketing/Engagement/Logistics - £35,000

3.0 Main report

3.1 St Patrick's Day 2024 Process

Belfast City Council's previous model for the delivery of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Belfast, consisted of a Carnival Parade along a city centre route, followed by a free music concert for all ages in the city centre from 1.30pm - 4pm. In 2021, a new approach was adopted for St Patrick's Day Belfast 2022 and 2023. Following an Expression of Interest process, Council agreed to directly invest in the local sector through four Creative Development Awards. These projects then progressed from feasibility to pilot stage for the Festival in 2022. Following the delivery of the pilot projects in March 2022 an evaluation process was completed, with all four projects again supported in 2023.

2024 Approach

It was further agreed at CG&R in September 2022, that a new Design Contest would be run in a timely manner for any required service contracts to support the delivery of St Patrick's Day in 2024 and beyond. This was conducted with the support of CPS to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Publics Contracts Regulations.

A tender for a similar approach to the Expression of Interest was developed and as before, fully aligned to the Cultural Strategy.

This resulted in four Lots being offered for:

- A Parade / Pageant (£95k)
- City Centre Weekend Music Programme (£70K)
- Cross City Music Showcase (£50k)
- An 'Open Call' (£50k)

The remaining budget was retained for parade logistics (circa £35k) and some other programming and marketing activity.

The outcome of this process was that one submission was received for Lot 3 only, which was subsequently awarded to Féile an Phobail. Lots 1, 2 and 4 received a Nil return.

Further to discussions with CPS, Beat Carnival and Tradfest were approached at the end of October 2023 to deliver the Parade element and City Centre Weekend Music Programme respectively. Tradfest subsequently agreed to deliver Lot 2 and this was agreed at SP&R in November 2023.

It was further agreed that Lots 2 and 3 were to be delivered by Feile and Tradfest respectively. Beat declined the opportunity to deliver Lot 1 in mid-November. Officers then took forward the option to deliver Lot 1 (the Parade) in-house, due to timescales and the limited availability of organisations to provide assets. Subsequently, there was engagement with a number of organisations on the provision of professional performance, community engagement, and parade assets.

Lot 4 sought to consider open call proposals. There was no response to this tender and subsequently Council received a request to support Seachtain na Gaeilge, a 17 - day festival organised by Conradh na Gaeilge. The festival proposal provided an opportunity to for attendees to enjoy Irish, whether a fluent speaker, learner or someone with a Cúpla

Focal, with a calendar of entertaining and fun events for every type of interest and every age group. Voluntary and community groups, local councils, schools, libraries, and music, sports, arts and culture organisations organised events for Seachtain na Gaeilge le Energia in their local area. In 2023, Belfast City held over 100 events during Seachtain na Gaeilge and held the flagship event, Spraoi Cois Lao, with over 5000 attendees from all cultures and backgrounds on the day. Members agreed to a funding agreement to the value of £50k for delivery in 2024, budgets were sought from within current departmental allocation in repurposing the Lot 4 monies.

3.1.1 2024 Programming

In the lead-up to St. Patrick's Day and the day itself, a series of additional activities were orchestrated across the city, significantly enhancing the festive atmosphere. These were a combination of curated partners and Council:

Delivered by Féile an Phobail, TradTrail celebrated Belfast's status as a UNESCO City of Music with performances from the best local and national trad musicians from Sunday 10th to Sunday 17th March, offering free music performances in bars, restaurants, hotels and visitor attractions across the city. Performers from Clare & Cork participated in the sessions across the City.

Seachtain na Gaeilge, presented by Conradh na Gaeilge began on Friday 1st March and continued until St Patrick's Day itself. This included an Irish language family fun day - Spraoi Cois Lao – which took place at Custom House Square on Saturday 9th March, the biggest fun day of its kind. This event included musicians, dancers, activities, games, food and entertainment, all celebrating the Irish language, and was free to access. Almost 5,000 attended this, even with inclement weather. Across the period of the festival, over 10,000 attended over 80 diverse events and activities.

New for 2024, Belfast Trad Fest, presented the St Patrick's Day Music Weekend - three days of concerts, céilís, displays, taster sessions and workshops in venues throughout the Cathedral Quarter. Combining traditional music with bagpipes, Highland dancers, Irish dancing and bodhrán circles, a festival village located at Cathedral Gardens included a host of free performances, alongside food stalls, céili workshops and more. In addition, there were a number of ticketed performances too, including a Kiddy Céili at Belfast Cathedral on Saturday 16th March as part of Belfast Children's Festival, a gala concert with Frankie Gavin and

Dé Dannan at Ulster Hall on the same evening and a finale event with Stockton's Wing and John Spillane at the MAC Belfast on Sunday 17th March. Anúna played to an audience of 550 at St Anne's Cathedral. The music weekend was hugely successful in creating new partnerships across the City, with an audience of over 16,000 attending the events at 13 indoor and outdoor venues.

Council provided further family friend programming in 2 Royal Ave, via the Council -appointed operator Maywe which was well attended by families for a day of free events, including art workshops, dance performances, music, games area. Over 2,100 attended the venue which also accommodated a sensory area.

Council, in partnership with Ards Comhaltas, programmed live music in St George's market on both Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th March, which further brought the venue to life, showcased the asset and profiled the ongoing bid for Fleadh Cheoil.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade was held on Sunday 17th March, was a significant event aimed at providing a family-friendly experience in celebration of the cultural heritage. The St Patrick's Day Parade was curated and delivered by the Council Events team incorporating engagement, animation and participation from a number of professional, voluntary and community organisations with 500 plus participants; dance troupes, schools, community groups and musicians who joined the floats for a free multi-cultural, cross-community celebration, focusing on 'People, Place and Planet' – the key themes in the council's Belfast 2024 programme, which is celebrating the city's creativity throughout the year. Commencing from Belfast City Hall, the parade followed a circular route and concluded back at the City Hall, ensuring a vibrant celebration which was accessible to the large audience.

There was an estimated visitor attendance of 30,000 in the City Centre on the 17th for the Parade and Village.

The St Patrick's Celebrations were delivered within the budget allocation of £300,000. Members should note that Good Relations funding of £20k was also secured to enhance the community offering within the parade. It is worth noting that our partners did comment on the need for further financial resources to continue to develop this overall event, not only in the City centre but across the City. The levels of support for

the original tendered 'Lots' was also a factor in the lack of submissions.

3.1.2 Outcomes

In summary, while the procurement process for the provision of programming for the 2024 celebrations undoubtedly faced a series of challenges, ultimately the programme was delivered on budget, was very well attended, and positively received. All partners have been very positive in their feedback with further details on public reception available in 3.1.3.

A previous challenge associated with the festivities was the lack of dwell time around the parade in previous years. This year, there was considerable evidence of elongated dwell time in the City with the hubs and parade wrap around, particularly in the Cathedral Gardens, and 2 Royal Ave. This enhanced experience will be further developed via bringing other Council owned assets into play - positioning and the stories piece - all linking through to the opening of Belfast Stories in the coming years.

Operationally the parade route needs consideration of elongation next year due to the high density of the spectators attending; this will be considered in consultation with the H&S Advisory and other stakeholders.

Members will be aware that at a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28 August 2019 a new ten- year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, was agreed. As part of this strategy a new investment approach was approved and this model committed to a partnership approach to supporting the cultural sector, with the aim of sustaining and developing accessible cultural activity and infrastructure across Belfast and creating the conditions for long-term transformation. It was agreed that this partnership model should be applied to the direct delivery of City events by Council as well as funded programmes of activity.

Supporting Belfast to become a recognised cultural destination through a coherent approach to events and festivals. This would include a range of approaches from bidding for major events to supporting local festivals and importantly creating a portfolio of Signature homegrown Belfast Events.

Members should note that officers are reviewing this as an ongoing piece of work and will forward a report to committee

in August that looks at the implications of revisiting city events and associated resource implications. As part of this process officers wish to host a member workshop which will invite certain suppliers to provide direct feedback on councils' approach to commissioning events. This information will then educate the August report.

3.1.3 Alignment to the Cultural Strategy

The 'City Imagining Strategy' approved by Council has a focus on supporting developing local arts and cultural organisations, through funding, commissioning and capacity building. In this regard, Streetwise Circus were engaged to execute a stilt walking programme, teaching the youth the art of stiltwalking and showcasing in the parade. Circusful ran a circus skills programme with the youth circus to perform in the parade along with their professional performers. There was engagement with local arts, voluntary and community organisations to create props or coordinate performances of varying nature to enhance the overall production of the parade and highlight the local arts and culture within Belfast. Additionally, partners worked with the sector in the delivery of the wider programme.

3.1.4 Key Findings: Belfast St Patrick's Day 2024 socio-economic survey

Visitor profile:

- 58% of visitors from Belfast City Council area
- 29% from elsewhere in Northern Ireland
- 1% Republic of Ireland; 9% Great Britain 9%, 6% other regions
- 44% of those outside Northern Ireland, the event was the main reason for their trip
- 3% staying in accommodation away from home
- 43% attended the event with children
- 50% had attended a St Patrick's Day event in Belfast before, 50% had not
- 40% heard about the events by family /friends

Visitor Spend:

- 95% ate out during the event, average spend per group £50.63
- Total average spend per group *excluding* accommodation £77.65
- 12% staying in accommodation in Belfast region

Overall estimated direct spend for the St Patrick's Celebrations £1.274m.

Overall Rating:

- 86% gave the Parade a rating of 8-10, including 30% who rated it as 'Extremely good'.
- 96% of visitors agreed that the event improves NI's reputation as a host for events like these.
- 95% of visitors agreed that the event improves the reputation of NI as a place to visit.
- 96% agree /strongly agree events like this have can help shape a more accepting citizenship in our city.
- 100% of respondents believe that events like this encourage people to come to Belfast.
- 92% said that such events improve their sense of wellbeing and community.
- 98% felt the St Patrick's Celebrations were inclusive for all people from all cultural heritages.
- 95% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast.
- 98% would recommend the event to other people.
- 81% likely/very likely to visit St Patrick's Day celebrations in future years.

Events & activities

- 79% also attending 2 Royal Avenue activities
- 26% also attending music weekend
- 16% also attending St George's market activities

Respondents were also asked about whether the event should be held on a weekend or the 17th. 50% preferred the weekend, while 44% indicated a preference for the 17th March

3.1.5 Marketing and Communications

Council operated a digital campaign and online advertising to promote the events taking place under the St Patricks Celebrations banner, including all partner activity and the events at St George's and 2 Royal Ave. Council directed people to www.belfastcity.gov.uk URL, where the event information was displayed prominently on the page. Additionally, further details could be found on programming at partner websites.

Promotion took place across digital platforms and via key partners including Visit Belfast. A press release was also

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

issued in early March to promote the finer and confirmed details of the event schedule.

Stats from Belfast City Council as below:

Social media review- St Pat's 2024

Facebook

9 posts

Total post reach: 170,000

#BelfastStPats hashtag was used in 52 posts (including posts from partners and stakeholders) with overall reach of 2.3million.

Our post following the event with the pics was the best performing post reaching nearly 40,000 accounts organically.

Instagram

4 posts

Total post reach: 15,000

#BelfastStPats was mentioned in 197 posts (including posts from partners and stakeholders)

Our best performing post was the video following the event with the aerial footage, parade features and performers – it was played 6,700 times

Twitter

31 posts

Total impressions: 82,500

Standout tweet:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**



This tweet had nearly 10k impressions

#BelfastStPats hashtag was used in 312 Twitter posts with an overall reach of 3.8 million (including posts from partners, RTs, etc)

Stats from Visit Belfast as below:

Social Media Advert Campaign:

- Advert placed across Facebook and Instagram
- Advert targeted NI and ROI
- Call to action visit <https://visitbelfast.com/ideas/st-patricks-day-in-belfast/>
- Campaign live 20th Feb – 17th March

Results

- Impressions – 1,862,387
- Engagements – 312,121
- Video Views – 1,296,625

Organic Results

- Organic Impressions – 504,708
- Organic Video Views – 11,938
- Organic Video Views – 151,850

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**



Overall Results

Result

Website Visits	33,708
Total Social Media Impressions	2,345,685
Total Social Media Engagements	333,069
Total Social Media Video Views	1,425,223
Total E-zine Impressions	19,063

3.2 Way Forward 2025

The tender developed for 2024 resulted in four Lots being offered for:

- A Parade / Pageant
- City Centre Weekend Music Programme
- Cross City Music Showcase
- An 'Open Call'

While the outcome of this process was that one submission was received for Lot 3 only (Féile an Phobail), subsequently there was a direct award for Lot 3 (Tradfest) and Lot 4 was repurposed to support Seachtain na Gaeilge.

Lessons Learnt

Taking into consideration the procurement position from 2024 the following elements have been reviewed in order to achieve better engagement for 2025 delivery.

- Timings, procurement will hit market earlier to allow for better responses. Due to challenges with late market entry previously many suppliers had pre committed to other events already.
- Pre market engagement – a process of pre market engagement is underway to understand available resources, appetite and ability to deliver – this will inform any final tender specification requirements
- Simplified tender documentation
- Subject to committee approval increased value for the city centre music weekend
- Parade/pageant to remain at £95k in recognition of 2024 delivery and engagement outcomes

3.2.1 As per the tender process, both Féile an Phobail, on the back of a successful 2024, will progress into Year 2 of their award.

It is recommended that the element City Centre Music programme delivered by Tradfest in 2024 is procured for year 2 of the delivery in 2025 given the success of this activity in 2024. This would be required to be retendered given that SPR provided approval for one year only. Given the success of this element of the event officers propose increasing the contribution this year by £20,000 for a total of £90,000.

Conradh na Gaeilge, has been assessed and successful under CMAG to the value of £20,000. However, organisers have indicated that this will not be sustainable in 2025 as they are preparing for a significant increase in pricing and as such are seeking additional funding that would equate to the total provision of £50,000 made in 2024. As a result, officers are seeking approval to allocate £30,000 to Conradh na Gaeilge for the delivery of an event in 2025. This will be drawn from existing departmental budgets.

In summary the proposed allocation of the pre-agreed £300,000 is as below,

- Parade/Pageant - £95,000
- City Centre Weekend Music Programme - £90,000
- Cross City Music Showcase (£50k) – Awarded for year 2 to Féile an Phobal
- Conradh na Gaeilge - £30k for delivery of Seachtain na Gaeilge
- Marketing/Engagement/Logistics - £35,000

3.2.2 Officers have engaged with CPS to establish options for the Parade delivery in 2025.

Option 1: re-tender the Parade Lot for one organisation to provide the entire parade lot. Council would continue as per previous years to provide all logistical support. Members should note that no submissions were received in 2024 for this Lot and there will be no change in value or specification for 2025.

Option 2: continue with in – house delivery. Council officers would continue to work with CPS to test the market initially and establish the best means to explore procurement of the services required to successfully deliver a fresh parade, particularly with respect to floats, professional performance and community engagement. It is very evident that professional parade provision is very competitive on the island of Ireland due to the high demand for the St Patrick's Day celebrations. Early approval and engagement would give Belfast the opportunity to progress options for the 2025 Parade.

4 Financial and Resource Implications

The events budgets were presented to City Growth & Regeneration Committee on 8th May 2024 as part of the committee plan and associated workplans, this includes St Patrick's Day Celebrations to the value of £300k. It is proposed this is allocated as below,

5 Equality and Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

Events form part of the overarching City Imagining Cultural Strategy for Belfast that has been subject to EQIA. An equality screening has been completed and mitigating actions will be considered as part of any initiatives."

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 12th June, 2024**

During discussion, Members questioned the inclusivity of the St. Patrick's Day events and the need for further community outreach. The Director of Economic Development explained the principles and theme of the events, together with the community engagement that had taken place across the city. He advised that a report would be submitted to the Committee in August in relation to the review of the events process and community engagement.

In response to a Member's question in relation to the funding allocation for Conradh na Gaeilge, the Director explained further the rationale and associated Cultural Multi-annual grants funding.

Proposal

Proposed by Councillor F. McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the recommendation to allocate £95K to the Parade/Pageant for March 2025 until the aforementioned Workshop has taken place to consider feedback from the previous applicants.

On a vote, 3 Members voted for the proposal and 8 against and it was declared lost.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in the report.

**Update on Neighbourhood Tourism
Investment Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of work on the new Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme, outline the proposed commissioning model and advise on next steps.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Committee is asked to:

- **Consider the updated findings of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme approach as contained within this report**
- **Approve the commissioning model detail proposed, and associated next steps.**

- Approve the remaining financial allocation from the £500,000 allocation from the City Deal Reserve for a two year pilot programme with allocations of, £250,000 to Strand 2 & across the two year period.
- Note that funding was approved for EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar (previously 'City Connections Programme') by Committee on 10th April 2024. This initial investment programme phase will continue to support the work of both organisations for two years, with support of £62,500 to be released to each per annum via a funding agreement.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Strategic Context:

Council's ten-year tourism strategy, *Make Yourself at Home*, commits to developing a Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Fund, recognising that regenerative tourism is driven by the relationship between people and place and that there are strong opportunities to share tourism's economic benefits beyond the city centre and for local tourism to contribute to the city's growth.

Members will be aware that investment was approved in June 2023 for a two-year programme to 'develop and enhance tourism products and experiences across the city, sharing and distributing the benefits of a vibrant tourism sector throughout local neighbourhoods. In April 2024, approval was also granted to fund EastSide Partnership and Fáilte Feirste Thiar under the City Connections programme.

Earlier this year, the Tourism unit oversaw an extensive programme of independent research and engagement with a series of public workshops across the city. Flowing from this work are recommendations and timelines to inform a two-year investment programme, including considerations to support capacity, skills and visitor servicing interventions.

3.2 Engagement process and issues identified:

At April 2024 Committee, Members were presented with an extensive overview of the engagement work undertaken:

Stakeholder motivation for attending the workshops tended to be for one of three reasons:

- a) A small number had ready formed ideas or projects in different stages of development. This included plans to

expand or diversity an existing product or experience. Others needed market testing, piloting, prototyping, feasibility and other research.

- b) Many were at the start of their journey, recognising neighbourhood tourism as an opportunity for their organisation or area or wanting to find out more about potential benefits and opportunities.
- c) Others were motivated simply by their pride and passion for their area and a desire to advocate for council or others to do more, rather than by an interest in developing neighbourhood tourism themselves.

3.3 Overview of Key Engagement Findings:

Many participants were new to the concept of market segmentation. It was noted that further education and exploration may help focus neighbourhood tourism providers on key markets rather than on local supply or local interest.

Consultees generally agreed that the key market segments for their areas were from:

- NI: Aspiring families, Social Instagrammers, Natural Quality Seekers
- ROI: Active Maximisers and Open-Minded Explorers
- GB: Cultural Curious and Social Engineers

Key visitor groups identified to the city were Education (including academics and school trips), Spanish and American visitors, LGBTQ+ visitors and those with niche heritage interests. It was also noted that visiting families are increasingly multigenerational.

Consultees also noted a rise in the number of people coming to Belfast for a special event, such as a concert or a sports match, when they cannot get tickets local to them in ROI or GB. Once here, they often tap into other cultural, music or sporting activities, but the initial draw has been attendance at a special event.

Feedback also suggested that there should be a focus on local people and supporting them to be tourists in their own city. For example, one person described their work as 'selling Belfast Hills to Belfast' - in West Belfast, the Glider was seen as a factor in increasing numbers of visitors from East Belfast and the suburbs.

During the workshops, people were introduced to stories already identified through key Belfast strategies and relevant tourism research:

Authentic:

- Home
- Emotional, human connections
- Our people and personalities
- Road less travelled, beyond the guide book
- Hands - on experiences

Natural Assets:

- Hills
- Parks
- Rivers
- Sustainable tourism

Culture and Arts:

- Music
- Festivals and event
- History and heritage
- Language
- Writers, poetry, dramatists
- Screen tourism

People and Skills:

- Innovation and invention
- Maritime
- Industry

Food and Drink:

- Local
- Sustainable
- Tasting and making

Peace and Beyond:

- Politics
- Troubles
- Regeneration

Built Heritage and Attractions:

- Architecture
- Cemeteries
- Historic sites

There was general agreement the above thematics are the stories people in neighbourhoods want to tell. Consultees also suggested the following stories should be included: Local humour, Personalities, History and Sport.

Universal support was expressed for employing stories and storytelling as a means of engaging visitors and sharing the authentic flavours and histories of our neighbourhoods. For some, this meant sharing 'realness and grittiness', not a sanitised or 'vanilla' version of neighbourhood stories. For others, it meant sharing first-person experiences so that, for example, stories of the Troubles could be shared by those who experienced them, although some stressed this should not be at the expense of veracity. It is important that experiences will draw connections to the Belfast Stories Story themes and provide a mechanism for visitors to have deeper, authentic engagement opportunities while in destination.

Products and Experiences:

Some participants struggled with the dual lens of segment and story. Others were able to identify gaps and opportunities at both a story and market level.

Many consultees took the opportunity to highlight wider infrastructural, operational or servicing issues and needs such as joined-up marketing and promotion, signage, transport and capacity building.

Consultees generally struggled with new ideas and in all cases found it easier to produce existing products or enhancements rather than new offerings. For some, particularly those from the cultural sector, this was explicitly attributed to capacity and the need for significant further investment.

People were keen to work across the city, providing visitors with authentic story -based experiences not constrained by geography.

Although interest in neighbourhood tourism was clearly evident, many organisations acknowledged a low capacity in

this area. This currently includes volunteer-led groups, community organisations whose staff have a primary remit other than tourism, sole entrepreneurs and micro-businesses.

Stakeholders noted that centralised support for organisations in training, capacity building, marketing and promotion would be welcome.

Few consultees expected financial support alone. Rather, there was demand for wrap - around support at all stages from pre-application to post-evaluation. It was also noted that businesses may also need support to utilise local supply chains and become 'real' living wage employers.

Many participants noted that they would welcome more opportunity to collaborate further. It was suggested Council could facilitate this through networking, group training and capacity building. It could also be incentivised by making larger grants available to consortia.

This could include enhanced funding for clusters or itineraries that would encourage visitors to remain in neighbourhoods for longer than one product or experience with a half - day being considered a reasonable duration.

It should also be noted that a minority of consultees, particularly in South and inner North workshops, were not in favour of 'compulsory collaboration', citing experience where it had the opposite impact and 'squashed' co-operation' and that it is not sustained beyond the money.

For the investment programme to be effective and support high quality tourism offerings, an integrated programme is required - one which comprises financial support, wraparound capacity building and business support, effective contract management and partnership working.

3.4 Programme Overview:

Following a period of facilitated research and engagement, recommendations have been developed to support an integrated, 3-strand programme; previous Member briefings have noted that the programme would be comprised of 2 strands, however subsequent scoping work undertaken by Officers has indicated the potential benefits of a 3-strand programme, as cited. The proposed programme and investment model which would blend financial investment with holistic business support to meet the strategic objectives of the fund and optimise collaborative working to develop

cohesive visitor experiences across the city. The programme will embed reflective learning and evaluation throughout the pilot phase to inform and shape future investment.

The recommended programme will comprise a range of interventions:

- Strand 1: Wraparound skill and capacity building, mentoring and business support for tourism product development, together with tailored, specialist support to develop more mature visitor offers ('Neighbourhood Tourism Academy').
- Strand 2: Financial support for new or enhanced tourism products and experiences commissioned via a quotation process. Council proposes to commission 8 to 10 awards of between £25k and £30k throughout the programme across a two year pilot period from a total budget allocation of £250,000.
- Strand 3: Financial support for the work of EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar to deliver interventions which integrate support and capacity building to other Neighbourhood Tourism projects through an agreed programme.

3.5 Strand 1: Tourism Academy and Targeted Sectoral Support

An opportunity has been identified to optimise the impact and resources of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme by working collaboratively with the *Go Succeed* programme, within the Economic Development Unit. This programme provides a range of business advice and training opportunities, including mentorship for pre-enterprise and start-ups.

3.5.1 Neighbourhood Tourism Academy:

To build skill, capacity and maximise the quality and viability of a pipeline of developing tourism products, a wraparound business support programme, 'the Neighbourhood Tourism Academy', will be co-designed between the council's Tourism and Economic Development Units and will be delivered via the *Go Succeed* Programme. It is envisaged that this will provide a range of interventions, including networking and partnership introduction and facilitated workshops, business planning, training workshops and masterclasses, knowledge exchange, networking and partnership introduction and one-to-one mentoring.

An 'open call' will be made for applicants to apply directly to the Tourism Academy via existing *Go Succeed* programme architecture, with oversight and guidance from the Tourism Development Unit. Wraparound support interventions will be delivered by the *Go Succeed* team, together with mentors and sectoral specialists with tourism industry experience and expertise.

Data regarding applicant baseline capacity, programme outcomes and project progression will be captured and evaluated by the ESS team, with Tourism Officers to provide signposting to further sources of support where appropriate. As a result of Academy support, a pipeline of tourism products will be developed and organisations will enhance their ability to develop and deliver impactful visitor experiences across the city.

3.5.2 Targeted Developmental Support:

Tourism businesses with products which have progressed in development but require specific interventions to reach maturity may also apply to the Academy for tailored support and interventions, specific to their business needs. Working in close collaboration, Tourism and ESS officers will deliver targeted initiatives in response to applicant need, skills gaps and market opportunities, identifying sectoral specialists with appropriate skill and experience to support the applicant.

Data regarding applicant baseline capacity, intervention outcomes and project progression will be captured and evaluated by the Tourism and ESS teams. It is anticipated that Tourism Officers may then identify applicants/projects which may be suitable for investment in future programme phases. Projects which are not suitable for future investment will be signposting to further sources of support where appropriate.

3.6 Strand 2: Financial Support

3.6.1 Proposed Investment Model:

Under this support strand, it is proposed that Council makes 8 to 10 awards of between £25,000 and £30,000 throughout the programme. Grounded in best practice, consultation findings and learnings gleaned from the Belfast 2024 Programme, it is recommended that Council commissions new or enhanced neighbourhood tourism products and experiences via a quotation process, adapted to suit the specific ambitions of this programme. Given the higher value of the awards made

by Belfast 2024, the full design commission process is not appropriate to the scale of this pilot investment programme.

Research and consultation with key internal partners and sectoral specialists has indicated that this approach would support more effective delivery of programme ambitions than a grant funding model. The commissioning model would offer increased flexibility to Tourism officers to support, shape and steer project development, resulting in visitor offers which are financially viable, market led, with potential to spread the economic and social benefits of tourism within city neighbourhoods. Lessons learned from the Belfast 2024 team demonstrate that the commissioning model offers Officers agility through the lifespan of the project to adjust and test projects to ensure they meet expectations regarding quality, viability, budget and timescale.

It is envisaged that all commissioning activity will be managed by the Tourism Development Unit in collaboration with the Central Procurement Unit, with a dedicated Tourism officer appointed as contract manager to oversee performance of each commission throughout the project lifespan.

3.6.2 Strand 2: Application Process:

It is envisaged that a two-stage application process will be employed, with bidders submitting an initial Expression of Interest, followed by targeted invitations to submit project proposals up to the value of £25,000 - £30,000. This will enable council to identify projects which are most likely to meet the aspirations of the investment fund and to maximise resources. The Central Procurement Unit have advised that this process is the most appropriate and efficient process to deliver the ambitions of the investment programme at this stage.

- **Stage 1: Expressions of Interest**
To enable council to invest in viable, high-quality products which address market need, potential bidders for financial support will be required to submit an Expression of Interest form, including eligibility criteria, outline project proposal and details of project partners/consortia members.
- **Stage 2: Invitation to Quote**
It is recommended that Council commissions neighbourhood tourism products and experiences via a quotation process, with contracts awarded up to the

value of £25,000 - £30,000, supporting between 8 and 10 projects.

3.6.3 Strand 2: Eligibility and Programme Criteria:

Full investment criteria and applicant guidance are currently under development.

To be eligible to apply for financial support, bidders will be required to collaborate with other organisations and partners to develop joint proposals for experiences, clusters, packages or itineraries that will encourage visitors to dwell in a neighbourhood or neighbourhoods for at least half a day.

Consortia must comprise at least one for-profit business and one voluntary or community organisation. Social enterprises can be considered as both a for-profit and, depending on their community interest, a community organisation. One partner organisation must be identified as the lead partner throughout the project lifespan.

Bidders will be required to demonstrate how the product or experience:

- Is market - led, likely to appeal to key market segments.
- Is authentic - that is tells a story or stories that say something about the local area and are likely to captivate
- Will be high quality
- Is bookable and repeatable
- Will be marketed and promoted
- Responds to gaps in the visitor offer such as night-time economy, Sunday mornings and shoulder season
- Will enhance, support or connect to other tourism assets or stories
- Has the potential to be regenerative and positively impact on the local area.

3.6.4 Strand 2: Assessment of proposals

Proposals for investment will be assessed by a panel comprising Tourism officers and a number of key partners (potentially Belfast Stories, Economic Development, Neighbourhood Integration managers and Visit Belfast), ensuring there is a blend of business, tourism and local expertise.

- Successful commissions: each commission will be assigned a dedicated contract manager, who will

demonstrate agility through the lifespan of the project, adjusting and retesting projects to ensure they meet expectations regarding quality, viability, budget and timescale. However, the contract manager's role remains facilitative and that accountability and all liabilities will sit with the consortia.

- **Unsuccessful submissions:** Unsuccessful applicants will be briefed by Tourism officers on the rationale for non-award of financial support, viability of tourism product and, if appropriate, will be signposted towards sources of developmental support, capacity and skill-building, both within Council and external partners.

3.7 Strand 3: Support for EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar (previously City Connections Programme)

Members will be aware that funding was approved for EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar (previously 'City Connections Programme') by Committee on 10th April 2024. This initial investment programme phase will continue to support the work of both organisations for two years, with support of £62,500 to be released to each per annum via a funding agreement.

This uplifted funding will support an outcomes-based model which will integrate development support and capacity building to other Neighbourhood Tourism projects through an agreed delivery programme. In the year ahead, both organisations will utilise their sectoral expertise and learnings to support less mature offers across the city, delivering appropriate interventions, including learning journeys, workshops and targeted support. Given that tourism offers are at different stages of development across many of the city's neighbourhoods, it is envisaged that Officers will employ a flexible approach to programme delivery, ensuring that the organisations can provide agile, responsive support to address evolving needs.

In coming weeks, Officers will continue to meet with EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar to discuss and inform how strategic alignment can best be facilitated the recommendations of the Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme report and between the agreed programme for delivery in the year ahead, to include at least one collaborative project between both organisations.

3.8 Programme Monitoring and Evaluation:

Council will undertake ongoing evaluation and monitoring activity throughout the programme to facilitate continuous improvement to delivery. This will be a continual reflective process of learning with commissioned projects and key partners, including Economic Development and Belfast Stories teams, and will ensure that lessons learned are fed back in real time to inform future investment.

The evaluation will be 'live' and continuous over the 2-year pilot programme to enable Council to pivot and adjust parameters if necessary. The evaluation will generate key data and analytics to inform the uplift of the programme and future direction beyond the pilot. The evaluation will in real time identify gaps, issues, lessons learned, areas for consolidation particularly within the context of Belfast Stories.

The approach to evaluation will be three pronged and the appointed provider will ensure that there is a coherent approach and a synergy in the reporting across the three strands identified:

- **Strand 1:** Analysis of data from *Go Succeed* programme around numbers referred from Neighbourhood Tourism expressions of interest, types of intervention, hours spent, Go Succeed outcomes and generation of a heat map of future need.
- **Strand 2:** Analysis of data from the up to ten commissioned projects
- **Strand 3:** Analysis of data via support to EastSide Tourism and Fáilte Feirste Thiar
- Data from will reflect the performance indicators below and KPI's will be set around these to ensure synergy. The evaluation will consider qualitative and quantitative measures of success in relation to performance indicators, including:
 - Impact on visitor numbers
 - Impact on visitor dwell time
 - Quality of experience for visitors including authenticity, emotional connection, memorability, captivation or wonder
 - Impact on organisational capacity and capability particularly in relation to product development, business development and neighbourhood tourism

- Extent, nature and impact of collaboration between organisations and areas
- Impact on local people and communities such as job creation, skills development, pride, vibrancy, empowerment and exchange
- Contribution to local services and infrastructure
- Contribution to the city's stories and storytelling infrastructure
- Local support for and attitudes to neighbourhood tourism
- Differential impact on section 75 dimensions

In addition, a post-delivery evaluation of this pilot phase will be conducted to reflect impact and learnings and inform investment in future programme phases. with a report and recommendations to be brought back for Committee consideration in due course. A final monitoring and evaluation report will be published March 2026 and brought back for Committee consideration.

3.9 Risks and Mitigations:

A comprehensive assessment of potential risks and mitigations has been undertaken, a summary of which is outlined below.

- Variances in maturity of tourism offers in neighbourhoods: The Neighbourhood Tourism report recognises that different destinations and neighbourhoods across the city are at different stages of development. So too are potential providers, which include businesses, social enterprises, charities, voluntary groups and sole entrepreneurs across the private, community, culture and heritage sectors.
- Resource constraints: Many providers are small and lack staff, time and financial resources to innovate or take a risk on something new or unproven. For others, tourism is not a core organisational function or focus.
- Scope of investment programme: No scheme in isolation can address all challenges or issues. Any gaps identified, for example, in terms of geographic spread, stories, market segments, types or scale of product or experience, will be targeted in subsequent calls of the programme.
- Lack of sectoral knowledge and skills gap: The current primary risk is a lack of tourism knowledge and corresponding skills gap among organisations who are otherwise keen to promote their neighbourhoods and provide offerings which meet visitor needs.

Effective support blends financial investment with holistic business support and therefore, as a mitigation, we will work collaboratively with colleagues in the Economic Development Unit who have resources within the *Go Succeed* programme to deliver bespoke business interventions.

Additionally, the two-stage application process with a 'low bar to entry' expression of interest will enable staff to identify the support required and signpost to appropriate mentors and training providers.

A further mitigation could involve clustering initiatives whereby different organisations work collectively to design and deliver offerings aligned to their particular areas of experience and skill sets.

- **Project progression not as anticipated:** Successful commissions will be assigned a dedicated contract manager who will act as a single point of contact between the organisation and council. Payment schedules will be tied to key stages or milestones to ensure the commissions are progressing effectively and viably. For example, if market testing finds there is no demand for a product or experience, the council may exercise its right not to proceed with the contract.

Contract managers will provide a facilitative role and will exercise discretion should projects not progress as planned. For example, they will explore if the product or experience be adjusted and retested so that a viable product could still be developed within budget, timescales and to the required quality standard.

During a period of sectoral consultation and research, a further range of potential risks to programme were identified. These moderate and high risk, together with mitigating actions, are set out at Appendix 1.

3.10 Overview of next steps:

Work is ongoing to develop and implement the programme, including the following actions:

- Continued review the range of wraparound support measures and tailored interventions available under *Go Succeed* For integration to Neighbourhood Tourism support package

- Work has been developed in collaboration with Procurement colleagues on a Quotation document to include background information, detailed requirements, how to apply and the assessment procedure. A comprehensive list of FAQs is currently being developed.
- Information sessions will be held across the city to provide people with information first hand, this will include criteria, the process, timelines and capacity building support available.
- As outlined above, it is envisaged that Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be sought in the first instance. Interested parties will provide some key information on their organisation and potential partners and outline the product or experience concept.
- This initial EOI will help Tourism Officers to assess level of interest, emerging themes and identify potential gaps. When completing an EOI, applicants will be asked to identify their level of readiness to proceed with the venture and to advise of any support required to enable them to develop and bring to market a high-quality offer.
- It is anticipated that not all interested parties will be in a position to submit a proposal for a robust and viable tourism product or experience. The EOI exercise will help identify areas of need and the interventions required to address.

3.11 Timeframe:

The anticipated timeframe for development and delivery of the programme is as follows:

- June 2024 - September 2024: Neighbourhood Tourism Academy, co-designed between Tourism Development and Econ Development Units.
- August to mid - September 2024: Promotion of Opportunity via information sessions/online/in person - include information on criteria, application process, procurement model.
- September to December 2024: Open call for Expressions of Interest for financial support launched; also commence Neighbourhood Tourism Academy and roll out support services to build sectoral capacity and address skills gaps, with associated Communications support to raise public awareness.

- December 2024 to January 2025: following Expression of Interest phase, Invitations to Quote Issued.
- Early November 2025 to end November 2025 (December Committee TBC): Assessment and awarding of commissions. Feedback issued to unsuccessful & further signposting as appropriate.
- January 2025: Letters of Offer issued.
- January 2025 - March 26: Management of contract performance.
- March / April 2026: Impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation - include learnings from tourism academy participants and commissions and make recommendations for future investment phases.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications:

Support for Eastside and Fáilte Fearste was approved at April CGR committee to the value of £62,500 per annum a total of £250,000 across the two year pilot period for Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme.

Funding for the financial support strand for year 1 (2024 / 25) and year 2 (2025 / 2026) will be provided from Belfast Region City Deal Reserve. This is a total over the two financial years - £250k. It is anticipated that a total of 8-10 commissioned neighbourhood tourism products and experiences will be supported during this period, with contracts awarded up to the value of £25,000 - £30,000.

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

The Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme has been screened for:

- i) Equality of opportunity and good relations and
- ii) Disabilities duties

On the basis of the answers to the screening questions, it was recommended that the policy is 'screened out - mitigating actions' (minor impacts).

Therefore, the consultation and engagement on Neighbourhood Tourism and draft Equality Screening took simultaneously between January and March 2024.

This means that policy development was shaped by the findings of the consultation and screening, allowing any potential negative impacts to be designed out and opportunities to promote equality or good relations to be built in.

Only minor positive impacts have been identified at this stage. Council will continue to monitor for further differential impacts.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Housing Led Regeneration Round Table

The Committee noted that the Housing Led Regeneration All Party Round Table planned for the end of June would be rescheduled to a later date.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 19th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCullough;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,
T. Brooks, P. Donnelly, Doran,
D. Douglas, Kelly, F. McAteer,
McCabe, McCann, McCusker, McDowell,
McKay, McKeown, Ó Néill and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Manager;
Mr. D. McCamphill, Lead Building Control Surveyor
Mr. C. McLaughlin, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 17th April, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 7th May, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in the item “Féile an Phobail 2024”, in that she was its Development Manager, and she therefore left the room for the item and did not participate in the discussion or vote.

Item Raised in Advance by a Member

Street Closures - Councillor McKeown to raise

At the request of Councillor McKeown, the Committee agreed to receive a briefing from officers on Street Closures at its next meeting.

Delegated Matters

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN
PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER
STANDING ORDER 37(d)**

**Féile an Phobail 2024 - Request to operate at
Falls Park beyond the permitted hours**

(Councillor McCabe, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting at this point in proceedings.)

At the request of a number of Members, the Committee agreed to bring this item forward in the agenda.

The Building Control Manager presented the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To consider a request from the organisers of Féile an Phobail to permit the planned entertainment to run beyond 11.00 pm on up to 7 nights during the festival event within Falls Park, running from Thursday 1 August to Sunday 11 August 2024.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Taking into account the information presented and any representations received you are required to consider the request to extend the hours of entertainment and, subject to all technical requirements being met, either:**

- 1. Agree that all 7 of the events should be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence to 1.00 am; or**
- 2. Agree that only on specified nights will entertainment be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence to 1.00am and that the other requested nights be permitted to take place to an earlier specified extended hour; or**
- 3. Refuse to extend all of the hours as requested.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Members are advised that a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence and a 7-Day Annual Indoor Licence for a Marquee has been granted for Falls Park and both have been used to hold events in the past, primarily for this event.**

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2024**

The Licences are held by the City and Neighbourhood Services Department and are transferred to the organisers for the duration of their event.

- 3.2** The days and standard hours during which entertainment may be provided both outdoors and in a marquee are Monday to Sunday from 11.30 am to 11.00 pm.
- 3.3** In addition, the following Special Conditions are attached to both the Marquee and Outdoor Entertainments Licences:
- Maximum numbers will be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control Service and will vary depending upon individual concert set up proposals.
 - Prior to any event taking place the promoters are required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation and have in place a robust system of dealing with any complaints, which has been agreed in advance with the Council.
 - Any requests to provide entertainment later than 11.00 pm must be considered by the Licensing Committee and therefore must be made at least 3 months in advance of the proposed event.
 - Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then receive a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint is of such significant impact, authority is granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter will be required to make contingency arrangements.
- 3.4** The applicant has indicated that outdoor music events are scheduled for Friday 2nd, Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th August, in conjunction with consecutive nights on Thursday 8th, Friday 9th, Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th August and has requested to operate beyond 11.00 pm on these seven nights. However, the applicant has indicated that it is intended only to operate to 1.00am for the diversionary dance music event on the Thursday 8th August 2024.
- 3.5** It is a Standard Condition of the Outdoor Entertainments Licence that all requests to operate beyond the permitted hours of entertainment must be considered by the Licensing Committee.

- 3.6 As this is not an application to vary the terms of the Outdoor licence, but a request for Council's permission to extend the hours under an existing Licence Condition, there is no requirement for public advertisement in this case.**
- 3.7 Members are reminded that in 2023 the Committee agreed to grant the organisers permission to operate on 6 nights of the event beyond the standard hours of 11.00 pm to 1.00 am and on all these nights entertainment did continue beyond 11.00 pm.**
- 3.8 A Location Map is attached as Appendix 1**

Rationale for additional hours

- 3.9 The event has been running for over 30 years as a community festival and has grown from being a 2-3 day to a full 10-11 day festival, offering a mix of arts and cultural events including music concerts, comedy, tours and walks, debates and discussions, exhibitions / visual arts, theatre, youth and community and sporting events.**
- 3.10 In recent years the event organisers have consolidated the entertainment events at Falls Park to 6 nights. This decision was motivated by a desire to limit disruption to the community in close proximity to Falls Park.**
- 3.11 The applicant has indicated that it is intended that entertainment will go on no later than 1am for the event on Thursday 8 August, due to the diversionary nature of the event. We await confirmation on actual finish time of the other six events for which extension beyond standard hours have been requested.**
- 3.12 An explanatory letter provided by the applicant is attached as Appendix 2 and a representative from Feile has been invited to attend your meeting.**

PSNI

- 3.13 The PSNI have been contacted by the Service in relation to the event, however, a response has not yet been received. We will update Committee on their views at your meeting.**
- 3.14 In the absence of any police response, should Members be minded to approve the extended hours requested, this should be subject to a satisfactory response being received from the PSNI on the matter.**

Health, safety and welfare issues

- 3.15 Officers have engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in City & Neighbourhood Services in relation to the festival and will participate in the multi-agency meeting to be held in advance of the event with the event organisers.
- 3.16 An Event Management Plan in support of the event has been received and is being evaluated by the Service and shared with other colleagues.
- 3.17 Officers from the Service have carried out during performance inspections at previous events organised by Féile an Phobail and found that the organisers have adhered to the health, safety and welfare management requirements during that time.

Noise issues

- 3.18 A significant consideration for Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) will be the proposal to provide outdoor entertainment after 11.00 pm. Members are reminded that the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 gives councils additional powers in relation to entertainment noise after 11.00 pm.
- 3.19 EPU received around 120 noise complaints regarding the festival in 2023. This was an increase from the festival in 2022 when 58 noise complaints were received. Many complaints related to the entertainment being permitted after 11.00pm during the working week.
- 3.20 Complaints received during the course of the festival were brought to the attention of the event organisers and following conclusion of the festival a detailed summary of all noise complaints was provided for their consideration. No formal action was undertaken by EPU in respect of the noise complaints received.
- 3.21 Whilst the Service sought to arrange a post-event meeting with the applicant to discuss the event this did not take place.
- 3.22 In their letter to Committee Féile has committed, alongside local political and community representatives, to conduct a number of community consultations around this year's events in the park, specifically engaging with local residents and addressing any issues or concerns.

- 3.23 They also anticipate that entertainment will go to 1.00am on one occasion only, the diversionary event on Thursday 8th August 2024.
- 3.24 The event organisers will again be required to engage with an acoustic consultant to document a noise mitigation strategy for each night of entertainment. The purpose of the strategy will be to demonstrate that noise from the event will not cause unreasonable disturbance to commercial and residential premises. Once received by the Service this strategy will be provided to EPU for appraisal.
- 3.25 The noise mitigation strategy will be discussed at the pre - event multi-agency meeting. Last year the sound consultant did not have a site presence on the nights of entertainment to carry out sound testing, and this would be a beneficial mitigation this year.
- 3.26 The organisers will also be required to produce a suitable residents pre-notification letter containing a nominated event organiser contact that residents may refer concerns or make complaints to. The extent of the letter's distribution, which will take place prior to the event will be agreed with the event organiser by the Service in consultation with EPU officers.
- 3.27 The event organisers will be reminded of the standard licence condition that receipt of significant complaints may lead to further late nights being curtailed. However, it can be impracticable during the festival to curtail further nights at short notice as complaints are not all received on the nights that are the subject of the complaint and a full picture does not emerge until all complaints are collated, by which time the events can be concluded.
- 3.28 Members may therefore wish to consider if it is appropriate to set an earlier time limit such as midnight for some of the events this year.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.29 None. Officers will carry out inspections at the events which will be catered for within existing Service budgets.

Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.30 There are no issues associated with this report."

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2024**

A Member stated that there had been complaints from residents last year in the Highfield and Springmartin areas and asked whether those complainants would be consulted in regards to the events taking place in August 2024. She also pointed out that the number of complaints from the year before had doubled, and that that was concerning. She also highlighted that one of the proposed nights for late-night entertainment was a weeknight and that some people would have to get up early for work the next morning. She advised that, last year, some residents in the Village area had reported a disturbance at 2am after a Féile an Phobail event, and that the PSNI had been made aware of it. She stated that she was interested to know the PSNI response to the proposal of the late night events.

In response, the Building Control Manager confirmed that there had been a significant rise in the number of complaints made than the previous year. He outlined that, depending on the atmospherics of the night, noise could travel in certain directions more than others and that was something that could be looked at by an acoustic consultant to see what mitigations could be made in terms of, perhaps, stage orientation and through monitoring. He confirmed that most of the complaints received regarding last year's events related to the cumulative impact of events running past 11pm throughout the week.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. K. Gamble, Director of Féile an Phobail, to the meeting.

A Member stated that she had attended a post-event meeting with the promoter of the recent Bruce Springsteen concert and that she had felt that it had been useful. She suggested that it could be conditional that the applicant should engage in a post-event meeting.

A further Member queried why the promoter was seeking a late finish time when the usual finish time for all concerts was 11pm.

The applicant stated that he would be more than happy to engage in a post-event meeting. He also confirmed that they engaged widely in a pre-event consultation with the local community and with local Councillors and that he would be happy to engage with any Councillors or areas which had raised concerns in the past or who may have had concerns with the events for this year.

He stated that they had engaged with the PSNI regularly and that they were due to meet with them again soon, including a wider meeting with all the statutory services. He stated that the PSNI had a copy of their event plan and their safety plan and that they had raised no issues with them in regards to last years events or this year's plans.

In response to the Member's question as to why they were seeking an extension of entertainment past 11pm, Mr. Gamble stated that, originally, it had been for the diversionary nights of 8th and 9th August, where traditionally bonfires would have been lit in Nationalist and Republican areas. He stated that Féile an Phobail had engaged with community representatives, political representatives, statutory agencies and the young people involved to come up with diversionary activity to prevent antisocial behaviour.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2024**

He explained that there were some young people who would have left the park at around 10pm and returned to the areas where bonfires were being lit. He outlined that, with further engagement with those young people and with the Council, safety officers, the PSNI and local community representatives, Féile an Phobail had decided to apply for additional evenings of late night entertainment, in order to try and curb that anti-social behaviour further.

He advised the Committee that, over the past two years, the PSNI and the Head of the Fire Service had confirmed that there were no call outs to attend bonfires on those evenings throughout the city, and that that was largely due to the alternative activity that the festival offered.

In response to a Member's query as to whether those who had made complaints last year about the event would be issued with notification letters, the Building Control Manager explained that those areas were further away than the usual notification area. He confirmed that the letter would be distributed as widely as possible and that they would work with their colleagues in the Environmental Protection Unit to determine what distance was appropriate. A further Member suggested that individual Members could highlight the late nights of entertainment to their constituents on their social media pages.

Moved by Councillor McCann,
Seconded by Councillor Bradley and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that all 7 of the events (taking place on 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th August, 2024) be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence to 1.00am, subject to:

- a satisfactory response being received from the PSNI in respect of the additional hours;
- an acoustic consultant being on site at each of those nights;
- a post-event meeting being held with the applicant; and
- that houses within a certain proximity, working with the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) to determine what is appropriate, are given advanced warning of the late night events.

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licenses
Issued Under Delegated Authority**

(Councillor McCabe returned to the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Committee noted a list of applications which had been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation during April and May 2024.

Licenses Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications for licences which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2024**

**Application for a New Licence to operate a House
of Multiple Occupation for 49 Atlantic Avenue**

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager presented the details of the application to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that the property had had the benefit of an HMO licence issued by the Housing Executive, which had expired on 13th June, 2022. Reminder letters had been sent to the licence holder on 19th January, 2022, and 18th May, 2022, informing them of the need to renew the HMO licence before the expiry of the existing licence. On 19th May, 2022, an HMO licence application was received to renew the licence. The NIHMO Unit ceased to consider the application as the owner had failed to comply with Regulation 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (Notice of Application) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019, which required them within seven days of submitting the application, they must have published information of the application in one or more newspapers circulating in the locality of the HMO and have provided a copy to the NIHMO Unit. A reminder to do so had been sent to the applicant.

The Members were advised that, on 10th August, 2022, an incomplete application for a Temporary Exemption Notice “TEN” was received and subsequently refused. A subsequent TEN application was received and approved, with an extension, but that had expired on 25th January 2023.

On 5th December, 2022, an HMO licence application was received from the owner, which was rejected on 15th December, 2022 for breach of planning control. A further licence application was received on 12th December, 2023.

The HMO Manager outlined that, pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council could only grant a licence if it was satisfied that:

- a) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;
- b) the owner, and any managing agent of it, were fit and proper persons;
- c) the proposed management arrangements were satisfactory;
- d) the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- e) the living accommodation was fit for human habitation and—
 - i. was suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
 - ii. could be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

The Committee was advised that, as it was a new application, the Council's Planning Service was consulted. It had confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use of Development “CLEUD” was granted on 3rd February, 2023.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with the Environmental Protection Unit in relation to daytime noise; the Public Health and Housing Unit in relation

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2024**

to rubbish accumulation/filthy premises; and the Enforcement Unit in relation to litter and waste and all had confirmed that there had been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of any of the issues in the HMO in the last 5 years. The applicant had confirmed that they had not been convicted of any relevant offences under the 2016 Act.

For the purpose of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation as being Housing Management Area (HMA) "2/02 Atlantic" as defined in the document Council's Local Development Plan Strategy, which was formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. It was reported that Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the 2016 Act upon the Council to be satisfied that the granting of a licence would not result in overprovision.

The officers had had regard to:

- a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality; and
- b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation was required to meet that need.

To inform the Council in its consideration of the above provisions, the Council had taken account of the 2023 Strategy given that "Nurturing sustainable and balanced communities was a fundamental aim of the LDP's housing policies." In particular, the Council had considered Policy HOU10, which stated:

"Within designated HMAs, planning permission will only be granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within an HMA."

The Committee was advised that, on the date of assessment, 28th May 2024, 60% of all dwelling units in policy area HMA 2/02 Atlantic were made up of HMOs and flats/apartments, which in turn exceeded the 20% development limit as set out in Policy HOU10. There were 2 (1%) licensed HMOs with a capacity of 10 persons in that HMA.

It was outlined that there were a total of 161 dwelling units in HMA 2/02. The Committee was advised that the fact that the use of the property as an HMO was permitted for planning purposes was a relevant consideration in determining whether the granting of the licence would result in overprovision.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager reminded the Committee that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and, to meet that demand, HMOs were an important component of the housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, played an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who were single, who had temporary employment, students, low income households and, more recently, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager explained that, in assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, officers could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 19th June, 2024**

result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

The Committee was advised that no objections had been received in relation to the application. It was also reported that the accommodation had been inspected by a technical officer from the NIHMO service, on 26th February, 2024, during which it was established that the rear return bedroom window was below the minimum 6.5m² requirement.

On 29th May, 2024, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, officers had issued a Notice of Proposed Decision to the Applicant advising that it was proposing to refuse the licence on the grounds of overprovision. The Members were advised that a response had not been received from the applicant.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Carragher, applicants, to the meeting. Together they outlined that while they had initially let the property out through a letting agent that they had now taken it over personally. They explained that they had spent a lot of money on the HMO fees. They also outlined that they had not been warned about the overprovision criteria but that they felt that the demand for HMO accommodation was in the area.

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Bradley and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to refuse the application as, in accordance with Section 12 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, it was satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, as determined under section 8(2)(d) of the Act.

Chairperson

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Planning Committee

Tuesday, 18th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, T. Brooks,
Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Hanvey, G. McAteer, McCabe,
Murphy and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning)
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management);
Mr. D. O'Kane, Acting Planning Manager (Plans and Policy);
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. U. Caddell, Senior Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Alderman Lawlor and Councillors Magee and McCann.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th May, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd June, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McAteer declared an interest in relation to item 6b on the agenda, under the heading - Notice of Opinion issued by the Department for Infrastructure: LA04/2021/1317/F and LA04/2021/1318/DCA - Demolition of existing dwellings and erection of two new dwellings and associated site works. - 450 and 448 Lisburn Road, in that she had engaged with constituents who had objected to the application.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the site visits which had taken place on 21st May, 2024.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

Request for Pre-emptive Committee Site Visit:
LA04/2023/4613/F - Proposed building ranging
between 5 - 10 storeys (20.60m - 42.35m)
including offices (Class B1a), ground floor retail
(Class A1), community and cultural (Class D1)
and restaurant uses, and licensed restaurant at
upper level with external terrace, rooftop plant
area, landscaping, servicing, public realm
improvements, and all associated site works. -
Lands west of Donegall Quay, east of Tomb
Street, south of Corporation Square (opposite
Belfast Harbour Office) and immediately north of
the NCP Multi Storey Car Park

The Committee agreed to undertake the pre-emptive site visit.

Request for Pre-emptive Committee Site Visit:
LA04/2024/0574/F - Proposed temporary (up to 5
years) nursery and primary school, soft play
area, access, parking, landscaping and ancillary
site works - Land adjacent and east of No. 44
Montgomery Road

The Committee agreed to undertake the pre-emptive site visit.

Request for Pre-emptive Committee Site Visit:
LA04/2024/0681/F - Erection of Purpose-Built
Managed Student Accommodation development
with additional use of accommodation by further
or higher education institutions outside term
time, comprising 4 no. blocks of accommodation
with building heights ranging from 5 to 9 storeys
and up to 35,850sqm gross external floorspace,
café, associated communal facilities including
landscaped courtyards, internal bin stores and
cycle stores, pv array, disabled parking, public
realm provision, associated site works and
extension of Titanic Boulevard to form new
junction with Hamilton Road. - Lands to the
northeast of Olympic House, east of Queen's
Road and south of Belfast Metropolitan College

The Committee agreed to undertake the pre-emptive site visit.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

Notifications of Provision/Removal of Accessible Parking Bay

The Committee noted the notifications regarding accessible parking bays at the following locations:

- 14 St James Road;
- 27 Innisfayle Gardens;
- 36 Snugville Street;
- 81 Cambrai Street;
- 27 and 28 Carncaver Road;
- 13 Rossnareen Avenue;
- 123 Joanmount Gardens;
- 10 Andersonstown Park South; and
- 4 Knocknagoney Road.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in April, 2024.

Miscellaneous Reports

**Committee Decisions awaiting issuing and New
Section 76 Planning Agreement Processes**

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with a summary of the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

To provide an update in relation to delays issuing some Committee decisions and to update the Committee on new Section 76 planning agreement processes.

2.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- a) note the contents of this report; and**
- b) agree the proposed reporting method for applications which have been determined by Committee but not yet issued.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 At its February 2024 meeting, the Committee requested further information in relation to the monthly report it receives on planning application decisions issued by the Council. Following the Committee's request, and for ease of identification, the monthly report now includes a colour coded system, highlighting approvals in green and refusals in red.
- 3.2 In addition, following clarification of the original request, officers have produced a summary table of all decisions made by the Committee on planning applications that have been determined by Committee but have yet to be issued. The summary table is provided at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Officers propose to report an updated summary table to the Committee at future meetings as part of the monthly report on decisions issued.

Assessment

- 3.4 The summary table shows that there are 29 applications the Committee has resolved to approve which have not yet issued. The oldest Committee decision dates back to the February 2022 and most recent to the April 2024 Committee.
- 3.5 The summary table specifies the reason why each decision has not yet issued. The reasons are broken down as follows:
- 24 applications (83%) awaiting completion of a Section 76 planning agreement;
 - 3 applications (10%) notified to the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi);
 - 2 applications (7%) awaiting further consultation responses.
- 3.6 Analysis of all decisions made on applications for Major development in 2023/24 shows that 13 (46%) of the 28 decisions made by the Committee were subject to post-Committee delays of 10-weeks or more before the decisions were issued. Of those 13 decisions, 9 (69%) of the 13 decisions were delayed due to negotiations post Committee in relation to the terms of the Section 76 planning agreements.
- 3.7 As set out above, some of the delays relate to procedural or technical matters which had to be resolved such as outstanding consultation responses, finalising conditions and other

administrative delays. Recognising that the majority of delays in issuing decisions has been the finalisation of planning agreements, officers have been working on how to streamline this process to ensure decision notices are issued as soon as possible after Committee.

New Section 76 planning agreement process

- 3.8 Historically, focused negotiations on the detail of planning agreements have tended to take place once an application is scheduled to be presented to Committee. This inevitably leads to delays post Committee whilst the detail of the agreement is worked through with solicitors who have sometimes only been instructed post Committee. Officers are proposing a new streamlined process to frontload this work as much as possible before an application is presented to Committee for determination.
- 3.9 The Planning Service and Legal Services have been working together to produce model Section 76 planning agreement clauses, covering the following areas:
- ✓ affordable housing
 - ✓ financial developer contributions
 - ✓ employability and skills
 - ✓ public realm
 - ✓ open space
 - ✓ property management
 - ✓ green travel measures
 - ✓ purpose built managed student accommodation
- 3.10 The Model Section 76 planning agreements will be supported by new processes, which will further streamline the overall procedure. These are summarised below.
- 3.11 The Planning Service's *Application Checklist* will be amended so that customers are clear about what is expected as part of the application process and what they in turn can expect from the Council. The 'Heads of Terms' will be expanded to require confirmation of which proposed obligations contained within the schedule to the model agreement are applicable, details of all owners and/or persons who have an estate in the land and contact details for the applicant's solicitor.
- 3.12 Applications that require a Section 76 planning agreement will not normally be reported to the Committee until the planning agreement has been agreed in principle by the Planning Service and applicant, including content and ownership details confirmed by the applicant's solicitor.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

- 3.13 The Planning Service will aim to issue the decision notice within 10 working days of the end of the Committee decision call-in process.
- 3.14 The new processes and customer guidance will be published on the Council's website alongside the Model Section 76 planning agreements. Customers will be encouraged to engage with the planning agreement process early on in the process and advised that where the model clauses are used this will lead to a much quicker processing time.

Future reporting

- 3.15 The Planning Service has worked with the Intelligent Client Function (ICF) (which manages the contract for the Planning Portal) to design an automated report which enables the Planning Service to routinely update and report the summary table to Committee.
- 3.16 Officers propose to report an updated version of the summary table at Appendix 1 to future meetings as part of the monthly report on decisions issued.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Significant work has been undertaken by both the Planning Service and Legal Services in drawing up the new Model Section 76 planning agreements. However, this will save time overall in the drafting of future planning agreements and, combined with the new processes, will enable the Council to deal with planning applications more efficiently and effectively.

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

- 5.1 There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report."

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed the proposed reporting method for applications which had been determined by the Committee but not yet issued.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

**Notice of Opinion issued by the Department
for Infrastructure: LA04/2021/1317/F and
LA04/2021/1318/DCA - Demolition of existing
dwellings and erection of two new dwellings
and associated site works. - 450 and 448 Lisburn
Road, Belfast**

The Planning Manager outlined the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** To report on the Department for Infrastructure’s Notice of Opinion in respect of planning applications LA04/2021/1317/F and LA04/2021/1318/DCA. These applications were approved by the Planning Committee at its 29th June 2023 meeting and subsequently called-in by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).
- 1.2** DfI has issued a Notice of Opinion to the Council of its intention to refuse planning permission and Conservation Area Consent. The letter states that DfI must receive any request in writing for an opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Planning Appeals Commission, or a person appointed by DfI, for the purposes of a hearing within 8 weeks of the date of the letter (i.e. by 15th July 2024).

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Council responds to the Notice of Opinion, requesting opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Planning Appeals Commission, or a person appointed by DfI, for the purposes of a hearing.
- 2.2** This would provide opportunity for the Council to present its case that planning permission and Conservation Area Consent should be granted, contrary to the Department’s opinion that the applications should be refused.
- 2.3** The Committee is also asked to consider whether it wishes to nominate an Elected Member (or Elected Members) to appear at the hearing alongside officers in support of the Council’s case.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1** At its 29th June 2024 meeting, the Committee resolved to approve the following applications:

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

- LA04/2021/1317/F – Demolition of existing dwellings and erection of two new dwellings and associated site works. 450 and 448 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7GX (application for ‘planning permission’).
 - LA04/2021/1318/DCA – Demolition of existing dwellings and erection of two new dwellings and associated site works. 450 and 448 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7GX (application for ‘Conservation Area Consent’ for demolition).
- 3.2 A copy of the Committee report is provided at Appendix 2 and minutes at Appendix 3.
- 3.3 Section 89(1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council to notify DfI where it intends to grant Conservation Area Consent. Following ratification of the Committee’s decision, on 14th September 2023, the Council duly notified the Conservation Area Consent application (LA04/2021/1318/DCA) to the Department.
- 3.4 On 11th December 2023, DfI issued a letter to the Council, ‘calling in’ both the Conservation Area Consent application and application for full planning permission (LA04/2021/1317/F) for its determination. The Department’s reasoning for calling in the applications was stated as follows:
- ‘...in view of the proposed development’s potential conflict with the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) 2015, the Local Development Plan for the area (the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035), particularly in relation to heritage matters, and the potential for the proposed development to impact on the implementation of the plan-led system. It is therefore considered to be an exceptional case and that the regional and sub-regional issues raised would benefit from further scrutiny by the Department.’*
- 3.8 DfI’s call-in decision was reported to the Committee at the time. The decision transferred jurisdiction for determination of the applications from the Council to the Department.

Notice of Opinion

- 3.6 On 21st May 2024, DfI issued its Notice of Opinion of its intention to refuse both planning permission and Conservation Area Consent. The refusal reasons are set out below.
- 3.7 **LA04/2021/1317/F (application for planning permission):**
1. ‘The proposal would result in the demolition of two existing dwellings that make a material contribution to the character

and appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposed replacement dwellings would be of an inappropriate footprint, scale and alignment. The proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, contrary to Policy BH2 of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035, paragraph 6.12 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and Malone Park Conservation Design Guide.'

2. 'The proposal, by reason of its footprint, scale and alignment, would harm the setting of No. 1a Malone Park, a Grade B2 Listed Building. The proposal is contrary to Policy BH1 of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement and Malone Park Conservation Design Guide.'

3.8 LA04/2021/1318/DCA (application for Conservation Area Consent):

1. 'The proposal would result in the demolition of two existing dwellings which make a material contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the proposed replacement dwellings would be of an inappropriate footprint, scale and alignment. The proposal would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, contrary to Policy BH2 of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035, paragraph 6.12 of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and Malone Park Conservation Design Guide.'

- 3.9** The Notice of Opinion states that the Department must receive any written request for an opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Planning Appeals Commission (or a person appointed by the Department) for the purposes of a hearing within 8 weeks of the date of the letter (i.e. by 15th July 2024).

Assessment

- 3.10** It is recommended that the Council responds to the Notice of Opinion, formally requesting opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Planning Appeals Commission (or a person appointed by DfI) for the purposes of a hearing. This would provide opportunity for the Council to present its case that planning permission and Conservation Area Consent should be granted, contrary to the Department's opinion that the applications should be refused.
- 3.11** The applicant has also received the Notice of Opinion from the Department. It is unclear at the time of writing this report whether or not the applicant will also request to appear before and be heard for the purposes of a hearing.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

Conservation Area Consent Pilot

- 3.12 As reported to the Committee at its [January 2024 meeting](#), the Council is currently taking part in a pilot with the Department which is seeking to reduce the number of Conservation Area Consent (DCA) applications notified to DfI. During the pilot, the Council is only required to notify such applications where the proposal involves full demolition and/or there is an objection from special conservation advice.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 The Planning Service's attendance at the hearing and preparation of the associated written supporting statement that sets out the Council's case would have a modest impact on costs and resources and would be absorbed as part of its day-to-day work.

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

- 5.1 There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications."

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

"That no request is made by the Council to appear before or be heard by the Planning Appeals Commission, or a person appointed by DfI, for the purposes of a hearing in respect of planning applications LA04/2021/1317/F and LA04/2021/1318/DCA, 450 and 448 Lisburn Road."

On a vote by show of hands, five Members voted for the proposal and twelve against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the recommendation to the Committee and the Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to respond to the Notice of Opinion and request an opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Planning Appeals Commission or a person appointed by DfI, for the purposes of a hearing.

The Committee noted that any Member that wished to appear at the hearing, alongside officers in support of the Council's case, would contact the Director of Planning and Building Control directly to arrange.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

Committee Visits to Implemented Schemes

The Planning Manager explained that it was a recommendation of both the NI Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee reports of the NI planning system, that planning committees regularly review a sample of their previously determined applications.

He suggested that the Committee visit a small selection of sites across the city that it had approved and that would cover a range of different development types, such as residential, affordable housing, purpose built managed student accommodation and commercial.

The Committee agreed to undertake an annual review of a sample of implemented schemes that it had granted planning permission for.

LDP Plan Strategy - EQIA Stage 7 Monitoring Report

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager provided the Committee with an update on the preparation of the Stage 7 Year 1 (2024) Monitoring Report of the Plan Strategy.

He explained that there were seven stages to Equality Impact Assessments and that the monitoring stage represented the final stage in the process. He stated that the process had not identified any negative impacts on any Section 75 group and that the EQIA had concluded that all nine Section 75 groups would benefit from the policies through the provision of a broader mix of housing, more jobs, access to green infrastructure, walking and cycling routes and improved access to services and facilities.

He reported that, in line with Stage 7 of the Equality Commission Guidance, monitoring of the policies for adverse impacts was required over a two-year period and that ongoing monitoring would continue to determine whether there was any effect over a longer period of time. He added that a Stage 7 Year 2 report would be required in May, 2025.

The Committee noted the update.

**In the Matter of a Judicial Review.
BCC v PAC. 2024/4371/01**

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager explained that the recent legal challenge the Council had taken against the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) in respect of its decision to overturn the Council's refusal of planning permission in August, 2022 for two retrospective change of use applications for short term let accommodations at Citygate on Sussex Place.

He stated that the PAC's decision was issued in October, 2023 and that on 11th June, 2024, Mr. Justice Humphries held that the PAC had misinterpreted policy in allowing a retrospective change of use and ordered that the applications must be redetermined.

He pointed out that the case highlighted the Plan Strategy's assertion that using permanent homes or apartments for short term holiday accommodation was a potential risk on a sustainable supply of housing stock across the city.

The Committee noted the update.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

Planning Applications previously considered

**LA04/2023/4162/F - Change of use from retail
unit to amusement arcade and adult gaming
centre. - 51 Rosemary Street**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of the change of use;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Proliferation of Amusement Arcades.

She reported that an additional objection had been received from Mr. E. Poots MLA which stated that the proposal was inappropriate in principle, that the use was incompatible to neighbouring property, First Church and that the proposal harmed the image and profile of Belfast city centre.

She explained that the issue of the impact of the proposal would have on the image of Belfast city centre had been addressed in the report and assessed in light of the relevant LDP policy and the impact that the proposal would have on the character and appearance of the area. She added that the issue of the cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in the city centre had also been addressed in the report and that the proposal would result in four amusement arcades within a five-minute walk or 200 metre radius, and that it had not been considered a proliferation, given the distance from the application site.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the potential impact the proposal would have on neighbouring properties, that included First Church had also been addressed in the report and that, in terms of concerns raised with regard to mental health and gambling addiction, the proposal could only be assessed against relevant planning policies.

She reported that the proposal complied with the LDP Plan Strategy and that it was recommended that planning permission be granted.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. D. Thompson, MBA Planning, to the meeting who was speaking in objection to the application, on behalf of First Church.

Ms. Thompson explained that the Council's Amusement Policy clearly set out that amusement arcades were not acceptable in the prime retail core and that approval of the proposal would cause a cluster of amusement arcades within a small area.

She stated that the proposal would present a bad neighbour to First Church, that was much more than a place of worship, and that it was tourist and cultural hub for the city centre which played an active role in its community and religious life.

She explained that the church was only 22 metres from the proposal site and that the church disagreed with the assertion that it would have no significant impact as gambling

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

activities would jar with the religious, spiritual, cultural and tourism activities that were conducted within the church and associated grounds.

She stated that amusement arcades raised unique planning issues and should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and explained that Building Control did not consider arcades compatible with retailing and regenerations for the following reasons:

- They had a narrow appeal and so low footfall;
- It was highly questionable whether they add vitality to an area;
- they did not provide active street frontage at ground level because their interior was screened; and
- they did little to project an image that Belfast is open for business.

She referred to the cumulative impact and stated that there were already 10 amusement centres in the city centre and pointed out inconsistencies between the Building Control Officer's assessment and the Planning assessment. She added that, if the applicant's plan was to move their existing arcade in North Street, this had not been assessed and there was no mechanism to extinguish the old use which could result in two arcades in close proximity to the church.

She concluded by asking the Committee to refuse the application and invited the applicant to find a unit away from the church and outside the prime retail core.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Thompson for her representation and welcomed Mr. W. Orbinson KC, Mr. S. Stranaghan, Mr. A Mains and Mr. B. McAllister, the applicant, to the meeting.

Mr. Orbinson KC explained that the applicant welcomed the careful consideration given by the Planning officers and pointed out that the report confirmed that the proposal, which was a relocation from existing premises in North Street which had been forced by the redevelopment of the area, was acceptable in principle within the primary retail core, was policy compliant and would cause no harmful impacts.

He stated that, by spending £200K on refurbishment of a vacant unit, the retention of eight jobs and increasing footfall, the proposal would support vibrancy. He explained that expert consultees confirmed that it would cause no harm to the setting of the listed church or the character and appearance of the Conservation area.

He stated that the Council's Plan Strategy had primacy over the subsidiary Amusement Permit Policy and the SPG, quoted by those in objection to the application, and rather supported leisure development in the city centre, as part of a vibrant mix of uses and that policy RET1 directed that such uses to the core.

He explained that the church had been co-existing for many years with other contrasting users and pointed out that a licenced social club which contained gaming machines and served food and alcohol on outdoor tables, opened from noon on Sundays. He added that the proposed site had previously been an Ann Summers outlet, which had a very distinctive offering, however, co-existed with the church, and its tourism and cultural functions had flourished.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

He informed the Committee that the applicant's intention was to open from noon on a Sunday, similar to the adjacent 3Cs Social Club, and that it would be after the 10.30am start of Sunday worship at the church. He stated that, if necessary, the amenity of the church could be further protected by the amusement permit to control opening hours, however, the front façade and entrance, therefore the streetscape, would remain unchanged with the windows and doors obscured.

Mr. Orbinson KC referred to the proposal's proximity to other amusement arcades and asserted that it would not be a proliferation and that there was no other amusement arcade on Rosemary Street. He explained that the Landlord of the applicant's North Street unit had objected to the grant of a new lease on redevelopment grounds.

He concluded by stating that the recent objection from Mr. E. Poots MLA added nothing to the church's objection and was deserving of no greater weight, just because it came from an MLA and asked the Committee to approve the application.

A number of Members raised concern with regard to the proposed frontage of the premises and highlighted a conflict between licensing and planning policies. The Principal Planning Officer stated that in the context of Planning, the proposal was acceptable in principle and that in terms of amenity on future residents of the city centre, Environmental Health had not considered the proposal to have any harm on future residents.

In response to Members' queries with regard to proliferation, the Director of Planning and Building Control stated that the Policy SP3 of the LDP Plan Strategy relating to Improving Health and Wellbeing had not been dismissed and that it had been considered in the assessment of the proposal. She pointed out that Building Control dealt with Licensing and not Planning and that both bodies assessed applications with a different regime and where there is a conflict, Planning had to be focussed on the land use issues.

The Chairperson put the officers' recommendation to approve the application, subject to conditions, to the Committee and upon audible dissent, he called for a vote. On a vote by show of hands, seven Members voted for the recommendation and eight against and it was declared lost.

Following further discussion, the Committee deferred consideration of the application in order that the policy concerns that it raised could be considered in more detail by officers and reported back.

**LA04/2023/3936/O - Proposed replacement
dwelling and all associated site works -
89a Upper Springfield Road**

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application. She explained that the main issue for consideration was the principle of development and if the proposal met the policy requirements for new/replacement dwellings in the countryside.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

She reported that the existing building had been designed and built for agricultural purposes and that, whilst an individual may have resided in the building, it was not sufficient to meet the policy test for replacement.

She stated that, having regard to DC2 and DC3 of the Local Development Plan – Plan Strategy, it was recommended that the application be refused as the presumption was against new housing in the countryside and an exemption had not been demonstrated. She added that the building to be replaced did not exhibit the essential characteristics of a dwelling house and was not eligible for replacement.

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the officers' recommendation to the Committee and on a vote by show of hands, nine Members voted for the recommendation and seven against, therefore the Committee refused the application and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the reasons for refusal.

**LA04/2023/2748/A - 1 Digital Advertisement
Display - 12-13 Shaftesbury Square**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained that the key issues for consideration were the impact on amenity, setting of listed buildings and public safety.

She informed the Committee that a sign had first been approved on the building in 1994 and again in 1998 and had been removed in 2009 and a further temporary consent had been granted for the existing LED digital sign in 2015. She explained that the temporary time condition attached to the 2015 approval was to allow reassessment of the long-term impact of the signage at the location, however the temporary condition had been the subject of a planning appeal which was allowed and permanent consent granted.

She reported that objections had been received from DfC Historic Environment Division and DfC Roads on grounds of adverse impact on the setting of the adjacent Listed Building and road safety.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that the application would be refused.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Fairfowl, the applicant, and Mr. R. Walker to the meeting.

Mr. Fairfowl explained that he was content that his evidence supported the proposal and gave a strong rebuttal for the refusal reasons stated in the report.

He stated that, with regards to amenity, the proposal was suited well to the predominantly commercial area which was a main transport corridor where signage could be integrated effectively into the architecture. He pointed out that the proposal was situated near a grade B2 listed building but that the area could not be classed as sensitive or within a conservation area.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

He contested the officers' report, stating that the proposed display, albeit wider, would not sit any higher above the parapet than the existing display, which was not centred on the building. He added that the size of the display had been reduced by 19% in order to be less prominent.

Mr. Fairfowl stated that, within his Heritage Impact Assessment, his view was that the overall contribution of the B2 listed building and its setting had already been severely compromised by a lack of investment in the surrounding area and diminished the architectural and historic interest to the wider community.

He stated that the proposal would entice local and international investment in the area and referred to a proposal which had been granted on a temporary basis for Arthur Square, which was located in a conservation area.

He asserted that public safety was paramount and that data suggested that, with messaging and brightness controls, digital displays could be used safely, despite size, and would not cause an increase in road incidents, as demonstrated in his road safety impact assessment.

He explained that the proposal sat well above any relevant traffic signals and in no way back framed or obscured the traffic signals or signs. He stated that DfI's level of risk for the proposal was too high and did not evaluate the growing evidence.

Mr. Walker stated that there was no evidence in any jurisdiction that would indicate a larger display was detrimental to road safety. He added that the Heritage Environment Division's view would have been sought when the existing sign was approved and that the proposal sat within the framework of the building.

A Member asked Mr. G. Lawther, DfI Roads, who was present at the meeting, how the larger sign would affect road safety. Mr. Lawther explained that the policy in relation to the advertisements sets out categories that specifically cover concern, in that traffic signals will be affected by advertisements in the background at some point. In relation to the existing sign, he stated that, even subsequent to a successful appeal, DfI would continue to find such signs unacceptable and would affect road safety.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the proposals impact on the adjacent listed building, Mr. B. McKervery from DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) explained that the proposal would impact on the setting of the listed building and would detract from the building's special character.

The Committee agreed to refuse the application in accordance with the officer recommendation and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the reasons for refusal.

Planning Applications

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)

LA04/2023/2459/F - Redevelopment of the NICSSA pavilion complex within the Stormont Estate creating a centre of excellence for sport. The development will comprise of demolition of the existing pavilion building and replacement with new 2 storey building providing state of the art indoor sports halls, changing accommodation, function/meeting space offering improvements to the existing offering. Day to Day operation of the site will be improved by way of improvements to internal road network via new access/egress arrangements from the existing Stoney Road junction, additional car and cycle parking and new waste/recycling areas. (Revised description, reduction in site boundary and further information received) - Lands within the Stormont Estate to include The Maynard Sinclair Pavilion and Dundonald House

The Senior Planning Officer presented the Committee with an overview of the application and explained the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of the proposed development;
- Acceptability of the design of the new pavilion and ancillary development;
- Impact on the setting of the adjacent Listed Dundonald House;
- Impact on trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order;
- Impact on natural heritage;
- Traffic Impact/parking;
- Environmental protection;
- Drainage, flood risk and climate change;
- Employability and Skills; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

She stated that, following the submission of further information, DAERA NIEA Water Management Unit, Regulation Unit and Natural Environment Division had no objections to the proposal subject to conditions and that Special Environmental Services (SES) had carried out an appropriate assessment on behalf of the Council and advised that the project would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects subject to mitigation measures which were recommended as conditions.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

She pointed out that the proposal would result in substantial loss of trees across the site and the Council's Tree Officer had stated that they were unable to support the application and advised that the removal of large groups of existing trees within the site would be detrimental and impact the existing amenity, wildlife, habitat, and impact visual character within the site which the trees currently provided.

She reported that five representations had been received which raised concerns regarding a lack of parking and the impact on nearby residential streets, amenity impacts such as noise, floodlighting and trees and wildlife. She informed the Committee that DfI Roads had considered the proposal and objections, and raised no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions.

The Senior Planning Officer stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was, in the planning balance, considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission would be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. K. Devlin and Mr. G. Kelly, NICSSA, to the meeting. In response to a question from a Member with regard to ash dieback and the preservation of trees, Mr. Kelly explained that trees had been planted within the estate for the past 30 years, many of which were planted along the site border with the Newtownards Road, to provide coverage, reduce sound and visual activity and had also brought in conservation volunteers to plant other trees on the site.

He stated that more trees were being planted than being removed and that NICSSA had a long history of preserving trees. Mr. Devlin explained that of the 404 trees that were being removed, 23% were early mature trees. He added that, from a maintenance perspective, the proposal was being used as an opportunity to maintain and protect the site and would take all necessary precautions to reduce tree loss on the site.

In response to a Member's question regarding car parking during large events, Mr. Kelly advised the Committee that parking for such events would be provided within the Stormont Estate.

The Planning Manager explained that the proposal did not comply with the tree policy, however, on balance, having regard to the wider community benefit and health and wellbeing, it was considered acceptable.

The Chairperson put the officers' recommendation to the Committee and on a vote by show of hands, 15 Members voted for the recommendation and one against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

LA04/2022/0612/F - Residential scheme of 53 no. dwellings comprising 34 no. semi-detached and 4 no. detached) and 15 no. apartments (7 no. 2-bed and 8 no. 1-bed), amenity space, bin and bicycle storage, landscaping, access, car parking and all associated site works. (revised description & amended plans). - Lands at the junction of Shankill Road, Lanark Way, and bound by Caledon Street

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application for the Committee and explained that the site was within the development limit and that the site had been the subject of previous planning permissions for residential development which had expired.

She pointed out that the proposal would help regenerate the area and utilise a site that had been vacant for approximately 20 years. She stated that NIHE was supportive of the social housing element and that, on balance, the overall design of the proposal was not considered to be out of keeping with the residential character of the area.

She reported that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission would be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and to deal with any other matters that arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/4153/F - Conversion of an existing dwelling house to a 5 bed HMO dwelling house. No works to the exterior or elevation of the property. - 44 Ponsonby Avenue

The Committee deferred consideration of the application in order that a site visit could be undertaken.

LA04/2023/4616/F - Installation of glazed box to enclose existing external seating area - Nicos, 54 Lisburn Road

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- The principle of development;
- The impact on the character and appearance of the draft Area of Townscape Character;
- The impact on the setting of nearby listed buildings;

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

- Impact on amenity and adjacent uses; and
- Highway safety.

He explained that DfC Historic Environment Division had raised concern about the impact of the proposal on both nearby Listed terraces and the Council's conservation advice had highlighted concerns with regard to the location and design of the extension.

The Planning Manager pointed out that the proposal was considered acceptable as it was light weight and transparent in design, located at the termination of a terrace, in an area of changing character due to the iReach development proposal and because of its importance to the restaurant business.

He reported that it was recommended that the application would be approved for a temporary period of three years, with conditions.

The Committee granted temporary planning permission for a period of three years, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2024/0128/F - Proposed 11m (Height) x 30m (length) ball stop fencing, including perimeter and spectator fencing, with a pathway surrounding the existing pitch, and associated site works. - Existing GAA pitch at Falls Park (Approx. 80 metres north of No. 13 Norfolk Park), Falls Road

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with a summary of the report and explained that the key issues for consideration were the principle of development at the location and the impact on residential amenity.

She reported that there had been no objections from consultees and that Environmental Health were content in principle, with a re-consultation on fence details outstanding.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was considered that the proposal was acceptable and recommended that the proposal be approved.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that arise from the outstanding consultation response from Environmental Health.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 18th June, 2024**

LA04/2024/0778/LBC - Removing existing wall mounted cycle racks and replacing with semi vertical cycle racks (free from wall mounting). - 2 Belfast City Hall, City Hall Donegall Square North

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained that the proposal was considered to be compliant with the SPPS, Policies BH1 and BH2 of the Belfast Local Development Plan Strategy 20235 and Section 91(2) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and would have minimal impact on the existing structure.

The Committee granted Listed Building Consent, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/3821/F - Proposed change of use from offices to aparthotel with the creation of additional floors to the upper section of building along with elevational alterations and associated development. -Dorchester House, 52-58 Great Victoria Street

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and referred to the following key issues:

- The principle of an apart-hotel at this location;
- Scale, massing and design;
- Impact on built heritage;
- Traffic and road safety;
- Human health/environmental considerations;
- Flooding and drainage;
- Economic considerations; and
- Environment and community.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable, and it was recommended that planning permission was granted, subject to conditions.

In response to a query from a Member, the Principal Planning Officer confirmed that a travel plan, prepared in accordance with LDP policy TRAN4 had been submitted.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided they were not substantive.

Chairperson

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Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 13th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bradley, Bower, R. Brooks,
T. Brooks, Bunting, M. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Flynn,
McAteer, McCabe and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager;
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Doherty and Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th April were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Flynn declared an interest to agenda item 3. Belfast Festival of Learning Food Data Hackathon, in that Allstate, the organisation for which he worked for was referenced in the report.

A Declaration of Interest was received from Councillor T. Brooks under agenda item 2. Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) Update, in that her employer Queen's University Belfast was referenced in the report.

Horizon Europe Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the ongoing activities as part of the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Project including stakeholder engagement, workshops, partnership working and highlight upcoming milestones.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note that Belfast, represented by Belfast City Council, is a pilot city within the Horizon Europe UP2030 project which is focused on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework using technical tools and support that are provided through the UP2030 consortium including analysis, mapping and engagement.
- To support a partnership with the RSUA to deliver the design competition in the UP2030 area in alignment with the project ambitions.
- To support Groundwork NI's Heritage Lottery bid, 'Climate Resilient Heritage' that is proposed to roll out within communities in the UP2030 pilot area.
- To note that an update report on UP2030 was also brought to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee yesterday, 12 June 2024.

3.0 Main report

3.1 In March 2022 Council was invited to participate in a three-year Horizon Europe consortium funding application from the Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) fund to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions. As reported in November 2022 and March 2023, the City Regeneration and Development and Climate teams were successful in joint bid of €204,250/£176,024 to further an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience.

3.2 Cities account for 70% of the global CO2 emissions and consume 78% of the world's energy. The UP2030 project is about recognising the role cities play in achieving net zero by 2050, and the sequence of actions and transitions that would be required by 2030 to ensure this target ambition is met. The 5UP approach guides the work of the project and the considerations required for the development of a framework for creating a net zero neighbourhood:

UP-Dating: Identifying the needs and barriers, and reviewing the processes, planning codes and policies that should be urgently updated to create future proofed NZ neighbourhoods.

UP-Skilling: Building capacities to upskill the entire stakeholder ecosystem, from city departments to urban practitioners to the construction industry, through to citizens.

UP-Grading: Considering the transformation at the suitable physical scale.

UP-Scaling: Scaling solutions and integrating them across sectors by shaping governance arrangements and matching financial resources.

UP-Taking: Sharing knowledge and learning through the project to create long-lasting communities of practice.

3.3 The project kicked off in February 2023 and will run until December 2025 and is driven by robust project milestones and constant engagement across the consortium that is made up of 46 partners, with Belfast one of 11 pilot cities and only UK city. As agreed at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in March 2023, the geographic area of the UP2030 pilot covers the Linen Quarter and the surrounding communities of Barrack Street, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Market. The primary focus of UP2030 is on the development of a Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework that is shaped around three thematic areas: active travel, greening and retrofit. These themes link across to the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience.

3.4 Council's UP2030 team is comprised of City Regeneration & Development and Climate team staff who collaborate on project development, engaging stakeholders and achieving the milestones set out within the wider UP2030 project. This includes regular consortium and work package meetings, project and financial reporting and ongoing contact with our liaison partner, Mapping for Change, as well as ongoing discussions with tool providers through the programme who can provide free technical support to enable the transition to NZ.

3.5 **Progress to date: Stakeholder engagement and workshop delivery**

Since the beginning of the project, stakeholder engagement has included mapping across sectors and areas of work, attending relevant events or meetings and building partnerships and sharing information. This has included one-to-one meetings with community representatives and site walks to understand local priorities and the challenges facing the surrounding city centre communities. It quickly became clear that there is a need to have 'climate conversations' with stakeholders to help everyone begin to understand the wider issues in relation to the impact of climate change, what the transition to net zero means for them and their work and the ways people can begin to participate in the transition. Therefore, a component part of UP2030 is to also support awareness raising regarding net zero in general and we continue to work through these multi-stakeholder channels throughout the programme to secure input into the development of the NZ Neighbourhood Framework.

- 3.6 A key feature in our approach has been linking into existing thematic stakeholder groups that have broad membership and expertise. In particular, this includes the City Greening Group that is convened by Belfast Healthy Cities; the Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel (CAST) subgroup within the Belfast Agenda; and engagement with Retrofit Hub that is coordinated by the Climate Team. There has also been engagement across government, academic, community, thematic city partners and Council teams to elicit input and included a presentation to the Resilience and Sustainability Board. This approach has ensured that we have developed a sound understanding of the challenges, opportunities and barriers across the thematic areas of work and are linked into relevant projects among city partners. An example of this is through an existing partnership with the Graduate School of Queen's University School of Built Environment and NIHE, where partners came together to deliver a QUB social innovation challenge with residents of John Street and Hamill Street.
- 3.7 This initiative was run by QUB and focused on NIHE land within the UP2030 area in the Barrack Street vicinity and focused on improving the quality of life of residents through the development of climate friendly place shaping proposals. Students from a variety of disciplines came together to deliver the challenge through the challenge title: 'Making Belfast a Green and Playful City'. Further to this work, a number of proposed interventions were identified through the consultation and NIHE are leading on exploring how these can be implemented and have already taken an initial step to begin reshaping the space based on needs identified in the engagement and supporting NZ interventions. This a strong example of multi-partner approach to deliver NZ and this along with the ongoing learnings from QUB and the NIHE will shape the UP2030 framework.
- 3.8 Additionally, Officers work in partnership with the Master's of Architecture StreetSpace initiative in QUB that has focused on the Market, Donegall Pass, Sandy Row and the Village communities over the past two years. In mid-June StreetSpace will hold a workshop based on the research and engagement with communities in these areas over the past year. The workshop is called 'Women in the Neighbourhood' and will investigate how issues of mobility and housing affect the everyday lives of women and explore solutions to foster safe, more inclusive cities and the feedback from this will further enhance our understanding of the community issues and inform the UP2030 NZ Framework.
- 3.9 As a result of our engagement sessions, we received a request from Groundwork NI to support their bid 'Climate Resilient Heritage' to the Heritage Lottery Fund, which would focus on two

areas within the UP2030 area, i.e. Sandy Row and the Market. The project would aim to ensure that the natural and cultural heritage of Northern Ireland is conserved for future generations and involves developing a network of young climate champions, supporting them to gain an understanding of the drivers of climate change, how this is/will affect the heritage of Northern Ireland, and what practical steps can be undertaken to mitigate against these effects in their local community. The programme will include training and practical action, e.g. carbon literacy training, data collection and greening projects. Members are asked to support Groundwork's bid in principal and, if successful, Officer attendance at future steering group meetings, which will ensure alignment of the thematic ambitions of the UP2030 project and can build on the momentum of engagement and data developed in the area to date, supporting development and delivery of the net zero neighbourhood framework within the pilot area.

4.0 Delivering project milestones

Key milestones achieved to date include the delivery of five workshops held between April to October 2023 with cross sector stakeholders, including a specific neighbourhood engagement session for community representatives from the pilot area. These events provided an introduction and background to the UP2030 project, exploration of the importance of climate neutrality for cities, and outlined the intention to develop a net zero framework neighbourhood approach within the pilot area but that can be replicated across the city. The workshops were interactive and facilitated input from participants with thematic and community interests as well as engaged strategic partners who operate across the city and region. This initial phase of engagement gathered quality input from diverse stakeholders that helped shape the thematic outline of the framework and refined the areas of focus.

- 4.1** Data collection and analysis has provided another layer of understanding of the UP2030 area and helped identify further needs, challenges and opportunities for net zero led regeneration to future proof the area and communities. A geospatial analysis of the UP2030 pilot area was undertaken, using interactive mapping software to overlay current information on the district such as demographics, tree data, deprivation indices, economic activity, travel to work/school behaviours, housing tenure, as well as projected climate impacts such as flooding and heat risk.
- 4.2** Building on this the initial engagement activities and data collection, a key project milestone was the delivery of five Visioning workshops with cross sector stakeholders that took place in Spring/Summer 2024. The purpose of this most recent engagement programme was to establish a common vision for the

UP2030 area and test the emerging Framework ideas. The sessions also provided a chance to identify future opportunities for improving greening and active travel, as well as exploring the potential to progress a retrofit pilot that builds on the recent learnings of the Retrofit Hub.

- 4.3 The workshops included internal Council staff, the Belfast Agenda CAST group, the City Greening Group and a session for young people organised with Alternatives. The purpose of these was to gain agreement on the vision for the project across the three themes (greening, active travel and retrofit) and underpinned by the three project pillars (carbon neutrality, resilience and a fair and just transition) by asking participants to imagine what a net zero Belfast could look like in 2050 and considering the actions required to support or deliver that transition. Participants were presented with mapped geospatial analysis data and the insights gathered on the project to date.
- 4.4 The final Visioning workshop with the Retrofit Hub will address three areas: commercial, public buildings and residential (divided into area, tenure and typology). This approach aligns to the identified areas of work within the Retrofit Hub, emerging data from the Local Area Energy Plan and will explore issues in relation to funding opportunities and financial models, capacity issues (e.g. skills/training, supply chain), policy and legislation and potential pipeline opportunities.
- 4.5 Following analysis of the feedback and findings from the Visioning sessions, coupled with analysis of the previous learning and research produced by the Retrofit Hub, we re-engaged the workshop stakeholders in a final follow up session. Through this we were able to sense check the emerging framework ideas, build a shared understanding of NZ options and agreed the adaptive pathways for the short/long term sequence of actions that would be required to support the transition and explore opportunities for pilot projects to help test concepts for the NZ Framework alongside continued stakeholder engagement.
- 4.6 An opportunity has been flagged through the Retrofit Hub Steering group to align the ambitions of the retrofit strand of the UP2030 work with a proposal to run a Net-Zero Neighbourhood Ideas Competition as a partnership between the Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) and JP Corry with support from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and the Northern Ireland Construction Group (NICG). It will challenge design teams led by Early Career Architects to generate ideas for the best way to deliver a net-zero neighbourhood in Northern Ireland. The competition seeks to explore how a holistic neighbourhood approach to lowering carbon emissions compares to a more

focused property-by-property approach. This will be an opportunity to build on the visioning outcomes of the retrofit work and engage with communities in the pilot area to codesign approaches for net zero delivery and contribute to the development of the framework. Members are requested to support UP2030 partnering with the RSUA to deliver the design competition in the UP2030 area in alignment with the project ambitions.

4.7 Maximining cross council alignment to NZ goals

Ensuring alignment of this project with the ongoing work and priorities of Climate team is a critical aspect of UP2030 and will shape future milestones and opportunities. This is particularly relevant to the work underway in relation to the Solar PV Study and possible follow up studies that could provide analysis of rooftops that may have potential for solar PV, greening interventions/retrofit or both. A Retrofit Hub Report on the UP2030 area, and an active travel scoping study would also to help us understand the potential of meeting net zero ambitions through active travel and the cost benefit analysis of these measures by using tools such as University of Cambridge innovative Scope 4 analysis. Furthermore, opportunities exist across Council to align resources and ambitions towards NZ outcomes and ensure that all investment in the regeneration of the city considers carbon neutrality, resilience and a fair and just transition to net zero.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.1** Members will be aware that given that the UK is no longer within the EU, the status of Council was changed from to being a Partner to that of an Associate which means that funding will be underwritten by the UK government (UK Research & Innovation, UKRI) fund rather than the EU. The Horizon Europe UP2030 Project is 100% funded for revenue only. No additional funding is required from Council however a small team drawn from the Climate Unit and City Regeneration and Development work together to oversee development and support implementation. Officers continue to work with partners to identify potential capital or revenue funding in the future and align current and emerging workstreams that could support the transition to net zero.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 5.1** Officers are currently developing the Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Screening and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.”

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 13th June, 2024**

During discussion, the Development Manager answered a range of questions in relation to community engagement, tools for analysis and cost of living concerns. In relation to Scope 4 methodology, she explained that it referred to the reduction in emissions achieved by the use of a company's products or services, to help create a modal shift.

One Member highlighted that the Disability Advisory Group report on the impact and practical solutions for Climate issues could be useful to this research also.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Festival of Learning Food Data Hackathon

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reminded the Committee that the Belfast Learning Festival was part of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and ran this year from 22nd to 27th of April. As part of the festival, the climate team had agreed to hold a hackathon that would explore the current food systems in the city. The aim was to help tackle real-world challenges using data driven solutions. She explained that the invite was issued to students in the Belfast Met, University of Ulster (UU) and Queens University Belfast (QUB) and more than 40 students had registered their interest. To help the students tackle 'the challenges of accessing healthy sustainable food in the city', the climate team had arranged a number of workshops throughout the week that included a modelling session with Allstate data analysts, a demonstration of the latest census data, the QUB Geoportal and lessons on how to use the NISRA data platform.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Mr. N. Cairns Mr. L. Mowbray, the winning team from the Ulster University.

The team presented their aim to develop an app for a mobile farmer's market that would travel throughout different neighbourhoods in Belfast, aimed at those with limited access to fresh produce. These markets would offer locally sourced fruits, vegetables, and other sustainable food products at affordable prices. They explained that, by bringing the market directly to people, their objective was to eliminate the transportation barrier and make healthy food more accessible.

The team described the potential features of their app, together with the data which had been used to inform their app and the benefits of a sustainable food city. They also highlighted that they were currently studying digital technology and the app was something that they might be able to develop in the future, as part of their course.

During discussion the Committee congratulated the team on their work. Members highlighted the potential and benefits of the app and encouraged its future development.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and the presentation on the findings of the challenge from the winning group.

The Climate Change Act (Reporting Bodies) Regulations

The Committee considered the undernoted report and associated appendices:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To highlight the new regulations that will place new climate change reporting duties on public bodies, including Belfast City Council.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1

- I. Note the attached correspondence from DAERA.
- II. Note that the regulations come into place early May 2024 and an update will be brought back to update Committee in due course.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Section 42 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 requires DAERA to make new Regulations, which will place climate change reporting duties on specified public bodies. The regulations will come into operation in early May 2024, 21 days after they are laid in the Assembly. However, the first reports by public bodies required under the regulations, will not be due to be submitted until October 2025.

3.2 What will be required?

There are two types of reports which we will be required to provide under the reporting duties set by the Regulations: 1) ‘climate change mitigation’ reports; and 2) ‘climate change adaptation’ reports.

3.3 Climate change mitigation reports must include:

1. a statement, in respect of each of the three preceding financial years, of the amounts and the sources of the council’s greenhouse gas emissions;
2. a statement of the council’s proposals and policies for reducing those amounts and otherwise for mitigating the effects of climate change in the exercise of its functions;
3. a statement of the time-scales for implementing those proposals and policies; and
4. an assessment of the progress made towards implementing the proposals and policies set out in any previous climate change mitigation report.

3.4 Climate change adaptation reports must include:

5. an assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to its functions;
6. a statement of council's proposals and policies for adapting to climate change in the exercise of its functions;
7. a statement of the timescales for implementing those proposals and policies; and
8. an assessment of the progress made towards implementing the proposals and policies set out in any previous climate change adaptation report.

3.5 The Regulations state that we must also have regard to the most recent 5 yearly UK Climate Change Risk Assessment and that we must publish the report on the council website and DAERA will also publish it on theirs.

There is an opportunity for cooperation between two or more reporting bodies to submit a joint report.

3.6 What support will be provided by DAERA

DAERA will provide:

1. technical, co-designed guidance on how to complete climate change reports;
2. a reporting template containing a list of climate change questions;
3. an online climate change reporting portal to enter data; and
4. training to complete the reports.

3.7 Timescales for reporting

The frequencies and timings are set to align with the development of the 5-yearly UK Climate Change Risk Assessments which are required under the UK Climate Change Act 2008 – these risk Assessments include detail on the current and projected climate change risks and impacts to Northern Ireland.

3.8 The regulations require the Council to submit the first of its 3- yearly reports on mitigation by 31 October 2025. The second and third 'mitigation report' must be submitted to DAERA by 31st October 2028 and 31st October 2031 respectively, and so on for subsequent reports every 3 years.

3.9 The first 'adaptation report' must be submitted to DAERA by 31st March 2026 (the first report will cover a 4 year period beginning from 1st January 2026). The second and third report will

be submitted by 31st January 2030 and 31st January 2035 respectively, and every 5 years from then on.

3.10 How have we prepared for this reporting?
Mitigation

A greenhouse gas emissions baseline report was completed for the Councils operations for the period 2019/20. This report included:

- Scope 1 emissions (direct emissions from combustion in Council owned or controlled boilers, furnaces and vehicles); and
- Scope 2 emissions (emissions are associated with purchased electricity, heat, steam and cooling).

3.11 The report included only a small portion of Scope 3 emissions (these occur upstream and downstream of the Council's operations from sources not controlled by the Council) as it did not include the emissions from the Council's supply chain. The report estimated the Council's emissions to be 18,783 tonnes CO₂e with the majority of these from gas (46%), electricity (23%) and fleet (15%). The most significant cost centres in terms of emissions are Capital, Residual waste and GLL.

3.12 The Council's supply chain emissions have since been calculated separately (for 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23) and the team worked closely with Procurement to develop a capacity to track these emissions annually going forward. Scope 3 supply chain currently makes up the bulk of the council's emissions at 84% (71,714 tonnes CO₂e in 2022/23) with 18% of supply chain emissions coming from River Ridge Recycling (Portadown) Ltd and Arc 21 Joint Committee.

3.13 Going forward, an annual emission report will be provided to Committee by June each year thereafter. There are some gaps in the data around internal waste that need to be captured to get the clearest picture of Council emissions, however the climate team are working on a proposal through the climate fund that will help make the estimates more accurate.

The Council is therefore well positioned to provide the required statement of the amounts and the sources of the council's greenhouse gas emissions (1 above) by 31 October 2025.

3.14 A Climate Data Platform is currently being developed by Digital Services to store this information and track progress on delivery. This will enable a snapshot progress report at any time and the

climate team will be able to provide an assessment of the progress made towards implementing the proposals and policies (4 above).

3.15 Adaptation

A Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) undertaken by KPMG in 2023 includes an assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change on Council functions (5 above). In terms of providing a statement of council's proposals and policies for adapting to climate change and the timescales for implementation (6-7 above), these are all captured in the Council's Climate Action Plan and have been included in the draft Corporate Plan. Again, it will be important going forward that the relevant Departments include these climate actions in their annual business plans and budgets to demonstrate progress on adapting to current and future climate risks in adaptation reporting (8 above).

- 3.16** The Council is therefore well positioned to deliver it's first 'adaptation report' to DAERA by 31st March 2026 (covering the 4 year period beginning from 1st January 2026). As above, the Climate Data Platform will enable regular tracking and reporting of progress.

3.17 Next steps

1. The Climate Team will be briefing DMTs as required to ensure staff are aware of reporting requirements.
2. Updates will be brought back to Committee in due course.

3.18 Financial and Resource Implications

There is no known extra funding available, however DAERA have stated that they will be providing all the necessary practical support with public bodies, training and an online portal for public bodies to use. There may be additional costs associated with data exploration and development options identified through the working group. CMT will be kept informed of the progress.

Resourcing needs are not fully understood at this point, however we will review the progress and report back to Committee in due course.

3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None Identified."

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 13th June, 2024**

Additional Item - Retrofit Workshop

The Committee agreed that a Committee Retrofit Workshop would be planned for September and representatives from NIHE, Phoenix Energy and Belfast Retrofit Hub be invited to attend. The Committee noted that the draft agenda for the Workshop would be considered by the Committee at its meeting in August.

Chairperson

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Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 17th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Ferguson (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bower, R. Brooks, Canavan, Doherty,
S. Douglas, Flynn, McAteer, McCabe, McDowell,
McKay, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate
Services (ICC Belfast);
Mr. C. McCloskey, Director of Events and Customer
Experience (ICC Belfast);
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services;
Mr. A. McKinley, Internal Auditor; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Copeland and Councillor Maghie.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th March, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th April.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Tour of ICC Belfast

The Director of Economic Development advised that ICC Belfast would host a tour of the venue and a meet and greet with the Chair of the Board for any new Members of the Committee. The Committee noted that details of the arrangements would follow in due course.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

Internal Audit Update

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Committee with an update on the outcome of an internal audit undertaken at the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall (BWUH) Ltd. in April 2024 and which had been reported to the BWUH Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee in May 2024.

She reminded the Committee that an internal Audit plan for 2021/22- 2023/24 was agreed at the BWUH Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee in December 2021, which outlined the areas that would be audited over that period.

For 2022/23 it was agreed that two audits would be completed. One would cover risk, performance and sales and marketing and the second would review cybersecurity, data protection and finance.

The first audit had been reported to the shareholders committee in November 2023. She presented the Committee with the outcome of the second audit, which covered:

- Cyber Security – three of the National Cyber Security Centre's '10 Steps to Cyber Security' (identity and access, data security and logging and monitoring.);
- Data Protection – compliance with data protection requirements based on ICO data controller, data processor and direct marketing checklists;
- Finance – purchases, payables, procurement and contract management, payroll, and travel and subsistence; and
- a follow-up on implementation of audit actions for all those areas.

The Committee was advised that AGRS had provided a "major improvement needed" opinion on this audit. She outlined that that was due to the high priority issues

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 17th June, 2024

they had identified in relation to cyber security and data protection, as well as delays in implementing two actions from their last review of IT security in June 2021.

The Committee was advised that BWUH Management had been receptive to their report and had agreed an action plan to address the issues raised in the audit, which management had indicated were due to be completed by the end of June 2024.

The Committee was advised that a new service level agreement between AGRS and BWUH and an Audit Plan for 24/25 – 26/27 were agreed by the BWUH Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee in May 2024. The audit for 2024/25 was expected to commence at the end of July and would include a follow-up of the agreed actions from the recent internal audit.

The Head of AGRS, the Finance, Risk and Corporate Services Director (ICC) and the Director of Events and Customer Experience (ICC) answered a number of questions from the Members in relation to the report.

After discussion, the Committee noted contents of the report.

Performance Report Q4 2023-2024

The Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services provided the Committee with an overview of the Company's performance during Quarter 4 Year to Date of the financial year 2023/2024, 1st January to 31st March, 2024, and an analysis of actual performance against the budget.

The Committee was reminded that it was the eighth year of operation for the company. He outlined that the final quarter of 2023/24 had been busier than expected with a large number of events spanning conferences, meetings and entertainment.

The Members were advised that Customer Satisfaction in post-event surveys had been extremely high, at 96% for entertainment and 99% for conferences.

In respect of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility, the Director of Events and Customer Experience reported that the Green Team had achieved the world-class Gold Award for sustainability from Green Tourism in October 2023.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to apprenticeships and the new nominated charity.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

Recruitment of Financial Controller

The Director of Economic Development outlined to the Committee that BWUH Ltd was audited internally and externally annually and findings in both 2023 and 2024 had highlighted that there should be additional controls added in relation to the 'segregation of duties' within the Finance team, including the Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services. In response to those audit findings, the Company had decided to recruit a

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 17th June, 2024

Financial Controller to assist in improving the segregation of duties in addition to adding resilience to the Finance team.

He outlined that, through recruitment professionals and market intelligence, it was estimated that the salary for Financial Controller positions for Small and Mid-Size Enterprises was in the range of approximately £55,000 - £65,000 per annum. The Members were advised that the associated costs had been set aside within existing BWUH budgets.

The Committee approved the recruitment of a Financial Controller position to assist in improving the segregation of duties in addition to adding resilience to the Finance Team.

Chairperson