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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, 2nd September, 2024 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
 - a) Request to address the Council

To consider a request from the Landlords Association for Northern Ireland (LANI) to address the Council in relation to HMO application fees.
6. Change of Position of Responsibility
7. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 86)
8. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 87 - 110)
9. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 111 - 146)
10. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 147 - 154)
11. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 155 - 172)
12. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 173 - 184)

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

John Walsh

Chief Executive

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Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall and remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 1st July, 2024
at the hour of 10.45 o'clock a.m., pursuant to Notice.

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor S. Douglas;
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,
Bunting, Carson, Cobain, Doran, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Kelly, Long, Maskey, G. McAteer,
McCann, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray) and Councillors Anglin, D. Douglas, Murphy and Nelson.

Battle of the Somme Anniversary

Moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick)
Seconded by Alderman McCoubrey and

Resolved – That we, the Lord Mayor and Citizens of the City of Belfast, on the 108th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, desire again to record our feelings of gratitude to the brave men of the 36th (Ulster) Division, the 16th (Irish) Division and other forces who, by their glorious conduct in that battle, made an imperishable name for themselves and their people and whose heroism will never be forgotten.

The Council stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect to all those who had lost their lives in the Battle of the Somme.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

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Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Monday, 1st July, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor S. Douglas; and
Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Black, Bradley,
R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain,
Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, P. Donnelly,
R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Kelly,
Maghie, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann,
McCusker, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth,
Verner and Walsh.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray), Alderman Copeland and Councillors Beattie, Bell, Bower, T. Brooks, M. Donnelly, F. McAteer, Murphy, Nelson and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Canavan, Duffy and Groogan declared an interest in the item "Social Supermarkets" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that they worked for or were associated with organisations which received Social Supermarket Funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor R.M. Donnelly declared an interest in the item "Request for Council to act as Sponsor for the Active Communities Network", in that her employer had requested the Council to act as a sponsor for the acquisition of a city centre property. As the item did not become the subject of debate, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick),
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Council of 3rd June, be taken as read and signed as correct.

**Meeting of Council
Monday, 1st July, 2024**

Official Announcements

Condolences

The Deputy Lord Mayor extended condolences to the Director of Property and Projects and her family on the recent passing of her father.

Councillor McKeown extended condolences to the family of Andrew Dougal, former CEO of the Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke Association, on his recent passing.

King's Birthday Honours

The Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated those who had received honours in the King's Birthday Honours List 2024, in particular, Alderman McCoubrey, who had been awarded a BEM for his work in the community.

Councillor Brooks congratulated Mrs. Lindsay Robinson who had been awarded a MBE for her work in perinatal mental health in Northern Ireland.

**Change of Membership on Committees/
Outside Bodies/Position of Responsibility**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that following the notification from the Democratic Unionist Party that it wished to give up its position on ARC21, Councillor Collins, PBPA would be filling the vacancy for the remainder of the Council term.

The Council approved the aforementioned change.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st and 28th June, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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

Councillor R.M. Donnelly advised that she had declared an interest in the item in the minutes of 28th June, under the heading “Request for Council to act as Sponsor for the Active Communities Network”, in that her employer had requested the Council to act as a sponsor for the acquisition of a city centre property. As the item had not become the subject of debate, she had not been required to leave the meeting.

**Meeting of Council
Monday, 1st July, 2024**

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st and 28th June were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Verner,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 11th June, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Maskey, and

Resolved- That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th June, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Dornan, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 18th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor R.M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 13th June, be approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council
Monday, 1st July, 2024**

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee of 11th June, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall and remotely via Microsoft Teams
on Monday, 5th August, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor S. Douglas;
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black,
Bradley, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Collins,
de Faioite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,
R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, Magee,
Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McDowell,
McKay, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy,
Nelson, O'Neill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were reported from the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick), Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey and Councillors Bower, R. Brooks, Cobain, Kelly, Long, McCabe, McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McKeown and Nic Bhranair.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, expressed his sincere condolences to the families and friends of the three girls who had been murdered in Southport.

Disorder within the City on 3rd August, 2024, and the attacks on minority owned businesses

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from Mr. A. Alloush and Mr. M. Alterk, the owner and manager of a local shop.

Together they advised the Council that their shop on the Donegall Road had been set alight and destroyed on 3rd August. They explained that it was, in fact, the third time that the shop had been attacked and that it had been targeted solely because it was a Muslim-owned business. Mr. Alterk also stated that he had been attacked by a group of six masked men.

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Monday, 5th August, 2024**

They criticised the PSNI response to the violence and queried what the police and political leaders were going to do about the ongoing attacks and violence against the Muslim community within the City.

The Lord Mayor thanked the speakers for their contribution and they retired from the meeting. He outlined that he was convening a group of affected business owners, community stakeholders and Council officers to determine how the Council could support them.

A number of Members thanked the deputation for attending and expressed their sympathy to them and to all those who had been affected by the violence, intimidation and criminal behaviour which had taken place in Belfast on Saturday, after an anti-immigration protest in the city centre.

Other Members condemned the violence and criminal behaviour which had taken place but stated that some people had genuine concerns regarding unregulated immigration and that they were entitled to peacefully protest.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

“This council condemns the violent destruction and racist intimidation across the city, caused by far-right agitators on the streets of Belfast over the weekend.

We stand in solidarity with those in our minority ethnic communities across the city, who own and run businesses, contribute to our culture and identity in Belfast and make Belfast an open and welcoming place to live, work and study.

We reiterate our commitment to Belfast being a city of sanctuary for those fleeing war and persecution.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the attack in Southport last week and their families, they deserve justice.

Those who would seek to exploit this tragic situation to suit their own malevolent ends do not speak for Belfast nor represent our city.”

Amendment

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

That the following be added to the end of the motion:

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 5th August, 2024**

“that officers would submit a report to a future Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, as soon as possible, to establish a programme of financial assistance for the business owners who were impacted by the racist, criminal attacks, following an anti-immigration protest on Saturday, 3rd August, 2024, with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to have delegated authority in respect of the establishment of the fund.”

The Proposer of the original motion agreed to the addition of the paragraph.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That this Council welcomes and officially supports the United Against Racism rally, taking place in the City on Saturday, 10th August, 2024, and that it will use its social media to promote it.

On a vote by show of hands, thirty-two Members voted for the amendment and ten against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That a report be submitted to a future meeting to consider a way in which those people who had concerns regarding immigration in the City could engage with the Council, in order to prevent future protests.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for the amendment and thirty-four against and it was accordingly declared lost.

After discussion, the following motion, standing in the name of Councillor Flynn, as amended by Councillor Beattie, was put and unanimously agreed:

“This council condemns the violent destruction and racist intimidation across the city, caused by far-right agitators on the streets of Belfast over the weekend.

We stand in solidarity with those in our minority ethnic communities across the city, who own and run businesses, contribute to our culture and identity in Belfast and make Belfast an open and welcoming place to live, work and study.

We reiterate our commitment to Belfast being a city of sanctuary for those fleeing war and persecution.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 5th August, 2024**

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the attack in Southport last week and their families, they deserve justice.

Those who would seek to exploit this tragic situation to suit their own malevolent ends do not speak for Belfast nor represent our city.

Officers will submit a report to a future Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, as soon as possible, to establish a programme of financial assistance for the business owners who were impacted by the racist, criminal attacks, following an anti-immigration protest on Saturday, 3rd August, 2024, with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to have delegated authority in respect of the establishment of the fund.”

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Monday, 8th July, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Councillors Black, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite,
R-M. Donnelly, M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. P. Hamilton, Lead Officer – Community Safety; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Beattie and Nelson.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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.

Bonfire Update (report tabled)

The Committee was provided with an update in respect of a number of bonfires which were being built across the City.

Annadale

The Committee was informed that the Bonfire Panel had requested that the bonfire located at Annadale Embankment be referred to the Committee for its consideration relating to the appropriateness of the location, which was on Belfast City Council land.

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Monday, 8th July, 2024**

The Committee was advised that the last time a bonfire had been held on that site was in July 2019.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees to instruct the contractor to remove bonfire material which had accumulated on Council land on Annadale Embankment.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for the proposal and four against and it was declared carried.

Inverary/Sydenham

After further discussion, the Committee agreed that further engagement be undertaken with the representatives building the bonfire in Inverary/Sydenham, specifically regarding the removal of tyres from the site, with a further assessment to be requested from the PSNI before the Council would fulfil the request from the bonfire panel for the installation of a sand base at the site.

Call-in

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 48 (a) (1), that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decisions would result in a breach of statutory duty.

Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Tuesday, 9th July, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Councillors Bunting, de Faoite,
R-M. Donnelly, M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. P. Hamilton, Lead Officer – Community Safety; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Beattie, Cobain and Nelson.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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.

Bonfire Update (verbal report)

The Committee was provided with an update in respect of a number of bonfires which were being built across the City.

The Committee noted the update.

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Tuesday, 9th July, 2024**

Call-in

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 48 (a) (1), that the aforementioned decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decision would result in a breach of statutory duty.

Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 16th August, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, de Faoite,
R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett and Maghie,

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Cobain, M. Donnelly, Groogan, Long, I McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nelson and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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.

Update on programme of support for the business owners impacted by the August attacks

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the ongoing work to support the recovery effort following the disorder within the city on 3rd August 2024, with a focus on the support for affected businesses.

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 16th August, 2024**

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the update on work undertaken to date to support the recovery efforts following the attacks businesses in early August;
- noted and endorsed the proposed short-term approach to supporting the affected businesses; and
- noted that a further report would be brought back to a future meeting to provide feedback on support provided and to consider any potential additional supports – in conjunction with other departments and agencies.

Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 23rd August, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Cobain, de Faoite and Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st and 28th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, 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, Black, M. Donnelly, Duffy, R. McLaughlin and Nelson declared an interest in item 2f – Discretionary Payments in that they worked for or were associated with organisations which had submitted applications and left the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

Restricted Items

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

Update on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts and agency assignees engaged by the Council and outlining the steps being taken to reduce the Council's reliance on those two categories.

She reported that, as at 30th June, 2024, 211 staff had been filling posts on a temporary basis, 121 of whom had substantive Council posts to return to when no longer required. The other 90 were fixed term contract employees who did not have a substantive post to return to. Between 1st April and 30th June, 22 staff had joined the Council on a temporary contract, with 9 having a substantive post and 13 being on fixed term contracts.

She reported further that 215 agency assignees had been engaged by the Council as at 30 June, 33 of whom were seasonal workers. She outlined the cost of employing agency assignees for the three-month period ending on 30th June and pointed out that this did not represent a financial burden, as it was met through departmental underspends.

From 1st April 2024 to 30th June 2024 there were 136 appointments made. As of 30th June 2024, there were an additional 40 posts in transition (at public advertisement / internal trawl stage; shortlisting and/or interview stage; pre-employment checking stage, etc.

The Director then stated that the Corporate Contract Manager, who had been in post since February, had established regular compliance and challenge meetings across Departments, with a view to driving down long-term agency usage and that data was being reviewed to assess the potential for creating some permanent flexible roles.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

In-house Agency Research Report - Findings

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report and agreed that the matter be included on the agenda of the Members' workshop on financial planning which was scheduled to be held in September.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted:

- the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change portfolio and timescales going forward;
- the update on the Pay and Grading Review; and
- the update to business planning for Continuous Improvement for the current financial year.

2024-25 Quarter 1 Finance Report

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 1 2024/25.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 1, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £1.8m, representing 3.8% of the net expenditure budget. The Quarter 1 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £169k, representing 0.1% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director then provided updates on the 2024/25 reserves position, additional vat receipts, the rates finalisation 204/25 and the capital projects.

The Committee noted:

- the Quarter 1 financial position; and
- the half year Treasury Management report.

Medium Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the assessment of the key financial factors which would influence the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 - 2028/29 and the rate setting process for 2025/26, together with an overview of the priorities and work in progress to establish the 2025/26 - 2028/29 Efficiency Programme.

The Committee:

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- noted the challenges to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting; and
- agreed that the same district rate increase would be levied on domestic and non-domestic properties.

Discretionary Payments

The Director of Finance submitted a report which provided details on the outcome of the assessment of Discretionary payment applications received during July and August 2024 and which sought agreement in relation to the award of the grant.

The Committee:

- 1) noted the number of applications received and the total funding requested; and
- 2) agreed the payment of grant to those who scored over 50%.

2 Royal Avenue

The Committee noted that an update on the initial Expression of Interest / Soft Market Testing Exercise in respect of the Ground Floor of 2 Royal Avenue was presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 7 August 2024, and noted the next steps on commencing detailed discussions with interested parties which would be reported back to the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in Autumn 2024 for consideration.

Low Emissions Strategy

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the ongoing development of a Low Emission Vehicle Strategy for Belfast City Council and which sought approval to move forward with an initial first phase to assess the commercial viability of council owned assets for possible Electric Vehicle investment.

The Committee:

- (i) noted the emerging draft Belfast City Council Low Emission Strategy;
- (ii) noted that detailed financial modelling was ongoing to understand the implications of implementing the emerging draft strategy and that a further report would be brought back to the Committee;
- (iii) agreed that officers progress with phase 1 and phase 2 of the strategy, which would support a commercial assessment and market testing of Council land assets to understand potential scope to bring forward for possible locations for low emissions infrastructure investment; and

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- (iv) noted that a further report would be brought back to Committee on phase 1 and phase 2.

Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention Programme

The Committee considered a report, the purpose of which was to provide Members with a progress update on the Wider University and Lower Ormeau Intervention and the development of a shared multi-agency action plan; to request Members to consider the approach for securing resources to deliver the 4-year action plan, the need of which had been further amplified given recent protests and violence which had severely impacted vulnerable people within the area and increased community tensions and the sense of safety; and to highlight and seek the views of Members in relation to a number of objections that have been received from LANI and the wider landlord community in relation to the emerging action plan, alleygating scheme and LIF environmental improvement project.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That should the contributions being requested from the other partners in the Inter-Agency Group for the continued funding of the post of Intervention Manager be not forthcoming, then the remaining budget in the discretionary fund be used for this purpose.

On a vote four Members voted for the proposal and 10 Members against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- (i) noted the progress update in relation to the development and delivery of the Wider University and Lower Ormeau (WULO) Intervention;
- (ii) noted the objections raised from LANI and the wider landlord community in relation to the WULO Action Plan;
- (iii) granted approval to publicly launch the WULO Action Plan, with the omission of LANI as being a support partner to the plan;
- (iv) agreed to write to the Inter-Agency Group partners seeking funding contributions towards the proposed extension of the Area Intervention Manager up to 2028 which was aligned to the 4-year action plan; and
- (v) agreed, in principle, the Council's funding contribution towards the Area Intervention Manager position.

Assets Report

(On the advice of the City Solicitor, the Members of the Planning Committee, that is, Councillors Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Murphy and Whyte left the meeting whilst part (ii) was under discussion. Councillor R. McLaughlin took the Chair.)

The Committee:

- i) Knocknagoney Linear Park – Boundary Rectification**
 - approved the rectification of lands at Knocknagoney Linear Park.
- ii) The Lighthouse Building, Gasworks Estate – Change of Use from Office to Residential Use**
 - deferred consideration of a change of use from office to residential to enable a further report to be submitted on the type of residential property and the land contamination.
- iii) Blythefield Multi Sports Pitch and Pavilion – Lease Variation**
 - approved the lease variation to Greater Village Regeneration Trust re the insurance and maintenance liabilities on the Blythefield multi-sports pitch and pavilion.
- iv) Ormeau Embankment – Notification of Footpath Adoption**
 - noted the notification of the footpath adoption at Ormeau Embankment by the Department for Infrastructure.
- v) Fullerton Park – Lease Renewal**
 - approved the Lease Renewal of a site lease at Fullerton Park to Dunmurry Young Men’s Football Club.
- vi) Olympia – Update on Commercial Development Sites & New Lease Agreement**
 - noted the update to the commercial development sites to Lidl NI Limited.
 - approved that a lease is entered into between the Council and NIE on a portion of the Olympia site to facilitate a NIE sub-station to service the development.
- vii) The Keep Cornmarket Concept Store- Licence**
 - agreed in-principle to enter into an agreement with DFI to facilitate additional security measures on the pavement outside the proposed new occupiers concept store with a further agreement to be entered into between Council and the occupier regarding the upkeep of the works.

NI Water update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted a report which provided details of correspondence which had been received from NI Water in respect of its constraints and which outlined the potential impacts of this for the city, along with the Council's proposed response. The Committee:

- (i) noted the correspondence received from NI Water regarding budgetary constraints and the potential impact of this for Belfast;
- (ii) noted the next steps as outlined at paragraphs 3.4-3.6 of the report; and
- (iii) agreed to invite the Chief Executive of NI Water to attend a future meeting of the Committee and noted that this would be raised with the Minister of Infrastructure as part of the All-Party meeting at the start of October.

Belfast Bikes Operating Model and revenue Structure

The Committee deferred consideration of the new operating model and revenue structure for the Belfast Bikes Scheme to enable Party briefings to take place.

Peace Programmes – Peace Plus and Peace IV Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Peace Programme, namely, Peace Plus and the Peace IV Programme.

The Committee noted the following:

Peace Programmes

- the significant investment that has been secured to date for Belfast under the Peace programmes (Peace – Peace Plus) of over £60m which had delivered significant and transformational projects across the city.

Peace Plus Programme

- Theme 1.1 – Local Action Plan – that the Council's Local Action Plan for Belfast under Theme 1.1 had been approved and represented an investment of over £15.1m in the city and would cover three themes as laid out in paragraphs 3.5-3.7 of the report.
- Theme 1.4 – that SEUPB's Steering Group was due to meet in September to determine the outcome of applications under this Theme which included the Council's proposals for the reimagining of Waterworks and Alexandra Park.

Peace IV Programme

- the updates on the Peace IV programme projects and the update on the procurement issue at Black Mountain Shared Space.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Notices of Motion – Neonatal Leave

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 At the SP&R committee on 24th March 2023 the Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st February 2023, had referred the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Spratt and seconded by Councillor Bunting:

“This Council will amend maternity leave provision for mothers of babies defined as premature so that maternity leave will not commence until the certified due date of the child. All/any leave required from delivery date of a premature baby by parents will be considered compassionate leave and not reduce an employee’s right to standard parental leave.”

- 1.2 The SP&R Committee adopted the motion, and it was forwarded to The Director of Human Resources to review / action.

This report informs Committee of the outcome of the consultation with the trade unions and the development of a proposed Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy which will be implemented in September 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the agreed Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy and to agree to the implementation of the policy for all staff with immediate effect.

3.0 **Main report**

3.1 **Commencement of Maternity Leave**

- 3.1 As maternity leave and pay provisions are a statutory right and the entitlement to maternity leave and pay is enshrined within legislation, including when maternity leave must begin, i.e. no later than the day of the birth (regardless if the child is born prematurely), Council are unable to amend the commencement date of a new mother's (or the equivalent for an adopter/surrogate) maternity leave to that of the expected due date as opposed to the date of the birth. However, there is no restriction upon the Council providing another form of leave which can be added on to the end of maternity leave to enhance the time a mother has to spend with her new-born child.

On 24th May 2023 a new Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Bill became law and will come to effect in 2025 in England, Scotland and Wales. This is not applicable in Northern Ireland.

In addition, Neonatal Leave is included within the current consultation on the Department for the Economy's "Good Jobs" *Employment Rights Bill*.

Despite this, there is no restriction upon the Council developing its own policy to allow for the provision of this additional leave and therefore consultation was commenced with the trade unions through the Council's Industrial Relations Framework to seek to develop a policy which would offer this provision to staff.

3.2 **Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy**

Following consultation between management and trade unions a Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy was agreed by JNCC on 20th June 2024.

The policy provides additional leave for staff, whereby they have a newborn child who has spent time in a neonatal care unit following birth. This will ensure such parents have the opportunity to spend the same amount of time at home with their newborn child, as would be the case had the child not spent time in neonatal care.

The proposed entitlements are based upon the statutory entitlements that will be provided to employees in England, Scotland and Wales as part of the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 and will create an additional family related leave over and above that which is already provided by the Council through its various work life balance entitlements.

Furthermore, the same entitlements will apply to mothers, fathers/non birthing parents, adoptive parents and the intended parent (if having the baby through surrogacy arrangements).

3.3 Entitlement to Neonatal Leave

The policy provides additional leave for Council employees whose newborn child has had to spend a minimum of seven consecutive days in a neonatal care unit within the first 28 days following birth.

The amount of leave will be dependent upon how long the baby spends in neonatal care and will be based upon full weeks only. The minimum period of leave will be one week (i.e. one period of seven consecutive days), with the maximum being 12 weeks.

The leave can be taken at any time up to 68 weeks following the birth of the baby. However, for the mother of the child it must be taken following her maternity leave (this will also apply to the main adopter of the child – i.e., it can only be taken at the end of the adoption leave). This is because, once maternity leave has commenced it cannot be ended and then restarted again.

For the father or non-birthing parent the leave can be taken at any time up to the 68 weeks and does not impact upon the entitlement to paternity leave.

3.4 Entitlement to Neonatal Pay

Payment for a period of neonatal leave will be paid at the same rate as the weekly rate of statutory maternity pay, maternity allowance, statutory paternity pay, statutory shared parental pay, statutory adoption pay and statutory parental bereavement pay. Currently, this equates to £183.03 per week.

While entitlement to the leave is a day one right, entitlement to the pay will require the employee to have completed 26 weeks of continuous service. This is in line with the current requirements for other types of paid “family leave” and mirrors the legislation to be introduced in GB.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5 Based upon UK average numbers of newborn babies who spend time in neonatal care following birth, and using the numbers of Council employees who were on maternity leave during 2021 – 2023 the estimated costs to the council would range from £497.84 (one weeks leave) to £5,974.09 (12 weeks leave).

- 3.6 Following ratification at council, we will work with colleagues in External Affairs, Communications and Marketing to deliver both external and internal communications around the benefits of the policy.

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

- 3.7 There are no equality or good relations implications with the Neonatal leave policy.
- 3.8 The introduction of the enhanced leave provisions should have a positive impact on equality and good relations as it will ensure that the parents of children born premature or sick, requiring a longer hospital stay, will have the same amount of time to spend at home with their newborn child as those employees whose child is born healthy.
- 3.9 This policy has undergone equality and rural needs screening and has been screened out.”

The Committee noted the agreed Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy and agreed to the implementation of the policy for all staff with immediate effect. It was agreed also that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the Council’s current Maternity Pay rates.

**Response received from DfC
re NOM – Anti-Poverty Strategy**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 19th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to the Minister for Communities requesting that the Anti-Poverty Strategy be brought forward as quickly as possible.

The Committee was advised that a response has been received from Mr. Carl Savage, Deputy Director Central Policy Division, Department for Communities.

In his response he advises “*Minister Lyons is committed to delivering long-term, sustainable solutions to poverty in all its forms for our communities right across Northern Ireland and ensuring the best possible future for those suffering socio-economic disadvantage.*

The Minister will be engaging with his Executive colleagues over the coming weeks and months to identify and implement effective and sustainable actions that will address the issues faced by all living in poverty within Northern Ireland.

The intention is for a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy to be brought to the Executive as soon as possible, taking account of the current delivery environment and Executive and Ministerial priorities.

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Final decisions on the content and implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy will be subject to Executive agreement."

The Committee was advised that officers would continue to work with colleagues from DfC to seek to maximise the draw-down of available funding to support those affected by the cost-of-living crisis through the Hardship Programme. The Council would also continue to raise awareness and create referral pathways to existing support services which might be available through the annual publication of the cost-of-living guide.

The Committee noted the response.

**Response received from DfI re
Trademarket Belfast's request**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting held on 19th April, 2024, it was agreed to write to Mr John O'Dowd, Minister for Infrastructure, to communicate the Council's support for Trademarket moving to Bankmore Square as an important catalyst for local business activity and as a unique offering to tourists, and ask that the Department ask Linen Quarter BID to surrender their lease and award Trademarket the lease of Bankmore Square, with all the due diligence required, from July 2024 in order to protect jobs and reduce any disruption to their business and the dozens of small independent businesses which rely on Trademarket.

The Committee was advised that a response had been received from Ms Mary Toner, Lands Branch, Department for Infrastructure.

In her response she advises that" *the area of land in question is not surplus to the Department's requirements. You are aware that the Department has already entered arrangements with another party (Linen Quarter BID) in respect of this land. The Department will not be seeking to terminate its licence agreement with Linen Quarter BID as there has been no breach of their obligations."*

Noted.

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

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

The Committee was informed that a response had previously been received from Mr. Chris Conway, Group Chief Executive of Translink, dated 7th May, which noted that Translink was planning a series of meetings with a range of interested parties, where they would listen carefully to all viewpoints and consider a response once this process had been completed.

The Committee was advised that a further response had subsequently been received, dated 18th July, again from Mr. Chris Conway, Group Chief Executive Translink,

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advising that, during recent weeks, representatives had met with a wide variety of groups, including Conradh na Gaeilge, Foras na Gaeilge, Ulster-Scots Agency/Board o Ulster Scots, Sinn Féin, DUP, and Belfast South Community Resources to discuss the issue. He detailed that Translink's position had been consistent throughout all meetings, a desire to listen to the issues raised and look for solutions.

In conclusion the correspondence advises that further dialogue on this issue within and between communities and political representatives will be required to reach a solution.

The Committee noted the response.

Governance

Appointment to Outside Body: Integrated Care System NI Area Integrated Partnership Board

The City Solicitor advise the Members that Correspondence had been received from the Department of Health advising that work was underway on the development and implementation of the Integrated Care System for Northern Ireland (ICS NI).

The letter indicated it had been agreed that council representation on Area Integrated Partnership Boards would be undertaken by local councillors. Therefore, the Department was now seeking to secure one local government representative from each relevant council within each shadow AIPB area, which would include one from Belfast City Council

This fell under the appointments to outside bodies under the St. Lague Order of Choices.

In accordance with the decision of the SP&R Committee 21/6/19 which "*agreed a process to deal with any additional requests from outside bodies for Council representation during the Council term, in that the Party or Parties who would have had the next available choice(s) under the Saint Lague table would be asked to nominate a representative(s)*".

Accordingly, the positions will be offered in the instance to the next Party on the list, namely, the DUP.

The Committee acceded the request to appoint to the Integrated Care System NI Area Integrated Partnership Board and noted that the nomination would be made in accordance with Committee's decision of 26th June, 2023 in relation to additional appointments to outside bodies.

Amendments to Standing Orders - The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider amendments to Standing Orders to allow all meetings of the Council and its Committees to be held in a hybrid format, that is in-person and remotely.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the amendments to Standing Orders and to approve the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) “The Regulations” 2024 came into effect from 25th June 2024.

3.2 The Regulations makes provision for remote attendance at council and committee meetings by members of a council and requires the council to make standing orders regarding the decision to hold the meeting remotely, the conduct of a meeting and access by the public.

3.3 By way of background, Members will be aware that the Council has always been supportive of the introduction of legislation to allow Councillors to attend meetings on a remote basis. The Council had previously responded to a Call for Evidence from the Department for Communities back in early 2022 indicating that it supported proposals to have legislation put in place which would allow remote/hybrid meetings to be held on a permanent basis, legislation which had previously been available temporarily under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

3.4 As recently as 19th April, 2024, the Committee 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.

Amendments to Standing Orders

3.5 The Regulations state at paragraph:

(5) A council must make standing orders governing remote attendance at meetings of that council, which shall—

- (a) specify the basis or process for considering whether (including who is to assess or decide whether) council meetings should or are to be held remotely;**
- (b) govern the arrangements for and conduct of such meetings whenever such meetings are to be held remotely; and**
- (c) regulate –**
 - (i) the public's access to such meetings, and**
 - (ii) the availability to the public of documents pertaining to such meetings,**

whenever such meetings are to be held remotely.

- 3.6 Regarding 5(a), given the Council's previous views on the holding of remote meetings, it is suggested that Standing Orders should be amended to provide that the default position is that all meetings of the Council and its Committees shall be held remotely, that is, in a hybrid format so that Members may attend in person or remotely.**
- 3.7 For 5 (b) the arrangements and conduct of meetings shall be governed by the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules (set out in appendix 1).**
- 3.8 In relation to 5(c), the public can access all Council and Committee meetings in-person. In addition, these meeting are streamed live and can be accessed through the Council's website. All papers will be uploaded through the software as per normal procedures and this is also set out in appendix 1.**
- 3.9 Therefore, it is proposed that Standing Orders be amended as follows:**
 - 2(a) All meetings of the Council and its Committees shall be held remotely, that is in a hybrid format so that Councillors can attend in-person or remotely, in accordance with The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations Northern Ireland (2024).**
 - 2(b) The arrangement and conduct, public access and availability of documents is set out in the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedures Rules.**
- 3.10 If the Committee is minded to agree to the amendments to Standing Orders then, following ratification by the Council and the expiry of the call-in period, it is proposed that the first meeting**

which will be convened in a hybrid format will be the September meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

- 3.11 The Protocol will be kept under review, with the authority delegated to the City Solicitor/Director of Legal Services to make any minor changes. More substantial changes will be brought back to the Committee for approval.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 None associated with this report. The Council already has the equipment and resources in place to host meetings in a hybrid format.

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

- 3.13 None.”

**Supplement to Standing Orders –
Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules**

The Local Government (Remote Meetings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 “The Regulations” which came into operation with effect from 25th June makes provision for remote attendance at council and committee meetings by members of a council and requires a council to make standing orders regarding the decision to hold a meeting remotely, the conduct of and access by the public.

This supplement should be read in conjunction with Standing Orders 2(a) and 2(b) which give effect to that.

Introduction and Application of the Remote Meetings Procedure Rules

This Protocol and Procedure Rules sets out the basis upon which any remote meeting of the Council, and its various Committees, will be held. This Protocol and Procedure Rules should be read in conjunction with the Council’s Standing Orders. The Regulations make modifications to the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The effect of the Regulations on the Authority’s Constitution is to insert what are, in effect, mandatory Standing Orders if the Council wishes to hold meetings remotely, either wholly or partially.

A reference in any enactment of a council or committee meeting is not limited to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place and a reference to a “place” where a meeting is held, or

to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital, or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers.

1. Public Access

- 1.1 All meetings will be held in a hybrid format.
- 1.2 The public can access all meetings in-person.
- 1.3 In addition, these meetings will be streamed live, and can be accessed through the Council's website. Those details will be published on the Council's website and on social media.
- 1.4 It is important to note that the public accessing the meeting by remote means, as described here, is different from the public attending to exercise a right to speak. A technological failure removing the ability for the public to access the meeting by remote means does not render the whole or part of a meeting incapable of proceeding. A member of the public who attends to exercise their right to speak and is unable to do so renders only their item incapable of proceeding (This is set out paragraph 3 below).
- 1.5 All documents for the meetings will be uploaded through the software as per normal procedures.
- 1.6 These will be available to the public via the Council's website.
- 1.7 Access to meetings and documents will be limited for "exempt" issues as set out in paragraph 6.1.

2. Management of Remote Meetings for Members

- 2.1 Democratic Services will give the requisite notice of the time of the meeting, and the agenda, together with details of how to join the meeting.
- 2.2 Members will be notified of a remote meeting by email and all agenda papers will be available on the Council's website and the Modern.Gov app.
- 2.3 Remote access to meetings will be via Microsoft Teams. The meetings will be facilitated by officers from Democratic Services and Digital Services.
- 2.4 If this is not possible, attendance may be through an audio link or by electronic means.
- 2.5 Any Member participating in a meeting remotely, must when they

are speaking, be able to be heard (and be seen where practicable) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and see where practicable) those other Members participating.

- 2.6 In addition, a remote participant must be able to be heard by, and in turn hear any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting and who exercise a right to speak at the meeting.
- 2.7 The Chairperson will normally confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of a Committee meeting that they can see and hear all participating members (this is unlikely to be practical for a meeting of full Council). Any Member participating remotely should also confirm at the outset and at any reconvening of the meeting that they can see and hear the proceedings and the other participants.
- 2.8 The attendance of those members at the meeting will be recorded by the Democratic Services Officer.
- 2.9 The normal quorum requirements for meetings as set out in the Council's Standing Orders will also apply to a remote meeting.
- 2.10 In the event of any apparent failure of the video, telephone or conferencing connection, the Chairperson should immediately determine if the meeting is still quorate:
- if it is, then the business of the meeting will continue; or
 - if there is no quorum, then the meeting shall adjourn for a period specified by the Chairperson, expected to be no more than fifteen minutes, to allow the connection to be re-established.
- 2.11 Should any aspect of a Member's remote participation fail, the Chairperson may call a short adjournment of up to five minutes or so to determine whether the connection can quickly be re-established, either by video technology or telephone in the alternative. If the connection is not restored within that time, the meeting should continue to deal with the business whilst this happens, providing the meeting remains quorate and the public are able to hear.
- 2.12 In the event of connection failure, the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have left the meeting at the point of failure and if the connection cannot be re-established to those Member(s) before the end of the meeting, then the presumption will be that the meeting should continue to deal with the item(s).

2.13 If the connection is successfully re-established, then the remote Member(s) will be deemed to have returned at the point of re-establishment.

2.14 If a connection to a Member is lost during a regulatory meeting, the Chairperson will stop the meeting to enable the connection to be restored. If the connection cannot be restored within a reasonable time, the meeting will proceed.

3. Remote Attendance of the Public

3.1 Any member of the public participating in a meeting remotely in exercise of their right to speak at Council or in regulatory or other meetings must meet the same criteria as members of the Council. Members of the public attending a meeting remotely must, likewise, when they are speaking be able to be heard (and ideally be seen) by all other Members in attendance, and the remote participant must, in turn, be able to hear (and ideally see) those other members participating be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

3.2 A process is in place which requires advance notification from members of the public wishing to attend remotely (if practicable). For those items of business, an invitation to participate in the remote technology can then be sent out in advance.

3.3 Alternatively, if the Council is unable to provide a technological solution, the existing public speaking rights will be replaced with public participation by receipt of representations in writing only, unless there is an express legislative provision which requires the person to be given the opportunity to appear before and be heard by the Committee. Submissions received from the public can then be read out by the Chairperson or a supporting officer.

3.4 The Democratic Services Officer or meeting facilitator should mute the member of the public once they have spoken, and remove them from the remote meeting on the instruction of the Chairperson, in order to maintain the good administration of the meeting or to retain order.

3.5 A breakdown of the technology should not disadvantage the member of the public in remote attendance wherever possible.

4. Meeting Procedures

4.1 Democratic Services will facilitate the meeting. Their role will be to control the video, telephone or conferencing technology

employed for remote access and attendance and to administer the public and Member interaction, engagement, and connections on the instruction of the Chairperson.

- 4.2 Given the reliance on technology it is particularly important that those making proposals or amendments differing from or in addition to report recommendations should, where possible, ensure these are provided to Democratic Services in advance of the meeting also. Political Parties are also encouraged to coordinate this activity wherever possible in respect of full Council meetings and other meetings likely to result in a high number of requests to speak. This is particularly important if Members are unable to participate via video conference.
- 4.3 The Chairperson will follow the rules set out in Standing Orders when determining who may speak, as well as the order and priority of speakers and the content and length of speeches in the normal way.
- 4.4 The Chairperson, at the beginning of the meeting, will explain the protocol for member and public participation and the rules of debate. The Chair's ruling during the debate will be final.
- 4.5 Members are asked to adhere to the following etiquette during remote attendance at a meeting:
- Committee members are asked to join the meeting no later than fifteen minutes before the start to allow themselves and the meeting facilitator the opportunity to test the equipment.
 - Any camera (video-feed) should show a non-descript background or, where possible, a virtual background and members should be careful to not allow exempt or confidential papers to be seen in the video-feed.
 - Mute the microphone when not talking.
 - Rather than raising one's hand or rising to be recognised or to speak, Members should avail themselves of the remote process for requesting to be heard:
[e.g., where available]
 - o Members are to use any chat facility to indicate to the Chairperson that they wish to speak. Members will unmute their microphone and turn their cameras on when the Chairperson invites them to

speak. The chat facility must not be used for private conversations between Councillors.

- Only speak when invited to by the Chairperson
- Only one person may speak at any one time
- Turn on the microphone and also the video-feed (if available or unless speaking to a diagram, presentation slide or drawing), then state your name before you make a comment
- When referring to a specific report, page, or slide, mention the report, page, or slide so that all members have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

4.6 Where members of the public are exercising speaking rights at the meeting via remote attendance, the Chairperson will, as part of their introduction, explain the procedure for their participation which will reflect those relevant elements of the above. Members of the public must adhere to this procedure otherwise they may be excluded from the meeting.

Voting

4.7 When satisfied that there has been sufficient debate, the Chairperson will ask for a proposer and seconder for the item being discussed and progress to making a decision. Unless a Recorded Vote is called, the method of voting will be as follows:

- Where there is a clear recommendation(s) in a report, the Chairperson will put the recommendation(s) forward. If there is no dissent then it is taken as agreed; or
- If there is a single amendment to the recommendation(s) or an alternative proposal, the Chairperson will put this forward. If there is no dissent then it is taken as agreed; or
- Where there is dissent or more than one proposal/amendment, these will be dealt with in the normal manner by means of a vote.
- Voting will take place as follows:
 - an officer will call out the name of each member present with:
 - members stating 'for', 'against', or 'abstain' to indicate their vote when their name is called

- the Democratic Services Officer clearly stating the result of the vote
- once confirmed the Chairperson will then move onto the next agenda item

4.8 Details of how Members voted will not be minuted (the minutes will, as normal practice state the numbers for and the numbers against) unless a Recorded Vote is called. Where a Recorded Vote is requested the Chair will ask members in turn to signify verbally whether or not they support that request.

Leaving a Meeting

4.9 Members leaving the meeting should use the chat facility or otherwise indicate to the Chairperson that they are exiting the meeting. Failure to do this will lead to an assumption that the Member has dropped out through a technology failure. The meeting may be adjourned to re-establish the remote link or to utilise the alternative phone connection. The Chairperson of the meeting will check with Members, joined to the meeting by phone, if they wish to make any contribution during discussion on any item. As the technology will make it difficult to monitor drop out at a Council meeting at which 60 Members may be present, a number will be provided enabling a message to be conveyed by text to Democratic Services.

5 Declaration of Interests

5.1 Any Member participating in a remote meeting who declares a disclosable pecuniary interest, or other declarable interest, in any item of business that would normally require them to leave the room, must also leave the remote meeting. Their departure will be confirmed by the Democratic Services Officer or meeting facilitator, who will invite the relevant Member by link, email or telephone, to re-join the meeting at the appropriate time.

6 Exclusion of Public and Press

6.1 There are times when Council meetings are not open to the public, when confidential, or “exempt” issues (as defined in Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972) are under consideration. Where the technology is available, the Democratic Services Officer or meeting facilitator will ensure that there are no members of the public in remote attendance or remotely accessing the meeting are able to hear or see the proceedings once the exclusion has been agreed by the meeting.

6.2 Each Member in remote attendance must ensure and verbally

declare that there are no other persons present who are not entitled to be (either hearing or seeing) consideration of such items, and/or recording the proceedings.

The Committee agreed the amendments to Standing Orders and approved the Supplement to Standing Orders – Remote Meetings Protocol and Procedure Rules.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Director of Economic Development Recruitment

The Committee agreed that the post Director of Economic Development be recruited on a permanent basis and that the selection panel for the post comprise the Chairperson of the SP&R Committee: the Deputy Chairperson of the SP&R Committee (or their nominees); and one additional elected member from the DUP; along with the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and the Strategic Director of Place and Economy.

Belfast Stories

(Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Programme Director submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Purpose of the report

- **Update Members on the Belfast Stories programme as part of the Belfast Region City Deal including design work undertaken to date as part of RIBA Design stages 1 & 2.**
- **Outline activity to support the next phase of development up to the end of RIBA Design stage 2 and the submission of the Outline Business Case.**
- **To note a 12-week public consultation on emerging designs including an Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Assessment.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note a 12-week public consultation on emerging concept designs for Belfast Stories, to run from 26th September until 19th December 2024.**

- Agree that a Members' workshop take place during the public consultation.
- Note that a report in December 2024 will be submitted to approve the submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Economy (DfE) to secure a contract for funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods.
- 3.2 A dedicated Programme Management Office within the Council has been operational since 2020 and the team provides regular updates to Committees and to the Belfast Stories Members Working Group.
- 3.3 In March 2024, an update was provided to SPR Committee outlining work undertaken to date and the appointment of design teams including the architectural team which is a partnership between Oslo-based Snøhetta and Belfast based TODD Architects. Gleeds was also appointed to oversee project management and design assurance.
- 3.4 In April 2024 Ralph Applebaum Associates (RAA) was appointed to head up the Experience Design Team to deliver the Interpretive Masterplan and Concept Design through to the end of the current project stage. The teams have been working together towards the delivery of RIBA stage 2 concept designs by the end of March 2025.

Programme activities and key milestones 2024

- 3.5 The focus in 2024 is the development of the design brief and concept designs for the experience and build and the development of the Outline Business Case (OBC) for submission to the Department for the Economy (DfE) for BRCD funding, which is expected to be submitted January 2025, subject to Council approval.
- 3.6 Key milestones in 2024 are as follows:

- Development of the Project Brief RIBA 1 by Q1 2024 - *complete*
- Concept Design (experience and build) RIBA 2 - Q2 & Q3 2024 - *ongoing*
- Establish the Belfast Stories Network by Q1 2024 - *complete*
- Stories Pilot by Q1 2024 - *complete*
- Set up the Stories Panel by Q2 2024 – *due September 2024*
- Develop the Outline Business Case (OBC) to be complete Q4 2024 - *ongoing*
- Members' Study Visit by Q3 2024 - *scheduled*
- Consultation on the Concept Design (experience and build) Q4 2024 - *seeking approval to proceed*
- Completion of the OBC for SPR approval December 2024 - *ongoing*
- Submission of the OBC to BRCD January 2025 - *ongoing*

3.7 These activities have been underpinned by a programme of ongoing engagement that recognises that the success of Belfast Stories hinges on the active participation and input of those who know the city best—its residents, local communities, cultural groups, business owners and visitors. Engaging with these diverse stakeholders through a structured consultation process is crucial to ensuring that the project reflects the collective vision and meets the needs and aspirations of all who will use and enjoy the space. A detailed Engagement Framework has been developed and an overview is included in Appendix 1.

First Public Consultation, August - November 2022

3.8 The first public consultation on Belfast Stories was delivered from August to November 2022 running for 14 weeks. The consultation focused on:

- Raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development.
- Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and Story Collection Framework.
- Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement.

3.9 A comprehensive consultation programme included:

- Online consultation hub
- Workshops and exhibitions
- General Public events and on street research
- Creative engagement.

3.10 The reach of this consultation included:

- 2,755 visits and 2,495 unique visitors to Belfast Stories online consultation hub
- 234 unique visitors viewed or downloaded the consultation documents and videos
- 149 responses to online survey and polls
- 65 consultation workshops
- 1,148 participants engaged through consultation workshops and events
- 82 per cent of those completing the survey or responding at consultation and engagement events are now excited by the concept of Belfast Stories.
- In the survey, 58 per cent of respondents offered stories, experiences, knowledge and networks they could share to help develop Belfast Stories.

3.11 Whilst the feedback received during the consultation was overwhelmingly supportive of Belfast Stories, there were several areas that were noted as requiring careful ongoing consideration throughout the development of the project. In particular, responses indicated that the main barriers that would stop people enjoying Belfast Stories included concerns over the experience not being considered inclusive, potential to be politically partisan or lack of trust in how the stories would be represented.

3.12 Specific barriers in relation to the building included:

- Cost
- Feelings of it 'not being for us'
- Specific design considerations
- Lack of interest/ relevance
- Concerns over duplication or competition with what is on offer elsewhere

Second Public Consultation, September – December 2024

3.13 From an early stage and in line with Council's consultation and engagement framework, the project had made a commitment to consult with the public, communities and key stakeholders at key points in the design process to allow feedback to be meaningfully taken on board. RIBA Stage 2 represents an important milestone and as such a second public consultation has been planned. It is anticipated that this second public consultation will take place for 12 weeks from 26 September to 19 December 2024.

3.14 This consultation programme will demonstrate how the emerging designs are already responding to feedback received to date. The

information presented during this consultation is commensurate with the current design phase. As such is will not present detailed designs, however, it will offer a genuine and inclusive opportunity to engage on two primary areas of interest, the design of the building and the envisioned visitor experience. Through the consultation exercise it is hoped Belfast Stories will gain both quantitative and qualitative responses to inform the next stage of project development up to the end of RIBA stage 2 and beyond. By undertaking consultation events, workshops and targeted activity, Belfast Stories will continue to ensure the potential of the project to deliver on inclusive growth through focusing on positive economic, social and environmental impacts.

3.15 The specific objectives of this consultation are to:

- Promote the project, raise awareness and gain buy-in.
- Ensure that Belfast Stories is for everyone including undertaking an equality impact assessment and rural needs impact assessment.
- Gain feedback on current plans and thinking.
- Inform next phase of project development and design - feedback will be taken on board and reported on as part of the end of RIBA stage 2 report (March 2025).

3.16 Activities and opportunities for feedback during the public consultation will focus on the:

- Emerging design concept to reflect the current stage of the project, RIBA Design stage 2 of a RIBA seven-stage process.
- Proposed facilities mix including creative hub, visitor attraction and public space.
- Visitor experience as informed by the *draft* Interpretive Masterplan, and specifically focusing on primary audiences (visitor journeys) for all elements of the Belfast Stories site.

Design Concept

3.17 Emerging proposals bring the former Bank of Ireland back into the life of the city respecting the importance of Royal Avenue whilst developing the full site, ensuring that the design orientates towards and embraces local communities. In designing a home for stories, the design teams have placed significant emphasis on inclusivity and generosity, making spaces for stories and for a multiplicity of uses. Above all, their proposals focus on making spaces for both visitors and local people.

Facilities Mix

- 3.18 The proposed facilities mix at Belfast Stories is based on the site bringing together three threads as one:
1. A *creative hub* where writers, musicians, artists and film makers can meet to create, collaborate and develop art and stories to sustain us. Proposals include education and learning facilities together with development and showcasing spaces for industry and a new home for archive.
 2. A *visitor attraction* that visitors can engage with which clearly communicates the spirit of the city – its past, its present and its future. Proposals include a ticketed experience that can support a 90-minute core visitor journey aimed at local and international visitors as well as free to access areas including orientation and a springboard to neighbourhood tourism.
 3. A *public space* – a place for everyone to gather, helping us to express our unique identities and share them with others. Proposals include generous outdoor space comprising of a programmable central courtyard for activities and events and an extensive roofscape offering panoramic views of the city.

Defining the proposed facilities mix further will continue to be an iterative process as we progress through the business case and design development processes.

Visitor Experience

- 3.19 The emerging masterplan for the visitor experience challenges a conventional thematic approach to storytelling and replaces it with a narrative framework comprising of the two main proposed routes of time and space, supported by a series of crossroads that will support large scale interventions and creative installations. This approach also emphasises the importance of the city's authentic voice focusing on engagement with the people of Belfast through an extensive programme of ongoing story gathering as well as establishing a creative commissioning model for local artists.
- 3.20 The consultation programme and materials will be designed to be accessible for a wide range of stakeholders and groups. Activities will be structured around five key themes, aligned to the overarching aspirations of Belfast Stories and mapped against the physical form that the building could potentially take. These themes are:

- Regenerating the city centre
- Providing outdoor space for all
- Providing indoor space for all
- Trusted storytelling
- Engendering pride.

3.21 Planned activity during the consultation includes:

- Online consultation hub
- Pop up hubs including 2 Royal Avenue and neighbourhood locations
- Partnership sessions co-hosted by local organisations
- Citywide stakeholder events
- Creative engagement projects working with Belfast 2024 and NI Screen
- Deep dive programmes with priority groups and Section 75 groups
- Internal Council events including workshop for Members.

Full details of the consultation activity programme will be shared with Members, and we would encourage dissemination and communication of these details further when shared.

3.22 A detailed report on the findings from the consultation, including how RIBA 2 end of stage designs have responded to feedback, will be presented to Committee in Q1 2025.

Outline Business Case

3.23 An interim Outline Business Case was completed in 2020 in advance of the purchase of the site. This business case estimated that investment in a worldclass attraction could deliver an estimated:

- £15m GVA (Gross Value Added)
- 700,000 visitors per year anticipated
- Potential to create 1,200 jobs including construction
- Ambitions to become a net zero exemplar for the city.

3.24 This work is now being reviewed and updated to reflect progress, emerging concept designs and project development with an updated OBC due to be developed by December 2024. At this stage the project will then move to departmental casework review with Tourism NI and the Department for Economy. A detailed report will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in December 2024, in advance of the submission of the Outline Business Case for departmental review.

- 3.25 The estimated approval period for the OBC is 6 months. This will hopefully be followed by a BRCD Contract for Funding estimated by September 2025.

Next steps

- 3.26 It is proposed that a Members' workshop is held during the public consultation period in October 2024. A report on the OBC will be presented to Committee in December 2024 followed by a further report in Q1 2025 outlining the key findings of the public consultation with details on recommendations and next steps.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.27 There are no new financial implications to this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.28 An Equality Impact Assessment and a Rural Needs Assessment were undertaken in 2022. These will be reassessed and updated in line with emerging designs and as part of the public consultation 2024. Findings will be reported on in Q1 2025."

The Committee:

- noted that a 12-week public consultation on emerging concept designs for Belfast Stories, would run from 26th September until 19th December 2024;
- agreed that a Members' workshop take place during the public consultation; and
- noted that a report in December 2024 would be submitted to approve the submission of the Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Economy (DfE) to secure a contract for funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

Belfast Region City Deal – update

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and seek approval for the BRCD Annual Report 2023/24.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the BRCD Annual Report for 2023/24
- Note the update in relation the Implementation and Financial Plan
- Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel

3.0 Main report

Annual Report 2023/24

3.1 As previously reported to Members, the agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires the production of an Annual Report and the requirement to meet with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation'.

3.2 The annual report has been produced for 2023/24 and outlines the significant progress made now that the deal is fully into delivery. The report provides an update on the progress of all the BRCD projects across its pillars of investment, and key highlights as of 31 March 2024 include:

- A total of fifteen projects with Outline Business Cases (OBC) now approved.
- The first Full Business Case (FBC) was approved for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) project in March 2024 marking a significant milestone for deal delivery. This was followed shortly thereafter with approval for the FBC for Studio Ulster.
- Nine Contracts for Funding (CfF) and Funding Agreements (FA) have been signed with an approximate value of £500m. These signed contracts for funding which include, Studio Ulster, Carrickfergus Regeneration, Bangor Waterfront, Newry City Centre Regeneration, AMIC, Momentum One Zero, iReach Health, Augment the City and Digital Twin, will enable project delivery.
- As the Accountable Body for the Deal, BCC has paid out £5.2m of claims to individual projects up to March 2024, with the most advanced projects now recruiting and upskilling staff, constructing new premises, co-designing projects with industry, procuring next generation technology and equipment and moving fully into operation.
- This year has seen key recommendations brought forward through the advanced manufacturing skills assessment for the projects associated with Advanced Manufacturing.

Skills assessments for the Creative Industries (Virtual Production) and Digital sectors are also now in progress.

- The Infrastructure projects, which have so far received £350k from BRCD funding are also progressing well towards the delivery phase.
- Launched in December 2022, the Belfast Region City Deal website www.belfastregioncitydeal.co.uk continues to be regularly updated with programme and project information, as well as the latest news and events. 27 key news and events announcements were uploaded to the BRCD website during the year.

3.3 The Annual Report, which was approved by the BRCD Executive Board on 12th June 2024, is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration. The individual BRCD partners will also be seeking approval for the Annual Report through their own governance structures. The report will be formally published after all approvals have been secured (and is therefore restricted until then).

3.4 The report will be shared with the Department of Finance in advance of the Annual Conversation which is scheduled to take place on 25th August 2024.

3.5 Moving into Year 3 (2024/25) we will see significant pace across the programme with:

- The opening of Studio Ulster anticipated later this year
- The innovation centres of excellence continuing to build capacity through ongoing recruitment of key positions and development of operating models
- Five additional CfFs currently in process for approval – committing an additional £150m
- Three FBCs at advanced stages of the approval process
- Eight major design and delivery contracts in place
- Two more skills assessments completed
- A Benefits Realisation Framework developed for the Programme
- Implementation of our Strategic Engagement Framework
- Participation of the BRCD Partnership at showcase investment events
- Partners continuing to seek to ensure that inclusive growth opportunities are maximised for those priority groups defined in the Deal's ambitions

Delivering Social Value and Inclusive, Sustainable Growth

3.6 As members will be aware, ensuring that the growth generated through the BRCD is inclusive and sustainable and that it

balances societal and economic needs with those of the economy, remains a central tenet of the BRCD. To this end we continue to monitor the efforts of partners to incorporate social value considerations into their contracts through the development of Social Value Delivery Plans. These Plans are reported through the SIB's social value portal and allow us to see the extent to which contracts are delivering against the social value points to which they have committed. This also gives the PMO an opportunity to identify any challenges to achieving these targets and to connect contractors relevant employability and skills services. All partners are aware of their obligations in this regard and training on this aspect of integrating social value is offered on an ongoing basis.

3.7 More broadly we will deliver for inclusive and sustainable growth through:

- Our Employability and Skills programme of activities which includes, skills for growth in high growth sectors within the deal as well as skills for inclusion providing opportunities and pathways to employment for economically inactive and marginalised groups – aligning with DfCs Labour Market Partnership ambitions
- Integrating inclusion and sustainability commitments in project design and development and holding projects to account for these commitments
- Adopting additional policy levers as appropriate

3.8 The BRCD PMO will shortly be recruiting an Employability and Skills Manager, funded by Belfast Met, to support the delivery of the Employability and Skills programme across the BRCD projects.

Financial and Implementation Plan

3.9 The overarching deal document is supported by a Financial and Implementation Plan. This year's Financial and Implementation Plan has been combined into one document which includes the expenditure profile of all the projects broken down annually and the high level project milestones. The Programme Management Office has engaged closely with partners and updated the plan alongside the production of the Annual Report. This has now been considered by the Finance Directors' Group and approved by the Executive Board and was submitted to the Department of Finance in June as required by the Contract for Funding.

Programme Communication

- 3.10 With the investment programme now in delivery phase, communication and engagement at programme, pillar and individual project level is becoming ever more important.
- 3.11 External support, which includes implementation of a strategic engagement plan, is now in place for the Belfast Region City Deal Programme. With an initial focus on local businesses, the plan will be further developed to engage with elected members and MLAs across the region to update on progress and identify further priorities and areas of collaboration, as well as future investment.
- 3.12 The Belfast City and Region Place Partnership has also been engaged to share relevant messaging with investors across the UK, Ireland and internationally, at showcase investment events such as UKREiiF - The UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum, MIPIM, the world's leading real estate market event and New York New Belfast. The partnership will continue to participate in wider investment events to maximise the benefits of the investment.

BRCDC Council Panel

- 3.13 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held on 25th September 2024, hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council. At the meeting members will be provided with a programme update and presentations on the highlights outlined in this report in relation to the 2023/24 Annual Report and a Destination Royal Hillsborough update.
- 3.14 The minutes from the meeting hosted by Belfast City Council on 31 January are attached at Appendix 2 for information.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 All costs associated with the BRCDC are within existing budgets.

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

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

'BRCDC is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be

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an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EIAs as and when appropriate.'

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Corporate Plan (2024-28) and Annual Delivery Plan

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the draft Corporate Plan 2024-25 and which provided an update on the process which was underway to develop the new four-year Corporate Plan.

The Committee:

- i. agreed the draft Corporate Delivery Plan (2024-25) as attached at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. noted the refreshed focus on measuring impact of the annual delivery plan through setting, monitoring and reporting against KPIs; and
- iii. approved the proposed next steps in relation to development of the new Corporate Plan, including the proposed Members' workshop in late September / October.

Hardship Programme

(Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Ant-Poverty, attended in connection with this item.)

The Members were reminded that an update had been provided to the Committee in June 2024 on the need for and positive impact of the £1million+ hardship scheme implemented in the 2023/2024 year which was fully funded by the Department for Communities. The Members were also reminded that the Council had fully funded and delivered a £1million Fuel Hardship Programme in 2022/23.

At the meeting in June, Members had been informed that, whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a hardship programme in 2024/2025, the amount available was £100,773, which was significantly lower than previous years.

As agreed by the Committee, the Council had issued correspondence to the Department for Communities seeking confirmation as to whether any in-year funding allocation for hardship would be made available to the Council and highlighting the need for a longer-term commitment to such funding by the Department and NI Executive.

A response had been received from the Permanent Secretary of DFC, Mr Colum Boyle. The correspondence stated that, given the very constrained financial/budgetary position and competing priorities, the Department was currently unable to provide any

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hardship funding for 2024/25. It also confirmed that it would not be possible at this time to consider a recurrent hardship funding model.

The Committee had previously agreed significant grant funding to support the social supermarket network across the city which provides direct support to those in need. Members were also advised that officers were working with key support agencies across the city to host a exhibition event in City Hall in late October / early November which would acknowledge and showcase the important work being done across the city to help people in poverty. The event would enable key service providers and support organisations to network with each other, to explore possibilities to collaborate and importantly to understand the referral pathways to key areas of support which exist for vulnerable people. Elected Members would receive an invite to the event when details are confirmed.

The Committee:

- (i) noted the contents of this report, including the recent response received from the Department for Communities;
- (ii) noted the current budget position (£100,773) in relation to the development and delivery of a hardship programme in 2024/25; and
- (iii) noted the planned exhibition and awareness event to be held in Belfast City Hall for those agencies and partners which provided support and advice; with invites to be issued to Elected Members.

Belfast Learning Cities

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To update Members on the work underway in support of Belfast’s membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and the repositioning of this work in the context of community planning.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i) note the ongoing work being taken forward in support of the city’s designation as a UNESCO Learning City including the cross sectoral partnership in place.**
- ii) note the £25k funding secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the Belfast Learning Cities initiative.**
- iii) note the proposed theme of ‘Connect’ for the 2024-2025 Belfast Festival of Learning.**
- iv) consider and agree, subject to SP&R approval, the proposed £40k funding to be allocated from existing budgets within**

City and Organisational Strategy to support the Belfast Learning Cities programme.

- v) consider and agree, subject to SP&R approval, the proposed £20k allocation to set aside to support opportunities for celebrating success or enabling access to learning opportunities across the city with up to £4,000 available N/S/E/W/Shankill.
- vi) consider and agree the proposed open call for small grant funding (up to a maximum of £500) to support community groups to design and delivery events as part of the Belfast Learning Cities Festival.

3.0 Key Issues

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that Belfast joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018 in recognition of the City's commitment to promoting and encouraging lifelong learning for people of all ages. Within The Belfast Agenda, we have a vision that our city should be a great place for everyone to live and providing lifelong learning opportunities is a core part of this. Learning has the potential to transform lives for the better- it can build better relationships and help enhance quality of life for everyone in the city.

3.2 Whilst Belfast continues to play its role as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities as well as a member of an All-Island Network of Learning Cities, it is felt there is a real opportunity to build on Belfast's Learning City status and to bring city stakeholders together to reenergise our focus and maximise the opportunities presented. Under the auspices of community planning, a cross-sectoral 'Learning Cities Leadership Group' currently exists and comprises representatives from QUB, UU, BMET, BHSCT, PHA, Education Authority, Libraries NI, community partners and Council. Other key partners, including the Open University and Belfast Healthy Cities, are engaged and plan to join the Leadership Group.

3.3 Emerging programme of work 2024-2025

i. Belfast Learning Festival 2025

A key focus of the annual programme of work has been a 'Festival of Learning' which is a week-long programme of free interactive and engaging events for local residents and partners. A thematic approach was adopted for the recent festival (held on 22-27 April 2024) which brought focus to the climate challenges facing the

city and our communities through the delivery of 120+ events across the city and attracting significant participation.

3.4 Council officers are actively scoping opportunities for the 2025 Festival of Learning Week. The theme of 'Creating Connections' is proposed alongside a strapline of 'Take Time to Connect'. This theme aims to promote the fact that learning is a lifelong journey and encourage individuals of all ages to connect with new knowledge, technologies, skills and each other. Similar to previous years, it is proposed that the programme of events is created through a combination of the following:

- Open call for small grants (up to a maximum of £500) to help local voluntary and community sector organisations to develop and/or showcase an event.
- Open call for in kind events, working in collaboration with key departments internally as well as external partners and anchor institutions.

3.5 *ii. Learning Neighbourhoods*

Another key area we would wish to scope and bring forward a potential initial demonstrator initiative is in relation to 'Learning Neighbourhoods'. The potential of this for Belfast emerged through shared learning and good practice from Cork Learning City and the work of the All-Island Network of Learning Cities.

3.6 A learning neighbourhood is an area that has a commitment to learning, providing inclusive and diverse opportunities for whole communities through partnership and collaboration and help build a culture of lifelong learning. It is proposed that the first demonstrator is realised in West Belfast, this is something that part of the city is already working towards and provides an opportunity to learn, and replicate based on evidence (aligned to values of our status).

3.7 *iii. Celebrating excellence*

A core way to help foster a lifelong culture across Belfast is to celebrate excellence. Rather than duplicating efforts or developing a bespoke approach to celebrating excellence this year, Belfast as a Learning City aims to capitalise on existing schemes/initiatives which align with our ethos or address gaps where appropriate.

3.8 In this context, a recent request has been received for the Council, under the auspices of learning cities, to support the Aisling Education Bursaries up to a value of £4,000. The Aisling Bursaries provide financial support to students from disadvantaged or

challenging backgrounds in West Belfast and Shankill to help make their ambitions of taking up further and higher education or training a reality, leading to securing a fulfilling career. Those who are supported through the initiative include young people who were perhaps the first person in their extended family to go to university; women and men returning to education and training having missed out education the first time around; ex-prisoners and victims of the conflict, lone parents, those from low-income households and those disadvantaged through disabilities. Since the Bursaries began in 2000, 1248 students of all ages from west Belfast and Shankill have been awarded £905,500 in Bursaries.

- 3.9 It is understood that the bursaries have received an unprecedented level of eligible applicants (i.e. 224) and the request of support from Council would help enable all applicants to be awarded a Bursary. Officers are actively exploring other opportunities to partner with other initiatives which celebrate success and/or enable access to learning opportunities across the city

Funding

- 3.10 It should be noted that £25,000 has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the festival and other related areas of work including the recognising and celebrating excellence as well as exploring the potential to bring forward a demonstrator initiative in relation to 'Learning Neighbourhood'. Similar to last year, it is proposed that the Council consider allocating funding to the learning city initiative up to a value of £40,000 from within existing in-year departmental budget. This would be spent on the following:
- i. **Belfast Learning Festival: £15,000 to enhance the small grant funding, the delivery of a launch event and to contribute to marketing & communications related costs.**
 - ii. **Learning Neighbourhood: £5,000 to progress the demonstrator and a report on key learning/impact etc.**
 - iii. **Celebrating Excellence: £20,000 to enable support to be provided to initiatives and schemes which celebrate success or provide opportunities to access learning opportunities. It is suggested that up to a maximum of £4,000 be made available to support initiatives across the city (N/S/E/W/Shankill). It should be noted that any future year support would be subject to Members consideration.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 £25K funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the delivery of the Festival of Learning. An additional £40k funding from Council is proposed and will be funded through available in-year budgets within City and Organisational Strategy.

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

- 3.12 There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee:

- (i) noted the ongoing work being taken forward in support of the city’s designation as a UNESCO Learning City including the cross sectoral partnership in place;
- (ii) noted the £25k funding secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the Belfast Learning Cities initiative;
- (iii) noted the proposed theme of ‘Connect’ for the 2024-2025 Belfast Festival of Learning;
- (iv) approved the proposed £40k funding to be allocated from existing budgets within City and Organisational Strategy to support the Belfast Learning Cities programme;
- (v) approved the proposed £20k allocation to be set aside to support opportunities for celebrating success or enabling access to learning opportunities across the city, with up to £4,000 available N/S/E/W/Shankill;
- (vi) agreed the proposed open call for small grant funding (up to a maximum of £500) to support community groups to design and delivery events as part of the Belfast Learning Cities Festival.

Belfast Business Promise Update

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The report provides an update on the work being taken forward to scale up the Belfast Business Promise including proposals to support organisations become JAM card friendly and adopt practices which supports those who may have a hidden disability or communication barrier.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the work being progressed in relation to the refinement of the Belfast Business Promise and the increase in the number of organisations becoming supporters; and**
- (ii) consider and agree the proposed establishment of a seed-fund/bursary (up to a value of £27,480) to support up to 80 organisations over a 2-year period to achieve JAM card friendly status, enabling them to become more inclusive.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Committee will be aware of the pioneering work which has been taken forward to develop, pilot and scale-up the Belfast Business Promise (BBP). As a key commitment in the Council’s Inclusive Growth Strategy and Belfast Agenda, the BBP is an accreditation for employers working to improve Belfast. It encourages, supports and recognises excellence and its flexibility makes sure all employers can take part, regardless of size or sector. The scheme has created a growing community of organisations committed to improving how they do business together.

3.2 The BBP is a demonstration of effective partnership working across sectors and across Council in designing, implementing, and securing commitment to the model. In May 2024, the Committee noted the positive response and commitment from businesses of all sizes and sectors during the first year of operation. There are currently 49 organisations committed as BBP Supporters (refer to Appendix 1 attached)

3.3 The BBP is a commitment from organisations to inclusive business practices and work towards achieving eight pledges including three core pledges which all businesses are committed to (refer to Appendix 2 attached). An underpinning accreditation process has been developed in conjunction with key Council

Departments, partner organisations such as the Labour Relations Agency and external advisers, including those with expertise and experience in auditing quality standards (IIP, EFQM and ISO standards). This enables organisations to benchmark their performance and practice against the eight pledges and gain support from the Belfast Business Promise community and network to continually improve.

- 3.4 In delivering the BBP and engaging with businesses and employers, a key area identified for possible improvement related to enhancing the accessibility to services for those with disabilities (including hidden disabilities). In response, and working alongside BBP partners, including the Equality Commission and the NOW Group, the following standard for organisations has been attached to core pledge 2 (Working in partnership with our communities):

“Ensure services are accessible and inclusive for those with disabilities (including hidden disabilities) through, for example, JAM Card membership (or equivalent)”

Just A Minute (JAM)

- 3.5 Members may be aware of the Just A Minute (JAM) Card, an award-winning initiative which originated within Belfast. The JAM Card is a discrete way for people with a disability (including hidden disabilities) or communication barriers to indicate that they need extra time and understanding in a private and easy way. It is a card that can be displayed in physical form or via an App, and which is widely recognised by both the people and participating businesses around the world, There are in excess of 2,500 businesses signed-up. Belfast City Council is already JAM card friendly alongside other organisations such as Danske Bank, Bank of Ireland, Translink, Belfast Harbour, Belfast City Airport, Labour Relations Agency, NHS as well as many smaller and community-based businesses. The NICS has also committed to becoming JAM Card friendly and have trained 17,000 staff across the region. Becoming JAM Card friendly, enables organisations to access the training, support and knowledge they need to ensure users of the JAM Card feel welcome in their premises.
- 3.6 Within the Belfast Agenda, there is a stated commitment to work towards Belfast becoming a JAM Friendly City; ensuring that all individuals are confident living, working and socialising in the city. There is a strong recognition across the Belfast Business Promise supporters and network of the benefits and social impact of becoming a JAM friendly organisation (refer to Appendix 3 for examples of feedback and testimonials received).

- 3.7 To encourage and support Belfast Business Promise support organisations to adopt more inclusive practices and to avail of available training and advice, it is proposed that the Council consider the creation of a 'JAM Card Bursary' scheme. The scheme would be put in place in collaboration with the NOW Group, who is the custodian of the JAM Card as well as a BBP partner. The scheme would act as a seed/fund to enable up to 80 organisations, over a 2-year period, to start their journey to become JAM Card Friendly. The scheme will target BBP supporters covering micro, small and third sector (voluntary, community, social enterprise) organisations. The scheme will provide one-off funding to participating organisations to become a JAM Card member and enable them to access the training and support available for a three year period. Any subsequent membership beyond the three years would be subject to consideration and funding by the organisations themselves.
- 3.8 Some examples of expected outcomes from the bursary include:
- i. enhance awareness and promote inclusivity and accessibility in the workplace and in service provision;
 - ii. demonstrate the Council's commitment to promoting inclusion;
 - iii. support the delivery of the Belfast Business Promise and increase the number of organisations achieving the core pledge 'Working in partnership with our communities'; and
 - iv. enable up to 80 businesses to become JAM Card Friendly and directly contributing to the Belfast Agenda commitment for Belfast to become a JAM card friendly city by 2028.

Ongoing development of BBP model

- 3.9 The process to refine and develop the Belfast Business Promise includes identifying different mechanisms to encourage, support and challenge organisations on their improvement journey, particularly in terms of bolstering the core pledges. The expertise and input from BBP Partners, including their resources, is critical to this. For example, external technical expertise has been provided to support the core pledge 'Protect our Environment' and work is underway with BBP Partners to improve and develop this further. Work is also ongoing to maximise the alignment and support through the Go Succeed programme.

- 3.10 As the BBP moves through its second year of delivery with 49 Supporters there is need to maintain momentum by continuing to build the programme of support available to Supporters and providing the robust assurance process to support the accreditation process, encouraging organisations to continue to improve and recognise their good practice.
- 3.11 As part of the ongoing development of the model, officers have commenced a process of independent evaluation of work undertaken to date in order to advise on the optimal approach for the BBP work for the next phase of development. An update on the key findings, implications and proposals will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for information and endorsement.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 The proposed JAM Card bursary scheme to be put in place to enable and encourage up to 80 Belfast Business Promise supporter organisations (micro, small and voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations) to become a member over a 2-year period is estimated to cost £27,420 (approx.). This budget would cover an organisations JAM Card membership and accessing associated training and support services. The actual costs incurred will depend on the level of uptake by organisations which will be monitored by the BBP team.
- 3.13 The proposed budget has been included within existing City and Organisational Strategy departmental budget.

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Planning Performance

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on Planning Performance. The report set out how current performance challenges were being addressed through the Planning Service's updated Improvement Plan.

The Committee noted the report.

City Innovation programme update

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

“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 the launch of the £277,000 Belfast 5G competition call aimed at businesses across the Belfast Region.**
- 2. Note plans to test and launch the Immersive experience within the City Hall Exhibition in late September – and the invitation to Members to attend a preview on 20th September.**
- 3. Note the launch of the Augment the City Phase Two funding call in September with approx. £50,000 available to up to five companies.**
- 4. Note ongoing discussions to support an ‘meanwhile use’ inclusive innovation hub at Weaver's Cross.**
- 5. To approve the development of a collaborative area-based inclusive innovation project with Queen’s University’s Communities and Place team.**
- 6. To note the request to work with Connected Places Catapult on forthcoming Horizon Europe inclusive innovation calls.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The Smart Belfast urban innovation programme encourages innovative collaboration between government, industry, SMEs, academia and communities. The aim is to harness digital 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 5G Innovation Regions competition

As part of the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme, funded by the Dept for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), Belfast City Council has launched a £277,000 competition aimed at businesses across the Belfast City Deal region.

3.3 The competition is designed to encourage the early commercial adoption of advanced wireless connectivity. The Council published full guidance on 20 August and the competition has already received 50 expressions of interest. Funded projects will run from October until March 2025 (when the main Belfast IR programme is due to end).

(2) Belfast City Hall Immersive experience

3.4 Work is almost complete on the augmented reality immersive experience within the existing City Hall exhibition (located in three rooms on the east side of City Hall). This is a significant collaborative R&D project with BT Northern Ireland.

3.5 Work is also underway on arrangements to manage the experience which is expected to go live in late September and run for six months. Officers are planning a Members preview on the afternoon of 20 September following the next SPR meeting. (An invite will be issued to Members once details are confirmed.

(3) Augment the City Challenge competition

3.6 This City Deal funded competition is providing £575,000 across three phases to up ten organisations to work directly with the team from Belfast Stories to explore the role of immersive technologies in supporting individuals to contribute their stories to future Belfast Stories collection. The aim is to inform the future procurement and design of digital solutions for managing the story-collection aspects of Belfast Stories.

3.7 Ten organisations received £10,000 each in phase one to develop concepts initial which were presented to a panel at a stakeholder

workshop in June. The audience included representatives from the region's Tourism sector and other local councils.

- 3.8 Work is now underway for the launch of Phase 2 which will open in September. Up to five of the original 10 organisations will receive further funding to develop Proofs of Concepts that are more tailored to the specific needs of Belfast Stories. A third phase will follow with final working proto-types solutions being developed early in winter 2025.

(4) Inclusive innovation

- 3.9 At the June SPR committee, Members asked for an update on the Council's work on inclusive innovation. The following sets out the current status of this work.

- 3.10 In developing its Smart Belfast framework, Belfast City Council recognised the importance of integrating an inclusive approach to its urban innovation programme. The national Innovation Agency, NESTA, was commissioned in 2023 to engage with local innovation partners to identify opportunities for integrating such an approach into the activities, not only of Belfast City Council, but other innovation partners including Innovation City Belfast and the Belfast Region City Deal.

- 3.11 The Nesta work identified two main drivers for inclusive innovation in Belfast:

- A commitment to a place-based, challenge-led approach that requires the ability of citizens and communities to collaborate with government, universities and industry to better understand and address complex urban problems. (and likewise the capacity of these other sectors to collaborate effectively with communities.) This includes a commitment to direct citizen participation and co-design in developing and delivering innovative solutions.
- A commitment to building core competencies and skills with residents and communities to maximise the benefits of living in a society increasingly shaped by digital technology. This is not just about providing a pathway to training and employment but about supporting communities to address issues of data privacy, disinformation, and access to services.

- 3.12 Nesta indicated that forthcoming UK and EU funding for research and innovation will be increasingly predicated on the capacity of cities and institutions to integrate inclusive innovation into their approaches.

- 3.13 Nesta noted that Belfast's existing community development infrastructure provides an important foundation on which to develop an inclusive innovation programme. And that the development of a core city programme would add significant value to existing approaches.
- 3.14 In parallel with the Nesta work, the City Innovation Office has led on a number of inclusive innovation projects including the £2m Homes for Healthy Ageing project which brought together health companies and university researchers, to work with older people in the Market area to test medical technologies that sought to address issues of stress, anxiety and loneliness. Feedback from the people taking part in the project was extremely positive, while a number of the companies involved went on to develop successful products.
- 3.15 The Office has also led on the three-year €675,000 'Hubs of Innovation' programme in partnership with the Belfast Maritime Trust. This EU funded project brought together communities along the city's waterfront, with tech innovators and creatives, to develop new ways to explore local cultural and heritage as part of the wider regeneration of the maritime mile.
- 3.16 Lately, the City Innovation Office has been engaging with Ormeau Labs, Young Social Innovators, Queen's University and Ulster University on joint opportunities to take forward inclusive innovation projects.
- 3.17 Professor Joan Condell from Ulster University is developing a programme similar in nature to Homes for Healthy Ageing that would work with carers, GPs and med tech companies. Professor Condell is awaiting a funding decision for the initiative and if successful is keen to work with Belfast City Council on accessing a city centre managed location close to inner city communities.
- 3.18 With funding from Invest NI, Ormeau Labs and other partners, wish to develop a Tech for Good programme based in Belfast that would work with young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and opportunities to grow new businesses that address social issues such as climate change and health issues.
- 3.19 Young Social Innovators (YSI) recently received €2.2 million from Peace Plus to deliver the IGNITE programme. This is aimed at 16 to 24 year olds across Northern Ireland and border counties and is designed to build innovation skills with people who are not in traditional education or skills pathways. IGNITE will build competencies in problem-solving, group work, leadership and the use of tech. While the programme covers all of Northern Ireland

YSI are keen to have a city centre location to allow it to focus on cohorts in inner city communities. YSI are working with Council officers to develop onward opportunities for people who take part in the IGNITE programme including training and apprenticeships.

- 3.20 The Council has also been approached by Translink and their master developer, MRP, about the potential of making available a shared innovation space as part of a 'meanwhile use' social value programme at Great Victoria Street bus station (which is due to permanently close this autumn). They are currently in discussion with partners (including those above) to determine if such a space could add value to inclusive innovation projects and generate specific opportunities for communities close to Weaver's Cross. An update on this will be brought to Members in the coming months.
- 3.21 Finally, the City Innovation Office has been engaging with Queen's University's Communities and Place (QCAP¹) team. With funding from Queen's and the Dept of Communities, QCAP have been working with the Market Development Association to establish an inclusive innovation programme that provides local people with the research, tech, data and training necessary to harness digital innovation to understand and address local issues.
- 3.22 Ultimately QCAP are interested in scaling their model across the entire city. As a next step they are keen to collaborate with Belfast City Council on a pilot, similar in nature to the Market project, but based in another inner-city community to explore local issues of climate and urban health. This would allow both QCAP and the Council to better understand how this unique approach can inform planning and service delivery within the Council and the public sector more broadly. Queen's have costed a one-year project at £64,000 and have asked Council to consider providing joint funding.
- 3.23 Members are asked to approve the development of a such collaborative project with QCAP. Following approval, the QCAP team and council officers will engage with local Members and community organisations on the merits and focus of such a project to determine how the existing Market model could be best adapted for another context. Officers would then engage with the relevant Area Working Group and bring a final proposal back to committee in the coming months for approval.
- 3.24 Finally, it was noted above that inclusive innovation forms a major strand of several EU funding programmes including Horizon

¹ <https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/qcap/>

Europe. For example, there are two current calls each to the value of €90 million aimed at supporting work between government, industry, universities and the citizen. Belfast City Council has been approached by Connected Places Catapult which is engaging with other European cities to consider a joint bid to these or similar competitions. Work such as that undertaken by QCAP, YSI, Ormeau Labs and others would provide important foundations for Belfast's participation in such competitions.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 Budgets for the initiatives noted above are funded via third-party sources, with any Council contributions identified within the existing City Innovation Office and Belfast Region City Deal budgets. Members have also approved £29,500 for an inclusive innovation pilot.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

5.1 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration 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 presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Capital Programme - Waste Plan - Expansion of kerbside glass collection** – Agree that the project is moved to **Stage 3 – Committed** with a maximum budget of up to £802,000 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.
- **Capital Programme – IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment** – 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.
- **Shared Island Funding** - that €46,620 in Shared Island funding has been secured as part of a joint funding application with Cork City Council to install solar photovoltaics (PV) on the roof of Donegal Pass Community Centre subject to acceptance of the grant offer.
- **Capital Letters of Offer** – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q1 2024/25.
- **Contracts awarded** – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded in Q1 2024/25.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. Members are advised that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

3.2 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
Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme	Part of the Waste Plan. The project involves the phased expansion of the kerbside glass collection scheme to households in the outer city/ blue bin area.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment	Folder inserter equipment is hardware used for automated mailing processes within Digital Services. It is required for large volume communications processing for NIHE and the Council.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed

Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme

3.3 In March, SP&R Committee agreed to move the Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme project to Stage 2 – Uncommitted. As per the three stage approvals process, an Outline Business Case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. The total costs of this capital project are estimated to be £1.6m. As reported to People and Communities Committee on 6 August 2024, the Council has recently been successful in securing an offer of match funding from DAERA for 50% of the total cost estimate, meaning that the funding required from the Council is up to a maximum of £802,000.

Members are asked to agree that this project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a budget of up to £802,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment

3.4 A new folder inserter is required to continue to provide a high volume enveloping service for NIHE mandated via a Service Level Agreement, and internally for council departments. The current hardware is coming to end of life. Maintenance requirements are now frequent and increasing in recent years, and sourcing parts for this machinery is no longer possible within the UK. This project aims to enable Digital Services to continue to provide SLA mail processing service for NIHE and for council departments.

Members are asked to 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.

Shared Island Funding Awards

- 3.5 In 2023 Belfast City Council partnered with Cork City Council on a Shared Island funded feasibility study that assessed the solar PV potential on a number of high consuming council sites in both Cork and Belfast. In Belfast, the potential solar PV generation for 25 council owned buildings was estimated and linked with consumption. The results of the study were then used to complete a joint application with Cork City Council last summer to access capital funding to install solar PV on three community centres with one of these being in Belfast (Donegall Pass Community Centre) and the other two in Cork. One of the conditions of the funding was that it had to have a community focus. Donegall Pass community centre was selected due to their high potential solar PV generation matched to high energy consumption levels as highlighted in the feasibility study. Members are asked to note that this a positive funding award and that once the solar panels are installed, the panels could generate 37,898 kWh/year against a current energy consumption of approximately 19,000kWh/year (ie the panels will produce approximately double the amount of energy currently used). This would reduce carbon emissions in the city by approximately 12.99 tonnes CO₂e/kWh annually and save around £7,000 per year on the electricity bill. A contract for funding is currently being reviewed and will be signed by the Council and Cork City Council. The project will be delivered by Property and Projects. Members are asked to note the award of funding and 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.
- 3.6 A further application was put in to test interventions in community growing within the net-zero (UP 2030) neighbourhood area – Donegall Pass, Sandy Row, Markets, Barrack Street and the Linen quarter. Interventions include horticulture/growing training sessions; co-design of urban sustainable food interventions; implementation of urban sustainable food interventions; promotion of active travel; promotion of energy saving and retrofit

measures. The funding for this project is €15,000. There may be an opportunity to avail of an additional €15,000 through partnering with Wild Belfast to deliver biodiversity enhancements, making the potential total funding up to €30,000. As above a contract for funding is currently being reviewed and will be signed by the Council and Cork City Council. For this stream the Council will work with the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership to engage with the neighbourhoods in the UP2030 area to identify and deliver community growing projects within the timeframe that will help develop growing capacity and biodiversity improvements across the area.

Capital Letters of Offer

- 3.7 Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer accepted in Q1 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

Contracts Awarded

- 3.8 Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q1 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 *Financial Implications* – Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme - a maximum of £810,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme – revenue funding is in place for 2024/25 as part of the rates setting process. Revenue requirements for 2025/26 onwards are subject to approval.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Community Asset Management Framework – Pilot Community Benefit Sites

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on asset related disposal, acquisition, and estates matters.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Community Asset Management Framework - Pilot Community Benefit Sites

The Committee is asked to:

- note the update on the various pilot projects across the city under the Community Asset Management Framework pilot.
- Note that a workshop will be undertaken with Members on the learning from the pilot to inform the Framework

3.0 Main Report

Community Asset Management Framework - Pilot Community Benefit Sites

Key Issues

3.1 Members will be aware that the Council has a long history of supporting community groups and third sector organisations to deliver services, doing so by permitting community management of council assets. It is believed that communities benefit not only from overall outcomes achieved but also through their direct involvement in the management and programming of community facilities.

3.2 Recognising this on 9th November 2021, the People and Communities Committee approved a number of pilot projects across the city using the draft community asset management framework and toolkit to identify future management models and maximise community benefits and ensure community management of council facilities can deliver on the outcomes of the Belfast Agenda. The pilot projects were designed to cover a range of different asset types currently being managed within the community (leases, FMAs, partner agreements) and included assets already managed within the community and new or vacant assets. The range of functionality included community programming, sports development and youth and community support. This work has been carried out in conjunction with

Development Trust Northern Ireland (DTNI) with the aim that it would help finalise a framework through which future similar requests. An update on each pilot site is provided below.

- 3.3 ***Ulidia Playing Fields to Rosario Football Club*** - On the 21st October 2022, approval was granted by SP&R to progress with a lease to Rosario Football Club at Ulidia Playing Fields. This approval was informed by a business case led by DTNI which recommended that a 25-year lease at less than best value was the best option to ensure future development of the asset and delivery of sporting outcomes, provided the Club maintain the entire site except for the boundary fencing. This approval further included £20,000 per annum in financial support which shall be reviewed at year 5. There have been ongoing negotiations on the lease since this time with Rosario FC who had requested the inclusion of a number of provisions which were outside of the Committee approval of October 2022 (including freedom to set prices and exclusive use of the Playing Fields meaning there would be no public access) and which therefore could not be agreed to by the Council. Members are asked to note that the lease is now in an agreed form with Rosario FC in line with the prior Committee approval. The proposed next step is to agree a photographic schedule of condition and completion of any remedial works prior to transfer which is now anticipated for end of August 2024.
- 3.4 ***Clarendon Playing Fields to Clarendon Development Association*** - On the 21st October 2022, approval was granted to progress with a lease to Clarendon Development Agency (CDA) for Clarendon Playing Fields. This approval was informed by a business case led by DTNI which recommended that a 25-year lease at less than best value was the best option to ensure future development of the asset and delivery of sporting outcomes, provided the Club maintain the site. This approval further included £20,000 per annum in financial support which shall be reviewed at year 5. There have been ongoing negotiations on the lease since this time with CDA with the main issue being the Club's lack of capacity to maintain the grass pitches and the surrounding grounds which are complex due to their topography. It has since been recommended by City and Neighbourhood Services that the Council maintain the grounds and pitches up to year 5 of the term. Members approval to the maintenance arrangements is now sought to ensure that both the asset is properly maintained and the sporting outcomes achieved and to progress the transfer.
- 3.5 ***Hammer Pitch to Shankill United*** - The Hammer Pitch has been under lease to Shankill United by way of a 10-year lease since 2012. After working with the Club as part of the pilot process, DTNI have recommended that the club are require more time to embed

and develop their governance before progressing with a long-term lease and are therefore recommending that a new 10-year facilities management agreement is the appropriate form of tenure for this Group. Members are asked to agree that a new 10-year Facilities Management Agreement is put in place with the terms of be agreed under the delegated authority of the Director of Property & Projects and Strategic Director of C&NS.

- 3.6 ***Willowbank Park Multi Sports Facility to Willowbank Multi Sports Club*** - Members are asked to note that Willowbank Multi Sports Club had their changing facilities upgraded prior to commencement of the pilot and given this they chose not to be part of the pilot. To provide a range of facilities to complete the pilot, Lenadoon Community & Sports Complex has been included in place of Willowbank (see 3.9 below)
- 3.7 ***Tullycarnet Park to TAGIT Boxing Club***- Members are asked to note that TAGIT's Boxing Club premises had only recently completed prior to the pilot and the Club had a relatively new lease in place with the Council and that given this the Club wished to continue with their existing arrangements and not proceed as part of the pilot.
- 3.8 ***Former Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre to RCity Belfast***- When the pilot sites were agreed, RCity had expressed an interest in using the former Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre as a hub from which to deliver youth and community programming. However the Group found alternative premises and given this the pilot was not progressed. Members are asked to note that an Expression of Interest process was run for the use of the Centre last year with StreetBeat Youth Project identified as the preferred applicant, based on their potential to deliver a wider benefit for the local community and on their potential to utilise the adjacent Ballysillan Park to maximise on diversionary activities to reduce the negative impacts of ASB on the community. Members are asked to note that the lease agreement is currently being finalised with StreetBeat.
- 3.9 ***Lenadoon Community & Sports Complex to St. Oliver Plunkett Football Club***- Lenadoon Amateur Sports Community Interests Company (ASCIC) is the current Facilities Management Agreement holder however Members are asked to note that they have confirmed their agreement to their FMA being transferred to St. Oliver Plunkett Football club. St. Oliver Plunkett FC are one of the leading providers of sports and recreation activity within West Belfast. A business case has been developed with DTNI for St. Oliver Plunkett FC and it is recommended that a long lease is put in place. Further detail on this will be brought to Committee when discussions have taken place with Legal Services re the transfer of the FMA.

Next Steps

- 3.10 It is proposed to hold a workshop with Members to review the draft community asset transfer framework and toolkit following the completion of the pilot and how the learning from this is incorporated within any framework. Members are asked to note that there are a number of lessons learned which have emerged through this pilot process with a central emerging theme being that there is not a 'one size fits all' model that can be adopted in respect of community asset transfer and that each request, if Members are supportive, will have to be examined in its own right. The lessons learned will form part of the proposed workshop with Members.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 Ulidia and Clarendon - Estates and Legal Services to progress the completion of the Leases.

Hammer - the Facilities Management Agreement to be prepared for Shankill FC at Hammer subject to Members approval

Lenadoon - consideration to be given to the transfer of Lenadoon ASCIS interest to St. Oliver Plunkett FC.

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

- 3.12 The final Community Asset Management Framework will be screened in line with Council policy.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 1**), with the exception of the Pest Control Services to enable a report on the reasons why it was not considered viable to provide these services in-house to be submitted to a future meeting.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 23rd August, 2024**

- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 2**):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Provision of email filtering service	Up to 3 years	£57,000	P Gribben	To reduce phishing and spam attacks and also virus scanning of attachments, therefore reducing the probability of an email cyber-attack.
Concession contract for the Stables Café at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.	Up to 5 years	Income based contract	D Sales	Concession contract for the catering operations and management of the Stables Café at Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park. Estimated annual revenue of £240,000 pa
Supply of line marking products and equipment	Up to 4 years	£156,000	D Sales	To support operational teams with pitch line marking.
VMWare support contract renewal	Up to 3 years	£120,000	S McNicholl	Support contract for VMWare products that host council's virtual server infrastructure
Demolition of dangerous buildings in Belfast	Up to 5 years	£200,000	D Martin	The safe and competent demolition of unsafe commercial, industrial, and residential properties, carrying out repairs to properties following demolition or to ensure that a safe environment is maintained and controlled around or within existing properties.
Repair and make safe historic structures (monuments and walls)	Up to 3 years	£400,000	D Sales	Specialist service to repair and make safe large historic monuments in its cemeteries which have become unstable and unsafe.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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4 x 7.5ton wireless mobile column lifts	One Off Purchase	£50,000	D Sales	The lifts are required to maintain/service/repair BCCs HGV/LGV vehicle fleet, to replace the 30year old static lifts that are beyond economical repair
Strategic Assessment and Action Planning - Specialist and technical support for the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership	Up to 5 years	£180,000	D Sales	Proposed 5-year contract would align with the 2025/2028 strategic plan period and take the learning into the next process. This Contractor would deliver the 2029/2031 Strategic Assessment and 2031/2032 Action Plan.
Benchmarking tool to support a new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS) Approved SP&R March 2024. Duration and value have been revised.	Up to 3 years	£106,000	D Martin	Belfast City Council is acting on behalf of the 11 Northern Ireland Councils to appoint a contractor to deliver a benchmarking tool to support a new Entrepreneurship Support Service (ESS). This tool will be used to enable new NI business owners to assess their progress against sector trends, to enable comparisons with business peers, provide NI businesses with good practice insights and provide case studies and success stories to help NI businesses to develop.
Hire of vehicles, mobile plant & glass collection vehicles	Up to 5 years	£1,000,000	D Sales	There is an operational requirement to hire small and medium commercial vehicles - up to and including 7.5 Ton GVW and specialized vehicles to meet work demands
Pest control services	Up to 5 years	£700,000	N Largey	To support sites/premises managers across the Council with pest control services required at

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				<p>Council owned sites. These are additional services to what the Council's internal Pest Contract Unit 'PCU' provides.</p> <p>Consideration was given for the PCU to deliver these services in-house but not considered viable due to resourcing/workload pressures within the PCU and the specialist nature of the pest control services that this tender would cover.</p>
Supply of electricity	Up to 5 years	£20.5m	T Wallace	Supply of electricity for Council properties/ assets
Provision of specialist sponsorship support services	Up to 5 years	£30k * Income based contract	J Greer	<p>Specialist support services to help the Council maximise income from advertising and sponsorship opportunities across Council assets and events.</p> <p>* £30k spend value planned for initial scoping work with supplier. Future payments to supplier will be performance based linked to advertising/sponsorship income opportunities they generate i.e. % fee basis.</p>
Analysis and evaluation of city development and regeneration proposals	Up to 18 months	£250,000	T Wallace/ D Martin/ C Reynolds	To appoint a suitably qualified professional consultancy to undertake analysis, evaluation and provide financial assurance, funding advice and due diligence in relation to

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				regeneration proposals involving 3rd parties and alternative funding mechanisms/ vehicles to support development and regeneration proposals.
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Table 2: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier	Title of Contract
T2455 Procurement Advice for City Regeneration (fully funded)	Up to 1 year	Additional 12 months	C Reynolds	Extension of time to existing contract (no modification to contract value) for procurement advice to deliver competitive dialogue procurements and financial due diligence to assist with addressing sustained housing demand from across the city and unlock regeneration potential across a number of strategic sites.	KPMG	T2455 Procurement Advice for City Regeneration (fully funded)
T1856 - Provision of a facilities management service at the	Up to 6 years	Additional 6 months and £80,024.50	S Leonard	Contract extension required to allow sufficient time for Council to complete stakeholder engagement,	Athletics NI	T1856 - Provision of a facilities management service at the

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Mary Peters Track				as requested by PGL, and allow time to explore alternative management options for the site following the stakeholder engagement.		Mary Peters Track
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**Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group Update**

The Committee noted the Social Value Procurement Policy ‘SVPP’ Delivery Report.

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting on 5th August 2024**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 5th August 2024, including:

SCP Membership

- Ms Laura Euler has replaced Ms Caroline McMenemy as the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust representative, and that Council has corresponded with the Bishop of Down and Connor Diocese seeking the faith representative for the SCP.

Request for presentation by Cross-Departmental Working Group

- SCP will receive a presentation at its meeting on 9 September regarding the work of the Cross-Departmental Working Group (CDWG) which has been established by The Executive Office in response to the recent escalation in racist hate incidents and crime in our communities.

Good Relations Q1 Report and LoO Update

- Note the Quarter 1 update on the delivery of the Council’s Good Relations Action Plan including the allocation of £158,851 in grants through the Good Relations Small Grant Scheme, listed in Appendix 2
- Note receipt of the Letter of Offer from TEO for a reduced allocation of £369,809.69.

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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

AOB – Recent Disturbances

- A special SCP workshop to be convened to consider actions to address racism.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of Party Group Leaders
Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 15th August.

**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
Áras Uí Chonghaile / The James Connolly Visitor Centre	12 September 2024	Small reception for an American Trade Union delegation being hosted in the City by Áras Uí Chonghaile / The James Connolly Visitor Centre Numbers attending 60	B	Small-scale daytime; £115	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception
Ferrari c/o Richmond Marketing	20 September 2024	Media Launch of Ferrari/ Pernod 0.0 – reception event to launch the 3-day outdoor event in the grounds of City Hall showcasing the Ferrari F1 car. Numbers attending – 50	B	*Part of wider commercial outdoor event previously approved – charge TBC by City Solicitor	No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Falls Women's Centre and Blackie River Community Organisations	12 October 2024	Student Graduation for adult learners on achievement at Levels 3,4 and 5, in Supporting Teaching and Learning, Health and Social Care, and Counselling. The event will promote community-based education programmes for adult learners. Numbers attending – 150	C & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community
Confederation of British Industry (NI)	18 October 2024	CBI NI Business Breakfast – to demonstrate to our invited guests from the UK, that Northern Ireland business is driving the economy forward, creating jobs and prosperity. Numbers attending – 200 - 300	B	£300	No hospitality
Royal British Legion NI	25 October 2024	2024 RBL Poppy Launch reception including photos and speeches. Numbers attending – 100	B	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community
Rethinking Conflict	28 October 2024	Reception for the Abraham Initiative – a group of Arabs and Jews working together and visiting NI to reflect on NI peace process and lessons learned, shared spaces. Numbers attending – 50	B	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Podium	4 December 2024	Celebration & Recognition of Female Entrepreneurship – as part of Belfast City Council's Enterprise Pathway Programme which Podium is delivering. The event will bring together 300 17–18-year-old females who are participating in a wider leadership initiative and celebrate the role of female entrepreneurs. Numbers attending – 300	C	£300	No hospitality.
British-Irish Intergovernmental Secretariat	17 December 2024	25th Anniversary of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference - a forum established by the Good Friday Agreement and chaired jointly by the Secretary of State for NI and Irish Tánaiste. Drinks Reception event to mark this anniversary and speeches to reflect on BIIGC work. Numbers attending – 250	B	£825	No hospitality
2025 Events					
Co-operation Ireland	16 January 2025	Co-operation Ireland Entwined Futures Programme – Showcase and Celebration Event for 8 schools who work in partnership on a cross community and	D	TBC	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		cross border basis, based in Belfast, Lisburn and Dundalk and Drogheda. Numbers attending - 220			
Chinese Chamber of Commerce & the Chinese Welfare Association N.I.	27 January 2025	Chinese New Year Celebration - introducing attendees to Chinese traditions, music, dance, and cultural performance, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and promoting community spirit and inclusivity. Numbers attending – 300-400	A, B & D	TBC	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity/ community
Department for the Economy	26 March 2025	Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Awards 2025 - recognises excellence and achievement in training and qualifications. The NIAA showcase and celebrate the depth of quality of our apprentices, and their mentors who have demonstrated exceptional progress as well as personal achievement and commitment. Numbers attending – 160	C & D	TBC	No hospitality.
British Irish Commercial Bar Association (BICBA)	10 April 2025	BICBA Law Forum Dinner for guests attending a one-day conference taking	A & B	TBC	No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		place at Royal Courts of Justice. Numbers attending – 80 - 100			
Queens University Belfast	8 June 2025	Welcome Reception for INSAP 13 'Conferences of the Inspiration of Astronomical Phenomena' for guests attending the 5 day conference taking place at QUB. Numbers attending – 50 - 60	A & B	TBC	No hospitality
QUADRAT c/o University of Aberdeen	9 October 2025	QUADRAT Annual Science Meeting Drinks Reception for guests attending the 5 day conference taking place at QUB. Numbers attending – 100 – 120	A & B	TBC	No hospitality
Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland	22 November 2025	Anniversary Ball to celebrate 100 years of local pharmacy - Drinks Reception, Dinner, Speeches, and entertainment. Numbers attending – 330	C	TBC	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary
2026 Events					
Molony & Kelly (Destination Management Consultants)	26 April 2026	TELUS Incentive - Welcome to Ireland – a gala dinner staff recognition event for the top performers as part of a 5 day incentive trip to NI. Telus International is worldwide a Digital and Data Solutions company.	A, B & C	TBC	No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending 180 - 200			
British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons	25 June 2026	BAOMS Annual Gala Dinner and Dance for guests attending the 3-day conference taking place at ICC Belfast. Numbers attending – 150 - 200	A &B	TBC	No hospitality

Request for use of City Hall grounds for sleepout to raise awareness of homelessness

The Committee approved a request which had been submitted by PWC for the use of the City Hall Grounds on 27th September for a staff sleepout to raise awareness of homelessness.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Policy Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 13th August.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group of 8th August.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Good Relations Programmes – Councillor Fiona McAteer to raise

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McAteer requested the Committee to agree to the following proposal:

“That this is Council recognises the vital role of Good Relations programmes in supporting reconciliation in a society recovering from conflict, bringing communities together, creating shared spaces, challenging sectarian, racism and other forms of prejudice, and promoting respect for all cultural identities; strongly condemns the recent violence and targeting of businesses; encourages greater support and investment for sporting and cultural events as a mechanism for uniting local communities; registers its disappointment that

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an enhanced and fully-funded regional Good Relations Strategy has not been prioritised since the restoration of the NI Assembly; and calls for a review of the progress of Good Relations programmes in Belfast City Council to be completed within 6 months.”

The Committee acceded to the request.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 6th August, 2024

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Verner (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower,
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. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.
- Also attended: Councillor de Faoite

Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor R. Brooks.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th June were taken as read and signed as correct.

It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.

Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson, Councillor Verner, declared an interest in agenda item 3 (a) Community Support Programme 2024/25 in that she was an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership (Spectrum Centre) that had made an application for funding through the Programme and she left the meeting whilst the matter was discussed.

Restricted Items

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following two items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of

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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.

2023/2024 Year End Finance Update

The Committee was updated in respect of the financial position of the People and Communities Committee for Quarter 4, which confirmed an underspend of £1.286m (1.2%) of the £103.48m budget.

The main reasons for this were savings in employee budgets due to vacancies and waste contract cost reductions as well as additional income from events and grants.

The Committee was advised that a report outlining the year end position for the Council had been submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 21st June, together with the Quarter 4 finance report and year-end treasury position.

The Committee noted the year-end financial position.

UK Emissions Trading Scheme scope expansion: waste - consultation response

The Committee considered the draft Belfast City Council response to the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) Authority Consultation – UK Emissions Trading Scheme scope expansion: waste. The Director OSSS and Resources and Fleet explained that this consultation was seeking the Council's views on the proposals to expand the scheme to include energy from waste and waste incineration.

The Committee endorsed the draft response, as attached to the report, and agreed that it be submitted in draft form by the closing date of 2nd August, noting that it was subject to ratification at the September meeting of the Council.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Community Support Programme 2024/25

Following her declaration at the start of the meeting in relation to this agenda item, the Chairperson, Councillor Verner, left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Garrett took the Chair.

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The main purpose of this report is to:

- inform Members that Council has received the Letter of Offer for the Community Support Programme 24/25 from the Department for Communities (DfC).
- advise Members that the Chief Executive has accepted the Letter of Offer, subject to Council approval and seek approval for him to accept subsequent Letters of Variance on behalf of the Council.
- seek Members' approval to issue further payments to funded organisations upon their completion of monitoring and relevant administrative checks.
- seek agreement from Members on the option to allocate the additional funding provided, based on the detail provided in the report.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the funding allocation of £2,575,577.30 presented in the Letter of Offer from the DfC for the 2024/25 financial year.
- Note that the Chief Executive has accepted the Letter of Offer, subject to Council approval and seek approval for him to accept subsequent Letters of Variance on behalf of the Council.
- Agree their preferred option relating to the Community Support General additional funding.
- Agree the proposed additional funding allocation for; Community Support General, Advice Grant, Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension-Tribunal Representation, Welfare Reform Mitigations- Face to Face Advice and Social Supermarket
- Approve the progression of funding payments, where appropriate, following completion of due diligence requirements based on the proposals.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Department for Communities (DfC) provides an annual grant to Council through its Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer. This funding provides an element of the budget towards Capacity Building and Revenue for Community Building grants as well as Generalist Advice.
- 3.2 The CSP also provides 100% funding for other elements of activity such as Social Supermarkets and Welfare Reform Mitigations.

- 3.3 At March Committee, Officers advised that the Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer for 24/25 had not yet been received by Council from DfC. Therefore, Members granted approval for officers to progress funding agreements and provide 50% payments for the Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Building grants and Generalist Advice.
- 3.4 Council received the CSP 2024/25 Letter of Offer from DfC on 3 July 2024. There is an increase to this year's funding across several elements. A breakdown of the allocation for 2024/25 in comparison to 2023/24 is attached at Appendix 1

Social Supermarket Funding

- 3.5 Members may be aware that Social Supermarket funding was considered at a Special SP&R meeting on 28th June 2024. Members were advised at this meeting that DfC had indicated that the total allocation for Social Supermarkets would be £672,687.77 in 24/25.
- 3.6 SP&R agreed to provide an additional council allocation to provide the maximum amount of funding recommended to successful applicants. Further detail is provided in Appendix 2. The figure in the LoO is slightly less than indicated, £672,650.06, but this will have no impact as it can be covered through existing budgets.

Additional Funding by CSP Heading

- 3.7 Table 1 illustrates the available budgets created under each heading by combining the additional allocation CSP increase and 5% Unrestricted Funding (Non-Recurrent).
- 3.8 Table 1

CSP Heading	Additional Funds 2024/25
1. Community Support General	£81,786.34
2. Advice Grant	£59,946.84
3. Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Tribunal Representation- Appeals	£6,942.02
4. Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Face to face Advice	£11,738.96

Proposed Allocation of Additional Funds

- 3.9 It is proposed that additional funding for elements 2-4 should be allocated using the agreed approaches. Further detail is provided

in Appendix 3. Members are asked to agree the proposed allocations for the 3 elements i.e. Advice Grant, Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Tribunal Representation- Appeals and Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Face to face Advice.

3.10 Members are asked to consider and agree their preferred option for allocating the additional funding provided under the Community Support General heading (£81,786.34) as outlined in Table 2. Further detail on the organisations funded through Capacity and Revenue awards is provided in Appendix 4.

Table 2

Option	Description	Pro	Con
1	Allocate all the additional funding to the 87 Revenue Funded groups. Each group will receive a non-recurrent payment of £940.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue funding supports running costs in community buildings. Applicants have highlighted the impact of increased running costs which this award would help to address. • Revenue applicants receive an annual award of up to £20,000. This is a lower value than the award to Capacity applicants which is up to £50,000 and therefore Revenue applicants are more impacted by increased costs and this option would provide an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity funded organisations do not have access to these additional funds yet are also experiencing increased costs.

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		additional award targeted at those who receive less funding.	
2	Allocate the funding to Revenue and Capacity funded groups. 130 organisations will receive a non-recurrent payment of £629	• Revenue and Capacity organisations will receive additional funding to meet their running costs and provide services.	• This option does not take into account the difference in the annual level of funding to both Revenue and Capacity applicants.

Financial Implications

All awards listed in Appendices 3 & 4 can be made in line with existing budgets for 24/25. Members should note that the Capacity and Revenue awards which are multi annual awards from 23/26 were enhanced with a £1.4 million additional Council allocation. As previously advised, this allocation will have to be provided in 24/25 and 25/26 financial years.

Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

This will be considered throughout, and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/good relations and rural needs considerations.”

During discussion the Members agreed Option 2 as the preferred option and agreed to progress on this basis. Following a query, the Members noted that the allocation of revenue grants was currently being reviewed and that consideration of removing the £20,000.00 cap per organisation would be considered as part of the review.

The Committee:

- Noted the funding allocation of £2,575,577.30 presented in the Letter of Offer from the DfC for the 2024/25 financial year;
- Noted that the Chief Executive had accepted the Letter of Offer, subject to Council approval and granted approval for him to accept subsequent Letters of Variance on behalf of the Council;

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- Agreed Option 2, as the preferred option relating to the Community Support General additional funding, to allocate funding to Revenue and Capacity funded groups with 130 organisations receiving a non-recurrent payment of £629.00;
- Agreed the proposed additional funding allocation for Community Support General, Advice Grant, Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension-Tribunal Representation, Welfare Reform Mitigations- Face to Face Advice and Social Supermarket; and
- Approved the progression of funding payments, where appropriate, following completion of due diligence requirements based on the proposals.

At this stage in proceedings, the Chairperson, Councillor Verner, returned to the Chair.

Notices of Motion Update

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update on the Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which had previously been allocated to the People and Communities Committee. He advised that the report provided an overview of the progress on those Notice of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance which remained open following the December 2023 update, and those Motions and Issues which had since arisen.

The Members were reminded that, at its meeting held on 20th November 2020, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of the following two reasons:

- Category 1 – Notices of Motion which contained an action that had been completed; and/or
- Category 2 – Notices of Motion have become Council Policy or been absorbed into a strategic programme of work.

Based on the aforementioned rationale, the Committee noted the respective updates as detailed in the report and agreed to the closure the following 10 Notices of Motion / Issues Raised in Advance:

- Play Facilities for Children with Disabilities (Ref 27);
- School Uniform Exchange (Ref 63);
- CCTV at CS Lewis Square (Ref 159);
- Fast Track Cities (Ref 357);
- XL Bully Restrictions (Ref 370);
- Request for Lagan Valley Regional Park and HED to address Committee regarding Giant's Ring (Ref 372);
- Renaming of Suffolk Community Garden (Ref 378);
- Request from Glentoran Football Club to address Committee (Ref 390);
- Belfast City Council Inclusive Play Parks (Ref 254); and
- Inclusive Leisure Services (Ref 287).

Operational Issues

Mutual Aid Across Councils - Emergency Planning Response

The Committee considered a report which provided an update regarding the District Council Mutual Aid Protocol.

The Director of City Services reported that Mutual Aid was defined as “an agreement between organisations, within the same sectors and across boundaries, to provide assistance and additional resources during an emergency or business continuity disruption which may go beyond the resources of an individual organisation”. She explained that Mutual Aid arrangements existed between all District Councils in relation to multi-agency responses, with the Protocol having previously been approved at a meeting of the People and Communities Committee held on Tuesday 13th June 2017.

The Protocol had been developed in recognition of the fact that mutual aid might be required between District Councils, and it was in line with the principals of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Civil Contingencies Framework 2021. She advised that the Protocol was not a legally binding contract but rather a statement of intent which would act as a point of reference should such arrangements need to be invoked between two or more of the Councils.

She explained that each of the Councils would endeavour to assist in the form of provision of personnel and/or equipment if there was an excessive demand for a statutory service placed on a Council due to an unusual event. The Protocol would be activated following, or in anticipation of, an emergency as defined in the NI Civil Contingencies Framework: *“An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment or the security of Northern Ireland or the UK as a whole.”*

The Director reported that the MoU had recently been reviewed by the Civil Contingencies regional team and it had requested that the Councils update and sign the updated version.

The Committee agreed the working arrangements as defined in the Mutual Aid Protocol.

Playground Improvement Programme 2024/25

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the successful 2023-2024 Playground Improvement Programme (PIP) and outline plans for new playground refurbishments under the 2024-2025 programme.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee are asked to agree refurbishment works at the sites below as part of the Playground Improvement Programme (PIP) 2024-2025:

- Grampian Avenue playground
- Michelle Baird playground
- Balfour Avenue playground

3.0 Main report

Playground Improvement Programme

3.1 Since its inception in 2012, the Playground Refurbishment Programme continues to make a positive impact to the overall quality and play value of the city's playgrounds, providing new equipment, safety surfacing, boundary fencing, site furniture and landscaping works. Under last year's programme the following playgrounds were successfully refurbished (see Appendix 1):

- Loughside playground
- Northlink playground
- New Lodge playground

3.2 As agreed at P&C Committee in December 2023, independent consultants undertook an audit of play value and accessibility at all council-maintained playgrounds in April 2024. The audit template combined formats used by Play Scotland and Play England and in consultation with PlayBoard NI, Mae Murray Foundation and council's Play Development Officer. The independent audit allows council to identify playgrounds that, although good in terms of the quality and safety compliance of their equipment, would benefit from an enhanced range of play opportunities and accessible elements.

3.3 Play value is used to describe the value an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to a child's experience of play, with high play value indicating children can play in many different ways. Through play children learn and develop their cognitive skills, problem-solving, social skills, and their fine and gross motor skills. A range of play opportunities is crucial to a child's development and enjoyment of a playground.

3.4 The play value and accessibility audit was undertaken by Play Services Ireland (PSI) Ltd in addition to their annual suite of playground safety inspections. As agreed, scores from the play value and accessibility audit has informed site selection for PIP

2024-25 and will inform subsequent improvement programmes going forward. Total scores allocated for each playground relate to existing features, elements within the playground that are not play equipment but do enhance users experience, and types of play opportunities available and their accessibility for a range of age groups and abilities (see Appendix 2).

- 3.5 All playgrounds were ranked in order of their total play value and accessibility score, helping to identify which facilities are in most need of improvement. If scores were tied sites were ranked using their combined play score; if these scores were also tied sites were then ranked in alphabetical order (see Appendix 3).
- 3.6 PSI Ltd. categorised all playgrounds as either Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP) or Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAP). Members should note that due to their scale, neighbourhood facilities have the potential to offer a wider range of accessible play opportunities than smaller local facilities, therefore neighbourhood facilities would cost more to refurbish than smaller, local facilities.
- 3.7 LEAPs and NEAPs are colour coded on the results table (Appendix 3) helping to identify their size and the potential scale of investment required. This will determine how many playground sites can be improved annually within the available capital budget.
- 3.8 In reference to the results table, members will note that Cathedral Gardens, received the second lowest score. It is recommended that this site is not considered for refurbishment under PIP 2024-25 as this is a temporary facility on a site to be redeveloped under the Capital Programme.
- 3.9 It is also recommended that Bridge End playground, the third lowest scoring playground, is also omitted from selection as this facility is due to be improved using a developer contribution under a Section 76 Planning Agreement.
- 3.10 Therefore, based on estimated costs to deliver improvements within the available capital budget, three playgrounds were selected for refurbishment this financial year, they are:
 - Grampian Avenue Playground (LEAP)
 - Michelle Baird Playground (LEAP)
 - Balfour Avenue Playground (NEAP)
- 3.11 Once improvement works are complete, or in the event of other capital investment in any playground, sites will be independently re-evaluated with the results table amended accordingly.

- 3.12 It is proposed to review the play value and accessibility audit process in five years to ensure it aligns with best practice guidance, with the option to seek approval to update and repeat the audit process if necessary.
- 3.13 Members should note that independent safety inspections, which informed site selection in previous years, will continue annually to identify essential repairs and ensure ongoing compliance with relevant safety standards. All repairs will be completed in parallel with improvement works under PIP.
- 3.14 The previous selection process focused on the quality and safety compliance of play equipment and did not consider play opportunities provided or how accessible they were.
- 3.15 The new audit and selection process provides an opportunity to enhance play value and improve accessibility at those facilities in most need, it also provides a useful tool that will inform future design decisions under PIP.
- 3.16 Members should also note that accessible parking and toilet provision was also assessed as part of the audit. Whilst delivery of these features would be outside the remit of PIP, findings from the audit will be used to inform future capital projects in our parks and open spaces. Subsequently, council officers have had discussions with the Mae Murray Foundation and Playboard NI around the development of concept designs for an exemplar, inclusive play space, with supporting infrastructure, that will meet the varying play needs of every child; initial discussions have aligned with key issues raised under the Notice of Motion, June 2022 – Inclusive Play Parks.
- 3.17 The December 2023 committee requested that a copy of the Annual Safety Inspection 2023 Playground Mean Quality scores were circulated. This is included in Appendix 4.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.18 All proposed playground improvement works will be funded through the Capital Programme within an allocated budget of £580,000. CNS Landscape Planning & Development Officers will continue to re-design play facilities and project manage all works associated with the delivery of PIP 2024-25.
- 3.19 As with previous years, CNS OSS Managers will continue to assist with the distribution of information relating to playground improvements to elected members, local communities, and user groups.

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

3.20 None.”

Following a query, the Director, OSSS and Resources and Fleet, advised that currently there was delays to necessary repair works due to appointed contractors struggling with turnaround times and he agreed to investigate if this could be expedited.

At the request of a Member, it was also agreed to add the Divis Backpath to the list of playgrounds to be audited.

The Committee agreed refurbishment works at the following playgrounds as part of the Playground Improvement Programme (PIP) 2024-2025:

- Grampian Avenue playground;
- Michelle Baird playground; and
- Balfour Avenue playground.

Update on Glass Collections and Small Vehicles Pilot

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress made to date in the planning and launch of three initiatives to improve the service delivery and recycling performance of Waste Collections within Resources and Fleet. These initiatives are

- **Small Streets Pilot with PSNI/DFI**
- **Introduction of Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets**
- **Expansion of Separate Glass Collection Services.**

It will be seen that these initiatives have been progressed to such a stage that officers will provide regular progress reports to Committee going forward.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are requested to note the contents of the report, in particular

- **The status of the collaborative work with PSNI/DFI**
- **the phased introduction of small vehicle routes to difficult to access streets commencing 12th August 2024**
- **the letter of offer from DAERA in relation to the BCC application to the DAERA Household Waste Collaborative**

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Change Programme for match funding to procure equipment (containers and vehicles) for expanded glass collections

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Small Streets Pilot in collaboration with PSNI and DFI.

3.2 Members will be aware that this pilot was launched on 6th May 2024, with the first area identified as the side streets from the Stranmillis Road in the University area. The plan was envisaged to run as follows.

Area	Start Date
Stranmillis Rd Area	06/05/2024
Donegall Road / Village Area	03/06/2024
Cregagh/ Loopland Area	01/07/2024
Springfield Road Area	29/07/2024
Lower Ormeau Road/ Park Road Area	26/08/2024
‘Iveagh’ Area	23/09/2024

3.3 It was envisaged that in each area the timetable would be as follows:

Week 1 – BCC staff Letter Drop to residents addresses and social media postings

Week 2 – PSNI will patrol and letter windscreens of poorly parked vehicles with leaflets.

Weeks 3-6 – Increased presence of joint PSNI/DFI neighbourhood officers and traffic attendants

3.4 To date three areas have gone ahead as per the plan. Letter drops by BCC officers were carried out as planned, and DFI patrolling was carried out as agreed. Unfortunately, the PSNI have informed council officers that they have not been able to provide resources as planned due to other prioritised operational pressures during this period.

3.5 At the time of writing, two areas have gone through their first cycle and the third will end soon. Officers have started looking at the data from these areas, both before and after each cycle, and hope to bring in more detailed analysis and results to the September 2024 Committee meeting. Officers have asked if DFI can provide some relevant data but unfortunately, they have let it be known that their systems are not configured to report on a street by street basis. Therefore, data will be collected from BCC records only.

- 3.6 As a note, officers can confirm that at the request of a Member from the area, a small adjustment has been made to the streets proposed in the Springfield Road area, namely Rose Street has been removed and Waterford Gardens and Cavendish Street have been added.

Introduction of Small Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets

- 3.7 The previous update to Committee in February 2024 outlined a proposed timeline of a launch of this initiative sometime in Q1 2024 (March – June) with actual dates to be confirmed. This was subject to timely procurement of suitable Refuse Collection Vehicles and the successful recruitment of staff to run or backfill for the duration of this trial.

In addition, officers reported that significant data analysis was ongoing in order to test the assumptions of the Consultant's report and findings and to create as effective and efficient routes as possible prior to operational launch.

- 3.8 Since then Waste Collection officers have been working on those outstanding actions. Good progress has been made:

- Two 18 tonnes Dennis Eagle Refuse Collection Vehicles have been leased for an initial period of 12 months; and
- Staff have been sourced to operate the proposed routes.

Since their arrival the collection vehicles have been utilised in some rigorous testing of the Consultant's report findings, to

- Verify access to defined streets;
- Test the numbers of bins presented, and the actual weight of waste being produced within the defined streets compared to the consultants report; and
- Carry out actual timings of travel times between streets and frequency and travel times to tip and the Waste Transfer Station.

The revised 'actual' information will be considered when preparing routing plans for the new vehicles.

- 3.9 From the testing it has been found that the figures in the consultant's report may be a little optimistic. This is due mainly to actual increased weights within bins vis a vis the estimates in the consultants report and the increased occurrence of more than one black bin being presented per household over and above the consultants expectation. Both of these factors have resulted in smaller route sizes due to the necessity to tip fully laden vehicles at the Waste Transfer Station more often than envisaged.

- 3.10 Because of these variances, Waste Collections propose to introduce the small vehicles in a phased approach. This is to ensure that the service does not raise unachievable expectations and then have to reverse changes to routing which may prove problematic. This is also designed to minimise the number of changes to collection days for residents.

The planned phases are as follows:

Phase 1 – Aug 12th to Sept 30th

- One vehicle will be fully loaded with Black Bin collection routes and will be fully monitored to establish if the routes have spare capacity or are overloaded in practice. This will continue for 6 weeks giving each chosen street 3 collections (1 per fortnight). Any spare capacity or overloading issues will be quantified and streets added to / removed from routes as deemed appropriate; and
- The second vehicle will be used for on going route development and refinement. Further trials will take place for blue and brown bin collections to establish as accurate routes as possible.

Phase 2 – Sept 30th – Nov 4th

- Second period of 6 weeks(3 collection rounds);
- The first vehicle routes will be fully established and operational. Should there be surplus capacity this will be made available in the short term for Brown and Blue collections; and
- The second vehicle will onboard any additional black bin collections as required. Spare capacity will be allocated to begin roll out of brown and blue bin collections.

Phase 3 – Nov 4th onward

- Both vehicles will be given established routes for all collection; and
- Synergies will be explored with the current 18 tonnes vehicle which currently carries out recovery collections and some similar activities on a limited basis.

- 3.11 A list of streets being changed to smaller collection vehicle routes from 12th August had been attached to the report as a restricted item.

- 3.12 Please note that following agreement at the Lord Mayor's Cleanliness Task Force, streets that are part of the separate

PSNI/DFI pilot are currently not included in this exercise, and since the consultant's report was commissioned, it is important to note that Waste Collections management have continued to resolve individual street collection issues. Additionally, where a satisfactory solution to a street's access issues has been put in place within the last 12-18 months resulting in consistent collections being established over an extended period of time, they have not been included in Phase 1 of the initiative, but all streets will remain under constant review.

Expansion of Separate Glass Collection Services

- 3.13 Following a feasibility study into the expansion of the kerbside collection of glass, Members approved revenue funding to deliver phase 1 of this project aimed at delivering the scheme to an additional 22,000 households in 24/25.
- 3.14 Resources and Fleet subsequently compiled and submitted an application to DAERA under the Household Waste Collaborative Change Programme for financial assistance with regard to capital funding for the project. After a series of clarifications from the regulator, officers can report that a Letter of Offer was received from DAERA on 25th July, outlining the scale and conditions of funding. Subject to the Council's approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) concerning, amongst other things, capital funding on a 50/50 basis, the project will now progress to implementation mode.
- 3.15 The Implementation phase involves the recruitment of collection crews, procurement of containers (44 litre boxes & lids), initial leasing of vehicles prior to the procurement of new vehicles, communication of the scheme to the selected households, assessment of apartments (if any within the selected areas) and finally delivery of containers followed by first collections.
- 3.16 Given the lead times associated with a number of these activities, in particular the purchase and receipt of containers, and mindful of the potential clash with collections arrangements for the Xmas season, it is envisaged that the implementation phase will be completed in Q4 of the current financial year.
- 3.17 The Service will continue to keep Members apprised of the progress of the scheme through the Council's usual governance procedures.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.18 In relation to the expansion of glass collections, DAERA will 50/50 match fund the agreed capital requirements as agreed in their

**Letter of Offer, subject to the Memorandum of Understanding
having been agreed by the Council.**

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

3.19 None.”

During discussion, whilst the Members broadly welcomed the small vehicles pilot, it was noted that Councillors wished to be involved in any expansion of the scheme to ensure that other problem streets in their constituency areas were considered for inclusion and noted that the agreed streets should also have been considered by the People and Communities Committee and not just the Lord Mayor’s Cleanliness Task Force.

Several of the Members welcomed the expansion of the separate glass collection services and noted it was long overdue in some areas.

The Committee noted:

- the status of the collaborative work with the PSNI and DfI;
- the phased introduction of small vehicle routes to difficult to access streets, commencing week beginning 12th August 2024; and
- the letter of offer from DAERA in relation to the BCC application to the DAERA Household Waste Collaborative Change Programme for match funding to procure equipment (containers and vehicles) for expanded glass collections.

**Investigation of Public Path Creation
Order at College Heights / Ailesbury Road**

The Committee considered a report which provided detail in regard to officers beginning the examination of a potential public path creation order from College Heights into the neighbouring Ballynafeigh area.

The Director, OSSS and Resources and Fleet, explained that under the Article 12 of the Access to the Countryside Order (NI) 1983 all Local Councils may enact compulsory powers for path creation where it appeared to a District Council that there was need for a public path. In 2006 a path through Annadale Grammar School had been brought to the Council’s attention as a potential public right of way. In 2008 investigations had indicated this was not the case. The site had been redeveloped into a residential area with a path for use of its residents but not the public at large. In 2022 the Council began to investigate whether it was feasible to enter into a permissive path agreement or public path creation agreement with the landowner.

The Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 places a duty on District Councils to ‘assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any public right of way’. In 2008 the Legal Advice on the nature of the route pointed that being closed overnight meant that no public right of way existed. The site was developed into a residential area with a path retained for the enjoyment of residents in the development. It was

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locked by a gate and a management company maintained the landscaped areas of this development, including the pathway. In 2022 members of the public approached Elected Members requesting that the path be open to the general public for use. This would include active travel such as walking to and from school, going to the shops and general recreation. The Director explained that the alternative route involved a 30- minute walk to and another to return which parents and guardians were doing 2-3 times daily. At this stage, the Council wrote to the landowner and explained that it would be willing to explore the potential of a public path creation agreement. The landowner did not respond. The Council again approached the landowner about the potential of a permissive path agreement on a pilot basis whereby the path could be opened and closed during set times of the day for a set period. Once again, there had been no response from the landowner.

The Director explained that a Public Path Creation by Order was a complex matter. The Council needed to be satisfied that there was a need for the path and also be willing to meet certain undertakings regarding maintenance, liability, etc. The Council must also consult with statutory undertakers, including DAERA, to confirm that the path was required and would not adversely impact the landowner's enjoyment of the land.

During discussion the Members sought assurances that the Council would consult with local residents and also consider in detail the future usage (active travel) and Council undertakings re maintenance and liabilities. It was noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting for the Members consideration prior to any decision being taken.

The Committee granted permission to officers to examine the potential of a public path creation order.

Active Belfast - Approach for 2024/25

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 seek approval for use of Belfast City Council's (BCC) allocation of £90,000 to support Active Belfast Partnership (ABP) in 2024/25 to deliver the programme of activity detailed in the report.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the use of the BCC allocation of £90,000 to support Active Belfast Partnership in 2024/25 to deliver the programme of activity detailed in the report.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Active Belfast Partnership (APB) is a multi-agency partnership supporting physical activity and healthy eating in Belfast. It is

jointly funded by BCC (£90,000) and the Public Health Agency (PHA) (£157,189.25). Physical activity and healthy eating remain priority areas within the refreshed Belfast Agenda (Our People and Communities, Health Inequalities) as well as wider health-focussed strategic documents. ABP therefore, both as an approach and as a partnership, plays a vital role in facilitating collaboration with key partners to take forward relevant and novel approaches.

Proposed Active Belfast 24/25 Budget Profile

- 3.2 The table below lists the recommended allocation for 24/25 following discussions with partners in line with the agreed Community Plan. The rationale for supporting these projects is outlined below and Table 1 shows the budget breakdown.

Proposed expenditure 24/45.

- Development of a 3-year ABP action plan. The allocation would enhance the action-planning process by enabling the recruitment of independent technical support/facilitation.
- ‘Emotional Wellbeing/Get Active’ Participatory Budgeting (PB) - 24/25 delivery. The allocation would enable continued testing of participative and innovative methods of engaging citizens in programme delivery and will contribute directly to BCC’s performance improvement plan 2025 and Belfast Agenda. Successful projects will be designed to improve residents’ Mental Health and Emotional Well-being and physical activity levels, based around ‘Take 5 Steps to Well-being’.

ABP Innovation Projects.

- Whole-system approach (WSA) to Obesity Leadership Group - mapping the system (phase 3). The allocation would support the continued development of a WSA to Obesity in Belfast (following completion of phase 1 ‘set-up’ and 2 ‘building the local picture’).
- WSA Test & Learn. The allocation will enable stakeholders to prioritise areas to intervene in the local system in the form of collaborative and aligned actions designed to address obesity within Belfast (phase 4 ‘action’).

Business continuity.

- Jog Belfast (£42,411.60 - 7 sites x 3) – Allocation of funding will support 7 sites across the City of Belfast, within North, South, West, and East to deliver 3 programmes across the

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year. A Task and Finish group will be established to review current model and funding of the initiative.

- **AB PB Move More Phase 2 Delivery & Celebration Event.** The funding was ring-fenced as part of the Phase 2 of PB led by BCC Sports Development under the ‘Move, more, eat well to feel better’ brand.
- **Resources/Training/Evaluation.** The funding would enable purchasing of resources, training, and/or professional services (OBA development) to support the delivery of the ABP approach described. The approach includes PB and WSA to Obesity which aim to contribute to improving physical activity levels and healthy eating within Belfast.

Table 1 – Budget Breakdown

2024/25	BCC AB	PHA PAB21	Total
Income	£ 90,000.00	£ 157,189.25	£ 247,189.25
Uplift		£ 1,540.45	£ 1,540.45
Total Income	£ 90,000.00	£ 158,729.70	£ 248,729.70
Proposed Expenditure 2024/25			
Develop 3 year action plan + transition year	£ 2,500.00	£ 2,500.00	£ 5,000.00
Emotional Wellbeing/Get Active PB - 24/25 delivery (80% or 90%)	£ 31,202.03	£ 49,323.93	£ 80,525.96
Partnership innovation projects			
WSA Test & Learn (community centres BCC)	£ 23,333.33	£ 46,666.67	£ 70,000.00
WSA Leadership Group - mapping the system	£ 1,500.00	£ 1,500.00	£ 3,000.00
Business continuity			
Jog Belfast (€42,411.60 - 7 sites x 3)(uplifted)	£ 9,338.80	£ 33,072.80	£ 42,411.60
AB PB Move More Phase 2 Delivery & Celebration Event	£ 18,125.84	£ 18,125.85	£ 36,251.69
Resources/Training/ Evaluation	£ 4,000.00	£ 6,000.00	£ 10,000.00
Total expenditure	£ 90,000.00	£ 157,189.25	£ 247,189.25

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.3 All activity outlined in this report can be delivered within existing budgets.**

Human Resources

- 3.4 Belfast Health Development Unit will continue to lead on this work. Oversight will be provided at organisational level by Nicola Lane within BCC and David Tumilty within PHA, as well as at a**

partnership/thematic level with the stakeholders involved in the ABP.

Asset and Other Implications

3.5 N/a.

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

3.6 The Participatory Budgeting programme has been equality screened and all other activity will be delivered with due regard to any equality/good relations and rural needs considerations.”

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

Events in Parks

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Committee is asked to note that Council has received several requests from event organisers to host events across several city park locations in 2024, including:

- VC Glendale – Falling Leaves Irish National League Race – Falls Park
- Ulster University – School of Art 175 Anniversary Light Show – Cathedral Gardens

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.

2.2 Please note that the above recommendations are taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more

structured framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

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

VC Glendale – Falling Leaves Irish National League Race – Falls Park - Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 October 2024

- 3.3 Belfast City Council has received a request from VC Glendale to host their annual Irish National League Cycling Race at Falls Park in October 2024. The falling leaves event has taken place at Falls Park for the last 8 years and has been supported by BCC during its time at the park. Due to the nature of the event, areas of the park will be required to be closed off to members of the public to allow the race to proceed safely and to ensure that no park users or participants are injured. There are expected to be around 500 people in attendance with participants and spectators attending from across the UK & Ireland.
- 3.4 Key dates for the event are:
- Set Up – TBC
 - Main Event Day 1 – Saturday 5 October – 12pm to 3pm
 - Main Event Day 2 – Sunday 6 October - 8am to 4.30pm
 - De-Rig - TBC
- 3.5 The areas of the site the organisers plan to use are the grassed area beside the playground leading to the woodland area beside the cemetery; followed by the pathed area along the side of the Falls Road and across the bridge leading to the pitches. Participants will then cycle around the entirety of the parks pitched area.
- 3.6 The event organiser VC Glendale are a voluntary cycling club who are established as a cross community cycling club with members taking part in races across the UK & Ireland. The club have worked closely with Belfast City Council over the years to run this event with no issues occurring during this time.

Ulster University – School of Art 175 Anniversary Light Show – Cathedral Gardens – Monday 18 November 2024 to Wednesday 20 November 2024

- 3.7 Belfast City Council has received a request from Ulster Universities School of Art to use Cathedral Gardens as part of their three-night Light Show to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the School of Art. The event is designed to be a collaboration between local artists and communities to tell the story of Belfast's history ranging from the origins of the linen industry to moments during the troubles.
- 3.8 The event will be an animated light show projected onto buildings such as St Anne's Cathedral and the Belfast Campus of Ulster University. It will be a free ticketed event with pre-registration taking place on-line to ensure the site does not go over its capacity.
- 3.9 Key dates for the event are:
- Set Up – Monday 18th November at 9am
 - Main Event – Monday 18 November to Wednesday 20 November – 4.30pm to 9.30pm daily
 - De-Rig – Thursday 21st November
- 3.10 **Financial and Resource Implications**
- There are no known implications at this time.
- 3.11 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
- There are no known implications.”

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

Application for Dual Language Street Signage

The Committee agreed the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Kestrel Grange, Ophir Gardens, Antigua Street, Salisbury Avenue, Parkside Gardens, Mount Eagles Lane, Lagmore View Way, Finaghy Park North, Commedagh Drive, Corrib Avenue, Isadore Avenue, Hazelwood Avenue, Slievegallion Drive and Brooke Close.

Application for Naming of New Street

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

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Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Black Ridge Crescent	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Road	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Knockbreda Road Crossing - Councillor Maghie to raise

At the request of Councillor Maghie, the Committee agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure seeking an update as to when works would commence for the Knockbreda Road crossing and also agreed to ask DfI how it could expedite the public consultation process for further applications.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 7th August, 2024

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Black, De Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Harvey, Kelly, Lyons, Maskey, F. McAteer, McDowell,
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;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. E. Clark, Programme Manager;
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors McCabe and McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 12th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following five 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

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information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Housing Led Regeneration Update

The Committee was provided with an update on a number of strands of the Housing Led Regeneration programme of work as agreed within the Committee Plan.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the update in respect of the submissions now received from Housing Associations in respect of the Inner North West Development Brief, comprising BCC and DfC lands at Little Donegal St, Library St and Kent St and that, following a joint evaluation with the Department for Communities (DfC), a future report would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee with recommendations in respect of the Development Brief, in line also with the DfC governance processes;
- II. Noted the update in respect of Phase 2 City Wide Strategic Site Assessments, including updates to Area Working Groups, and that further detailed reports and recommendations on next steps would be brought back to the Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee over the coming months in respect of specific Council lands identified through this process and, as appropriate, wider public sector assets identified as part of the ongoing work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group;
- III. Noted the update in respect of the Private Sector Partner (PSP) Procurement and that a further detailed report and recommendations for appointment of the preferred PSP would be brought back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in October 2024; and
- IV. Noted the revised date of the All Party Housing Led Regeneration Round Table had been scheduled for Wednesday, 4th September 2024, with representation from Party Group Leaders or their nominees.

2 Royal Avenue Update

The Committee was provided with an update in respect of 2 Royal Avenue which focused on the outcome of the initial Expression of Interest / soft market testing exercise undertaken in respect of the future use of the ground floor of the building.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the update on the initial Expression of Interest / Soft Market Testing Exercise in respect of the Ground Floor of 2 Royal Avenue;

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- II. Noted the next steps which included commencing detailed discussions with parties from the formal interest list who would be asked to develop detailed proposals under agreed categories which would be reported back to Committee in Autumn 2024 and which would be subject to agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee around financial and asset management aspects; and
- III. Noted that as part of the future report to Committee in Autumn 2024, detail on the propositions put forward from the interested parties would be set out against the categories as referenced in 4.5 of the report.

2023/24 Year End Finance update

The Committee considered a report regarding its Quarter 4 financial position.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Rural Business Development Grant Scheme - 2024-2025

The Committee was informed of the opportunity and proposed approach to support Belfast-based rural micro businesses to access funding as part of a collaborative bid to DAERA along with the 10 other councils.

The Committee:

- Noted and endorsed the opportunity to participate in the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme in 2024-25 funded from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) through the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme to support rural businesses in Belfast;
- Noted that DAERA had confirmed the total capital funding would be £1.5million to support the sustainability and growth of rural micro-businesses and this would be available to all 11 local authorities; and
- Agreed to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) undertaking the administrative function for the Grant Scheme on behalf of Belfast City Council as per agreed process for 2024/25.

Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024-2025

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 update Members on the Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024-2025 and seek approval for the recommended grants.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- note the contents of this report and agree the recommendations for artist studio grants, as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that at a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in February 2022, members agreed to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support for this sector. In May 2024, members agreed to continue this support for the third consecutive year and £100,000 has been allocated to support Artist Studios Organisational Grants in 2024/25.

Background and context

3.2 The ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, committed to a broader investment model that considered the diversity of the city's cultural landscape. In response to detailed consultation with the sector, Committee agreed in February 2022 to bring forward a specific funding programme for studios and artist-led organisations, with the latest audit identifying 17 studios/ artist-led organisations in Belfast directly supporting an estimated 450 artists. This in part is due to the value of artist-led spaces not being effectively captured through traditional metrics such as income generated through ticket sales or audience figures and it was agreed that an alternative form of funding would be developed for artist-led spaces. Belfast City Council's current support programmes do not include any of these organisations as annual or multi-annual clients.

Organisational funding

3.3 The "*Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25*" programme was opened on 4th June 2024 and closed on 4th July 2024. The purpose of this strand of work is to provide financial and developmental support to organisations similar to the support offered under cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG).

3.4 The Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25 scheme was advertised widely. The information and application details were emailed directly to a GDPR compliant mailing list representing over 370 organisations from across the cultural and creative sectors alongside associated social media marketing. An online information session was held in advance of the deadline, as well

as organisations availing of one-to-one support sessions with the Culture Development team.

Criteria for Decision making

- 3.5 The criteria and guidance for Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25 applicants are included in Appendices 1 and 2. Assessments were made, and scoring applied under four key areas of criteria:
- Fit with our investment aims, & themes 3 & 4, of cultural strategy “A City Imagining”
 - Need and potential impact
 - Value for money
 - High quality organisational development plan
- 3.6 Assessments were made only based on information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This included the application form and supporting documentation such as business plans and strategies.
- 3.7 Organisations or groups operating artist studios were able to apply for up to £10,000 to use towards specified developmental needs within a 12-month period. Grants up to £20,000 were available for organisations that accommodate at least 25 active members, and which meet additional eligibility criteria and supply a suitable business case.

Assessment

- 3.8 A summary of recommended grants and proposed grant recipients is included at Appendix 1. A summary of award descriptions is included in Appendix 2. The unit received 12 applications for Artist Studios Organisational Grants, requesting a total of £147,976. Percentage of funding allocated is based on scoring percentage. The recommendation is that we fund 11 organisations, with support of £100,000.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 An allocation of £100,000 is recommended to “*Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2024/25*”. These activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2024/25 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals.

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

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

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism explained further the recommended grant allocations and advised that further information could be provided.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and that further information would be provided in relation to the scoring matrix of the grants: and
- Agreed to the recommendations for artist studio grants, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

DfI Correspondence - Translink Night time services

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting in May, had agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure to request that consideration be given to the funding of the provision of public transport nighttime services.

It was reported that a response had been received from the office of the Minister for Infrastructure John O'Dowd MLA, in relation to the matters raised.

During discussion, the Committee highlighted the need and priority to provide night-time services for the city and economy and requested that officers explore further options, such as festival and events.

After discussion, the Committee noted the correspondence as set out in Appendix one to the report and that officers would investigate potential options with Translink and event organisers in relation to providing night-time services during festivals and event seasons in the city.

Positioning Belfast to compete

Belfast City and Region Place Partnership Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 7th August, 2024**

- **Update members on outcomes from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme including attendance at MIPIM as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. **Note the update on outcomes from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme, including attendance at MIPIM as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024.**
- II. **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 received an update on the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) in June 2024. This Committee noted the presentation from representatives from the 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; and 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. They also agreed to write to the BCRPP to request that they consider establishing a sub-group of the partnership for community engagement with a focus on social value; and Members 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.

3.2 In terms of context setting, Belfast City Council has been working with public and private sector organisations to proactively promote Belfast to local, national and international audiences to attract capital investment to support realising the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda, and this has included attendance at various national and international conferences, exhibitions and showcase events, including MIPIM, since 2016. More recently, attendance at MIPIM has been through participation in the BCRPP annual programme of activity, as reported to this

Committee in June 2024, and aligned to our wider Positioning the City to Compete proposition, a key programme of work within this Committee's work plan as agreed at a special meeting of CGR Committee in May.

- 3.3 Members should note that delivering on our Belfast Agenda ambitions requires a £7.5bn investment. This quantum of investment will require significant private sector funding and institutional investment, highlighting the importance of continued engagement and promotional activities with capital investment markets to positively position Belfast as an attractive investment location.**
- 3.4 Members will also be aware that work has commenced on a ten year stocktake of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), as agreed in this Committee's work plan. The output report will identify the positive development that has come forward over the past ten years, but also identify catalyst opportunities for the city in the next decade. It is likely that many of these catalytical projects will require significant private sector capital investment to be brought forward, which will require Council and City partners working collaboratively to promote these opportunities through international forums such as MIPIM.**
- 3.5 The Regeneration Lobbying & Advocacy Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast, as agreed by SP&R Committee in February 2024, highlights the disparity in regeneration and investment funding for Belfast and the benefits that enhanced investment could make for Belfast, with work advancing at various levels. It also highlighted the key role that the private sector plays in terms of deliver of the growth ambitions for the city and the importance of working in partnership with the private sector to support delivery.**
- 3.6 In 2023, Northern Ireland's commercial investment sector attracted £338 million of investment, with 24% of this investment coming from Institutional investors, which is notably lower than the UK average, as reported by property advisory firm, Savills. The report also noted the proportion of investment in NI from institutional investors has reduced significantly since the UK's referendum on EU membership in 2016, by way of comparison YTD Q3 2023 the UK commercial investment (including offices, retail, industrial and hotel) from Institutional and REIT/ Listed investors was approximately 50%.**
- 3.7 Members will recall that Party Group Leaders or their nominees and senior officers participated on a study visit to Manchester and Leeds in April 2024. Discussions with elected representatives and**

senior officers from Manchester and Leeds emphasised the important role that attracting institutional investment has played in shaping their city growth in recent times by providing both long term patient capital and partners who are bought into the cities' values and vision. Both Councils also noted that local authorities have a strong convening role in attracting investment and supporting private sector delivery by providing the strategic vision, city priorities and messaging to give confidence to the private sector and institutional markets. They noted that successfully delivering regeneration outcomes required them proactively and consistently sharing this vision and message both domestically and internationally to attract institutional investment. MCC highlighted that Manchester's success in recent years has been built on strong partnerships between the private and public sectors. This collaborative approach has allowed them to create a clear vision for growth and attending place promotion events such as MIPIM provides a global stage to present this vision and breadth of ready-made investment opportunities to investors who could become long-term collaborators.

3.8 It is evident that in order to deliver our aspirations for the city that Belfast must continue to proactively promote itself to the international institutional investment market to attract long term patient capital at scale and to assist with bringing forward the catalytic regeneration and development projects required to deliver on our wider inclusive growth ambitions.

4.0 Main Report

4.1 At City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 9 August 2023, the key objectives for the BCRPP Programme for 2023 / 2024 were presented as:

- 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.

4.2 MIPIM is the world's leading real estate conference and is recognised as a reference point for the global real estate industry. Over 20,000 delegates from 90 countries attended MIPIM in 2024, including over 2,000 investment companies which collectively manage approx. €4 trillion of assets, providing unique access to global investment capital to accelerate regeneration and development activities though participation in face-to-face discussions, workshops and panel discussions.

- 4.3 UK cities / regions who attended MIPIM 2024 included Cardiff Capital Region; Liverpool; London; Greater Manchester; Newcastle; West Midland's region; and the Western Gateway. Many of these cities have attended MIPIM for a number of years, recognising the importance of MIPIM in providing a platform to showcase their cities and development opportunities to attract global sources of capital. Many UK cities success in recent years has been through collaborative private and public sector working, with local government taking a lead role in facilitating this collaborative approach to seeking this external investment required to deliver their growth ambitions.
- 4.4 The Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2024 comprised of executive-level representatives and decision-makers from 15 organisations including Belfast Harbour, BRCD Council representatives, Invest NI, Titanic Quarter, private sector developers and professional services firms.
- 4.5 Key activities over the three-day conference included Belfast representatives joining panel sessions organised by other UK cities, UK Government, and partners covering a variety of topics including city centre living, waterfront regeneration, social value and Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, providing an opportunity to showcase city investment and development opportunities to potential investors and developers from across the UK and internationally. The Belfast delegation participated in the inaugural collaborative UK city event with Liverpool, Cardiff, Business Central South, British Property Federation, Department for Business and Trade and key investors. In addition, officers held a number of pre-arranged one to one meetings with key institutional investment funds and officers from other UK cities to build relationships and share learnings.
- 4.6 It is important to note that MIPIM forms one element of the overarching BCRPP programme of activity which is delivered through a structured programme of work focused 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. Therefore, outcomes from MIPIM should be viewed in the context of the wider programme objectives as outlined above.
- 4.7 **Programme objective: Increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government.**

The 2023 / 2024 programme included a presence at international real estate investment conferences, UKREiiF 2024 and MIPIM 2024, and the organisation of a Dublin Investment Showcase event which was delivered in conjunction with Urban Land Institute

(ULI). It is important to note that all three events took place within a six-month period which allowed for initial and follow up engagement with potential investors and collaborators in a relatively short time period. An overview of MIPIM investor engagement is set out below.

4.8 MIPIM Investor Engagement

There was a significant footfall on the Belfast Stand throughout MIPIM with a number of requests for impromptu meetings for investors, highlighting the continued interest in Belfast within the national and international investment community. In total, 133 leads were collected on stand with interest from a variety of sectors including residential development, leisure / hotel development, green energy and life sciences. In addition, City Council officers held one-on-one meetings with key institutional investors, banks, pension funds and end-occupiers interested in opportunities across the city.

4.9 Work is on-going to follow up with contacts made during MIPIM 2024 and other BRCPP activities. As noted at June Committee 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 F&B operators

4.10 The marketing activities during MIPIM have translated into inward visits to the city, with many of these visits / meetings taking place with private and other public sectors partners of the BRCPP who have testified to the benefits of attending MIPIM. Commercial sensitivities and the length of timeframes for concluding investment transactions make it difficult to precisely quantify the total level of inward investment achieved from attendance at international events such as MIPIM. However, to give Members an idea of the types of investment secured following introductions and engagement by 'Team Belfast' at MIPIM since 2016, Elkstone Partners, a leading Irish Investment House, have made a number of significant investments in Belfast, including purchasing Murray Exchange in February 2024 which was the key office investment in Q1 2024. Greystar, an international investment management firm, have invested in a number of purpose-built student managed accommodation (PBMSA) schemes in Belfast, with their most

recent investment being Nelson Street, a £48m PBSMA development.

- 4.11 In June 2023 Legal & General, with whom senior officers and other partners have held a series of meetings with at MIPIM, announced a £150m investment in the residential development Loft Lines, which is the largest single residential investment in Northern Ireland for 20 years, and will see the delivery of 778 new homes including 151 social and affordable homes, and significant public realm investment. MIPIM 2023 and 2024 saw a notable increase in interest in residential opportunities in Belfast from institutional investors, with follow up visits taking place. While these types of processes can take a number of years to complete, we anticipate that this engagement will continue to translate into investments to assist with bringing forward residential development in Belfast in the coming months and years.
- 4.12 Members will be aware of the Council's on-going competitive dialogue process to secure a private sector partner (PSP) to deliver residential led, mixed use developments across the city. This process follows an Expressions of Interest exercise which was presented at MIPIM 2023. Attendance at both MIPIM and UKREiiF 2023 allowed officers to actively engage with the private sector and investment market and afforded the opportunity to fully detail and explain the scale of the opportunity and the type of partner Council were seeking to attract.
- 4.13 In addition, private sector partners have established working relationships and secured business as a direct result of relationships brokered at MIPIM. By way of example, the Belfast based team from ARUP, a BCRPP Partner, has highlighted that working relationships made at MIPIM resulted in increased business and successful tendering outcomes on specific major projects.
- 4.14 Positively positioning Belfast as an attractive investment location to an international audience relies on strong collaboration with central government and international partners. The Partnership works collaboratively with the Department for Business & Trade (DBT) throughout the annual programme of activity. It supported the delivery of Northern Ireland Investment Summit which took place 12 and 13 September 2023 through supporting the showcasing of capital investment opportunities via a Capital Investment Roundtable and familiarisation tour of city regeneration and investment opportunities, with follow up engagement with investors who attended the Summit taking place at MIPIM and UKREiiF. In addition, MIPIM provided a useful platform for engagement with UK Government representatives to promote potential investment opportunities in Belfast and the

wider city region and have early engagement on the place-based growth proposition for Belfast. In recent years it has also provided an opportunity to showcase to both investors and international companies the research, development and innovation capabilities of the Belfast Region, which are being significantly enhanced in growth sectors through BRCD investments, and which is now so critical for international businesses when making decisions on where to locate or expand.

4.15 Programme objective: Continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region.

As mentioned previously, the BCRPP is delivered as a public private partnership with a significant percentage of the partners having consistently supporting the Partnership since its inception, showing the value that city partners perceive from being part of this collective partnership approach.

4.16 Feedback from BCRPP Partners

The private sector partners have highlighted that one of the significant benefits of attending MIPIM is the calibre of the Belfast delegation coming together to collectively showcase the city as 'Team Belfast', highlighting that relationships formed and enhanced at MIPIM help aid collaboration to deliver on our shared ambitions for the city. Outlined below is an overview of feedback received from the Belfast delegation post-MIPIM:

'I believe it is crucial that there is a joined-up approach across public and private sector partners as well as third level education (QUB, UU) to promote Northern Ireland on the international stage. Given that we face constant challenges in this part of the UK, it is essential that we are able to have a platform from which to create our own narrative rather than allow others to shape this for us outside of our control. Northern Ireland has so much that is positive to offer and doing this face to face at MIPIM plays to our strengths.'

'It is extremely important to promote the city region on an international level. If we don't talk about ourselves, there'll be no-one else talking about us. There are many countries around the globe that are promoting themselves at present, and subsequently many regions within each. It is important to be a part of these discussions in order to make sure Belfast is seen as the investment opportunity it truly is.'

'We are all trying to sell NI to the world, so having positive people championing Belfast and wider NI is important as we need to keep shouting to be heard.'

'It is essential that such events are supported by both the private and public sector. Investors are encouraged by economic and political stability. Great to see Belfast City Council and Invest NI represented alongside the private sector. The challenge (and opportunity) is how Belfast can demonstrate effective collaboration and strategic alliance with both Dublin and the UK that would make a compelling proposition to invest in Belfast and enjoy the benefits from dual market access.'

'I think it is extremely important for Belfast to be put on the international stage as the city continues to develop with our dual market access and North South relations continuing to grow, it puts our city up there with the largest UK cities in terms of attendance and visibility.'

'When you have everyone in the same boat, pulling the same way then you start to make waves and you can get really get places. It HAS to be a united approach: Council, businesses, planning, Translink, Invest NI, and employers with support from the Assembly so that we can give confidence to the people who are looking at us and Belfast/NI is actually worth spending time, money and effort in.'

'Important for Belfast to be represented as other cities such as Cardiff / Manchester etc to maintain prominence and increase exposure for future investment.'

'Public and private partners need to demonstrate that Belfast is a cohesive place to do business with as few barriers as possible.'

4.17 Programme objective: Continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland.

Communications through digital marketing and PR activities is a key strand of work within the BCRPP programme of work. Outputs included the development of an interactive Belfast Region Investment Guide which was a key marketing asset at MIPIM 2024.

- 4.18** As part of the communications campaign focused on Belfast's attendance at MIPIM, high quality media coverage was secured in a number of publications including Insider Housing, Ireland's Business Post, Place North West, and Real Asset Management. A targeted social media campaign highlighting Belfast's presence at MIPIM and key messaging on investment and regeneration opportunities reached 50.7K+ people and received 11.2k views of high-quality video content.

4.19 Learning from best practice

Beyond building important investor relationships, MIPIM also provides an opportunity for attendees to learn from best in class examples in delivering regeneration. A focus for MIPIM 2024 was bringing attention to crucial topics such as sustainability, waterfront regeneration and city centre living. Belfast delegates attended roundtables and panels on topics such as ‘delivering sustainable economic growth through partnerships’ and ‘creative retrofit’, partaking in discussions and learning from best practice examples. This knowledge sharing and understanding of how other cities have faced some of the challenges and opportunities Belfast is faced with is invaluable.

- 4.20** At the June Committee Members had also highlighted the need for community engagement by the BCRPP with a focus on social value. There have been some initial discussions on the most effective way of doing this and over the coming weeks this is to be explored further with community representatives, building also on a report BCRPP had previously commissioned (Building Social Impact) in relation to maximising social impact from the built environment. Further detail will be brought back to Committee on this.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.0** 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 Partnership programme budget.”

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development provided further detail on the tangible benefits of the conference and highlighted that further details of the investment statistics from the Savills report could be provided, if required.

The Strategic Director emphasised the importance of engagement and building relationships to deliver investments in Belfast.

Proposal

Moved by Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick,
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees to the recommendations as outlined in the report.

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Amendment

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the report to allow an options paper to be submitted to the next meeting to consider alternative models for inward investment, such as a reduced delegation at MIPIM and alternative approaches through different events and networks.

On a vote by show of hands, eight Members voted for the proposal and nine against and it was accordingly declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor McCormick and seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin was put to the meeting. On a vote by show of hands nine Members voted for the proposal and seven against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- I. Noted the update on outcomes from the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2023 / 2024 Programme, including attendance at MIPIM, as requested at the meeting of the Committee in June 2024; and
- II. Approved the attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2025 as part of the BCRPP 2024 / 2025 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

Music Strategy and UNESCO City of Music update

The Committee considered the undernoted report and associated appendices:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the work relating to the UNESCO City of Music plan and seek approval to the allocation of funding to several important strands of the music strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the contents of this report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’**

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- **Agree the actions for remainder of 2024/25 as set out in the report and in Appendix 1 including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the final ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’. Mirroring A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has 4 strategic themes, each having 4 strategic priorities. There are several actions and recommendations given for each priority catering to many areas of need across the music sector.

3.2 UNESCO Music delivery is funded from existing recurring and non-recurring departmental funds. At the meeting of the Special Policy and Resources Committee in April 2021, members agreed an allocation of resources to the delivery of the music strategy. £900k has been allocated towards City of Music and the Music Strategy for delivery on key developmental activities across 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. Members received updates and approved allocations of spend against various initiatives in April, June, August and September 2023. There has been substantive progress against each of these initiatives, including:

3.3

<u>Programme/Action</u>	<u>Status</u>
Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board	Completed in April 2023
Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase	Completed in June 2023
Continuation of Gradam Ceoil bursaries	Launched in March 2023 and continuing to March 2024
Micro bursaries programme, available to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. Delivered in Collaboration with Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival	Launched in December 2023. 18 musicians received awards of up to £1,000 in January 2024.
The Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues through a	Completed in September 2023 with 5 Grassroots Music Venues in

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partnership with Music Venue Trust	receipt of funding to upgrade equipment
Belfast Music marketing channels	New supplier appointed July 2023
Implementation of Access Riders to improve disability access	November to September 2024
The NI Music Prize	Event took place on 15 th November 2023
City of Music Industry sessions – series of free information sessions for the local music community	Delivered 6 sessions to date
Creation of a digital music support service developed in collaboration with Music Connections	Launching in September 2024
Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24	Launching in September 2024
Programme to develop the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment.	Contract appointed in March 2024
Health and Wellbeing sessions for musicians and the industry	Ongoing throughout 2024
‘Go Green’ toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation	Launching November 2024
Music Matter Internship Programme – Supporting 7 internships across the music industry	Supplier appointed in August 2024, programme launching in September 2024.
Support for international exchanges with other UNESCO Cities of Music.	Exchanges held with Hannover, Germany, Brno, Czech Republic, and London, Ontario Canada

3.4 The Belfast Music Board

The Music Strategy sets out governance recommendations for Belfast Music, including the formation of a Belfast Region Music Board. The overarching role of the Board is to oversee the implementation and prioritisation of the music roadmap, anchoring the city’s commitment to music and ensuring its composition represents the varied interests and needs of both the music sector and the people of Belfast.

The board was appointed in April 2023 and consists of 24 individuals from across a wide variety of disciplines, industries, and interest. The Belfast Music board has been meeting regularly alongside officials in the culture team to map out programmes and initiatives against each theme and priority in this Music Strategy. This engagement has been vital in informing and shaping the projects contained in this paper.

3.5 Theme 1 - Placing Artists at the Heart

Theme One of the Music Matters strategy focuses on ‘Placing Artists at the Heart’. The most basic – or foundational – needs of musicians, music creators and performers are the focus of this theme with a range of initiatives including funding, creative and professional development and opportunities to collaborate and create with others.

Building on the success of previous initiatives in this area, a range of programmes are recommended. These include:

3.6 The NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast – The Northern Ireland Music Prize honours and celebrates the very best of new, established and emerging Northern Irish music and is a key music event for the city of Belfast and its UNESCO City of Music status. It is an annual awards night organised by the Oh Yeah Music Centre and takes place in the Ulster Hall during Sound of Belfast Festival every year. This is an important event for music in Belfast and to complement and strengthen the initiatives and ambitions laid out in the UNESCO City of Music.

The NI Music Prize was established to support the growth and build the profile of NI Music and reflect similar work and recognition of regional music in other parts of the UK and Ireland. It is a significant event and key milestone for Belfast as the regional driver for the music industry in Northern Ireland.

The 2024 Music Prize will host an audience of 1,000 people including music industry guests from all over the UK and Ireland, Europe and the USA, as well as musicians, artists and music fans. The event will be broadcast live on BBC Radio Ulster and is filmed by a production company for YouTube. Many key industry professionals that attend are also involved in presenting and running panels at the Sound of Belfast conference earlier that day, including 200 young emerging artists who attend these panels which are streamed live on YouTube. Belfast City Council has supported the event since its inception and provided £30,000 of support in 2023.

- 3.7** At the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 13th September 2023, members also agreed to provide support to conduct an independent review of the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast. This independent review considers alignment to music strategy and role that it can play in achieving objectives through a longer-term strategic partnership and the value that it would take to achieve this. It has involved consultation with peers including benchmarking against similar events both nationally and internationally and produce a series of ‘recommendations’ or ‘next steps’ as part of a roadmap for development. This review is currently concluding, and a further update and full report will be presented to members in Autumn 2024.
- 3.8** Officials have received an interim report and recommendations from the review based on the research undertaken and the discussions held to date. This interim report recommends that funding is increased to enhance, scale and strengthen the activities being delivered at Sound of Belfast, including the NI Music Prize, in its 10th anniversary year. This additional resource would be ringfenced for a dedicated marketing and communications campaign to champion artists, promote the events and engage new audiences with Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize. Based on the recommendations from this interim report, it is recommended to allocate £45,000 to the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast.
- 3.9** Output Belfast- Established in 2016, Output Belfast has earned its reputation over the last 7 years as Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme the event is directly related to priority 2.5 within the music strategy, which reads ‘Develop regular music business touchpoints throughout the year using existing conferences to offer more regular but bitesize opportunities for micro learning’. The conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Activity includes music and creative digital showcasing and networking events, business development panels and workshops and meetings and networking with key international creative digital companies.
- 3.10** In December 2023, members agreed to allocate £28,000 to Score Draw Music Ltd to continue the delivery of the Output Conference in 2024. This conference was originally planned for April but due to logistical challenges with the April date, council officials and Score Draw Music explored alternative dates later in the year. The event will now take place on Tuesday 12th November to coincide with, and celebrate, the 10-year anniversary of Sound of Belfast.

- 3.11 This will be the first time that the Output Conference and showcase will take part during the same week as Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize and represents a unique opportunity to test the impact of combining both events and create a critical mass of activity throughout the city.
- 3.12 Continuation of the Micro-Bursaries scheme – This programme provides up to £1,000 to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. In 2023, this programme was delivered in Collaboration with Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, through enhancing their existing bursary programme to include a music micro-bursary. This initiative proved to be highly successful, with over 160 applications from musicians with 18 musicians receiving support. It is proposed to continue this scheme in 2024/25 with an allocation of £20,000 to the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival.
- 3.13 Continuation of the Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme - At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on Wednesday 8 September 2021, members agreed to support the Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme of a five-year period (2021 – 25) and contribute £15,000 each year.

The Gradam Ceoil Bursary Scheme is a series of three annual awards awarded to young (18–25-year-old) traditional musicians in Belfast, in partnership with Duncairn Arts Centre, Red Shoe productions and TG4. Each award is valued at £3,000 each and the programme aims are:

- To provide support, training and mentoring
 - To support creativity and cultural expression
 - Build capacity in online/broadcasting presentation skills (in acoustics and visuals)
 - Develop capacity and profile for the traditional music sector in Belfast.
- 3.13 The 2024/25 scheme aims to launch in January 2025 and will select three young Belfast traditional musicians to receive an award in March 2025. Highlights from the 2024 awards included the recipients performing at the Gradam Ceoil awards in Limerick for the Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, as well as a special performance at the Fleadh Cheoil and an invite to the Lord Mayor’s parlour for a reception to celebrate. It is proposed to continue this important partnership with a £15,000 contribution in 2024/25.
- 3.14 Health and wellbeing – In 2023/24, officials have worked on a range of partnerships with key organisations such as Tonic Rider and Help Musicians NI to co-design practical wellbeing events and initiatives focusing on the physical and mental health of music

creators. This has manifested as a number of practical schemes, including a partnership with Help Musicians NI that will see hearing health care and greater awareness of hearing health in the local music industry. In addition, a pilot programme with NI Alternatives entitled 'Fit to March' will launch in September 2024. This programme is targeted at the marching band community and will focus on physical and mental well-being of marching band members. It is recommended that this important element of the music strategy continues in 2024/25 with an allocation of £15,000 towards additional co-designed and targeted programmes.

- 3.15 **Music Mentoring Programme Stage Two - Point 6.1** within Theme One of the Music Matters strategy recommends investment in 'the delivery of a specially designed mentoring programme for individuals working in music, including continued professional development for senior or experienced individuals working in music' In 2023/24, members agreed an allocation of £30,000 towards the development of the Music Industry Mentoring Programme to upskill participants including agents, managers, PR professionals and labels. This programme is currently at procurement stage and will be delivered throughout Autumn 2024.
- 3.16 It is proposed to continue this programme with an allocation of £30,000 for Stage Two in early 2025. Stage two of the programme will allow the music industry entrepreneurs that have been through the programme thus far to continue their educational development by putting into practice with a cohort of artists, the latter of whom will be the focus of this continuation of the opportunity. The output of this second stage will be a group of local music creators who can progress through their careers with greater confidence in how they manage their individual businesses alongside a stronger team of individuals working in the spheres of management, PR and other complimentary roles.
- 3.17 **Music Industry Sessions - Theme one** of the Music Strategy focuses on the development of musicians, including action point 2.4 which seeks to 'provide opportunities via events and programmes to provide regular access to professional associations in music to deepen existing relationships and create new ones'.

In 2023/24, officials delivered 6 industry free industry sessions for musicians. It is proposed to continue this important sessions throughout 2024/25 with an allocation of £10,000 towards an additional 6-8 events. Proposed events thus far include focuses on women in sound design, meeting the Tallinn music industry, managing your vocal health, PR and connectivity in the digital sphere.

3.18 Theme two – Nurture the sector

Theme two of the Music Strategy focuses on strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators. Through prioritising the sustainable growth of the music business sector, initiatives in this theme support entrepreneurialism, meaningful business development, professional development and sustainable career pathways within the sector. A range of initiatives are proposed within this theme including:

3.19 Educating the Educators To support and promote sustainable career pathways within the music sector, it is proposed to run a Pathways Into Music programme in 2024/25. This programme will work directly with the Pathways into Music Foundation and is based on a successful scheme delivered in England supported by Arts Council England.

This programme for music educators, education hubs and talent development organisations will consist of a two-day in-person event in Belfast in autumn 2024, plus three accompanying webinars. These events will focus on careers and trends in the music business, providing music educators with the information, knowledge and contacts they need to advise and support students who seek to pursue a career in music.

The programme will be open to anyone involved in educating or supporting young people making music from key stage three (aged eleven) or above, including: music teachers, instrument tutors, and FE and HE lecturers, plus people working for music education hubs and talent development organisations. This programme will be delivered directly with the Pathways into Music Foundation, in collaboration with the Education Authority. It is proposed to allocate £20,000 towards this programme, reaching between 50-100 education professionals.

3.20 Supporting Accessibility in Music – Theme two of the Music Strategy includes a commitment to allocate programming funding to provide opportunities for disabled musicians in performance spaces across Belfast. In addition, there are several commitments to ensuring that music programming takes an inclusive approach at all times and that music activities are made available in safe spaces for all ages, where the needs of those with disabilities can be met.

To ensure greater opportunities for showcasing musicians with disabilities or additional needs, as well as to provide music activities that are accessible to all, it is proposed that BCC partner with the University of Atypical to develop a pilot a new support scheme that would allow recipients to host activities and events

that would develop, promote and provide platforms for those within the d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse music community. This programme would be developed through a strategic partnership with the University of Atypical for Arts and Disability (UofA), a disabled-led lead sectoral organisation for arts and disability.

It is envisaged that these grants would support not just costs associated with the running of the potential events but also costs that ensure access needs are met. It is proposed to allocate £30,000 to the University of Atypical for this pilot programme.

3.21 Theme 3 - Igniting the Live Experience

Theme three of the music strategy focuses on supporting the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth. This theme recognises the importance of live music to Belfast for creators and performers, for freelancers and those working in music, and for the people of the city, our audiences. a range of programmes are recommended for 2024/25, including:

3.22 Strategic Partnership with Music Venue Trust – The Music Venue Trust is a UK wide charity which acts to protect, secure and improve Grassroots Music Venues. The organisation has been a key partner during both the formation of the Music Strategy and at implementation stage. In 2023/24, Council collaborated with the Music Venue Trust to run a Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues. This scheme resulted in five Belfast venues receiving capital grants to improve their facilities.

3.23 Priority 9 of the Music Strategy focuses on deliver a series of measures that would facilitate the development of a thriving, sustainable and strong live music sector, including a commitment to ‘engage with the Music Venue Trust to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed’.

3.24 Through meaningful discussions with the Music Venue Trust as to how best to benefit the Belfast Music venues, it is agreed that prolonged engagement would have the most lasting impact upon the sector and would allow for the long-term fulfilment of five Music Matters strategic priorities. Through this engagement, the Music Venue Trust will work closely with venues throughout Belfast, including a co-designed series of events and workshops bringing together venue staff and leaders from local music venues with experienced counterparts and stakeholders from across the UK.

3.25 These events will focus on development opportunities for local Belfast music venues, education and knowledge sharing of best practice and utilisation of the annual report to compare and contrast regional statistics. A key aspect of the day will be information gathering to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing the survival of grassroots music venues in Belfast and the ways in which these challenges can be addressed (9.4). They will be able to utilise this direct engagement with the sector to also develop a strong awareness of the current entertainment licencing processes and how they impact local venues (9.3) as well as their event space and equipment needs (9.5) and other challenges facing venues. This research will go on to inform best practice at Council when supporting local venues as well as future partnerships with the sector and advocacy work undertaken by the charity. It is proposed to allocate £20,000 towards this strategic partnership with the Music Venue Trust.

3.26 Greening the Sector - Priority 12 of the Music Strategy focuses on greening the live music sector, embedding sustainability at the heart of its approach to business operations.

To deliver on this priority, it is proposed to allocate up to £5,000 towards an event and launch of a toolkit in November 2024. This event will be focused on sustainability in creative productions, particularly within the music sector, featuring a panel discussion with key Belfast creatives who will explore practical strategies and innovative approaches to making creative productions more environmentally sustainable, alongside experts in the field from organisations such as Native Events, specialists in looking at new ways of working more sustainably. The conversation will be live-streamed to reach a broad audience and later made available online as a valuable digital asset. In addition to the panel discussion, it is proposed to launch the Green Arts Toolkit for Belfast, a comprehensive resource designed to help artists and cultural organisations implement sustainable practices. This toolkit, developed in collaboration with Native Events, will provide actionable guidelines and best practices for reducing the environmental impact of creative activities. The event offers a unique opportunity to introduce this critical resource to the music community, with the support of Belfast City Council underscoring the city's commitment to sustainability and cultural leadership. The event will be produced by NI Science Festival and Nerve Centre and promoted through each organisations own channels, as well as the Belfast 2024 channels.

3.27 Safety in Music – Priority 11 of the Music Strategy aims to support venues and performance spaces in implementing initiatives to ensure the health and safety, both physically and in terms of

mental wellbeing, of performers and attendees at live music events.

To support a safer night-time environment for those working in or attending music events across the city, it is proposed to partner with and support Equity NI's 'Safe Home' campaign through a series of events and training with local venues with the inclusion of the Musicians' Union and relevant stakeholders in night-time safety. It is proposed to allocate up to £10,000 to this programme which will include practical training and events for local venues and the creation of video and print assets that will further increase knowledge and uptake of the campaign across the city.

3.28 Theme 4 – Unlocking the unifying power of UNESCO

Theme 4 of the Music Strategy aims to create a sense of ownership of the UNESCO title for the people of the city, recognising the vital role they have played in our musical past and the exciting role they can play in our music future. This roadmap aims to provide more opportunities for embedding music in all corners and communities of the city and also seeks to position the Belfast City of Music brand on the international stage as a gateway to visitors and investors.

3.29 As part of Belfast's application and status as a City of Music, member cities are committed to '*work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.*'. In 2023/24, support was provided for local music creators and industry to undertake international exchanges with other UNESCO Cities of Music such as Hannover, Germany, Brno, Czech Republic, and London, Ontario Canada. In addition, a partnership with the Belfast International Arts Festival provided a platform for a special UNESCO day featuring acts from other UNESCO cities at the Festival. It is proposed to continue this partnership with the Belfast International Arts Festival through hosting a UNESCO City of Music day on 9th November 2024, featuring artists from City of Music Kansas, USA.

3.30 As well as collaboration between cities, UNESCO Member cities are also expected to take part in official UNESCO events, including the annual UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) conference and UNESCO Music subnetwork meetings. Officials and the Lord Mayor were in attendance at the UNESCO conference in July which featured over 250 cities across the globe. Following this conference, officials have received expressions of interest from 11 different UNESCO cities to collaborate on a range of opportunities. Officials are actively considering each opportunity and exploring meaningful opportunities for artists and music

entrepreneurs from that will allow our local talent to be showcased on a global platform and increase opportunities for music tourism.

3.31 Finally, it is important to note that 2025 will mark four years since Belfast was awarded the title of UNESCO City of Music. As part of this year, Belfast City Council will be expected to complete and submit its Membership Monitoring Report highlighting each Creative Cities' contribution to UCCN's implementation. This report is mandatory for member cities every four years and will require a detailed analysis of progress against commitments in the music strategy alongside a plan and budget for the following four years.

3.32 **Finance and Resource Implications**

There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2024/25 budget from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy.

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

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

During discussion, several Members of the Committee welcomed the Music Strategy and its inclusive approach.

After discussion, the Committee:

- I. Noted the contents of the report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast”; and
- II. Agreed the actions for the remainder of 2024/25 as set out in the report and in Appendix 1, including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets.

Update on Belfast 2024

The Committee received a presentation from the Creative Programme Manager in relation to the Belfast 2024 Events Programme, which included a range of dance and theatre events, family fun days, outdoor spectacles, a celebratory concert, and the City Hall Immersive Rooms.

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The Committee noted the contents of the presentation and the Belfast 2024 programme of events for the coming months.

Growing Business and the Economy

Enterprise Support Service Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in August 2023, an update had been provided on the progress to operationalise and deliver the Enterprise Support Service which had been branded as Go Succeed.

Since the last update, the service was successfully launched and had now been operational for around eight months.

It was reported that the new service aimed to be the go-to source for expert business advice across the region. It represented the councils' collective response to our statutory responsibility and offers a set of connected enterprise support services where individuals, entrepreneurs or businesses could access a continuum of support to meet their needs, depending on their stage of development.

The key objectives of the model were to:

- Nurture a strong entrepreneurial culture, recognising enterprise as a viable career option and/or a route out of economic inactivity;
- Enable a vibrant and productive business base across Northern Ireland;
- Increase the proportion of 'innovation-active' businesses in NI and embed this more firmly with enterprise/ start-up agenda;
- Diversify the representation amongst those supported by the enterprise and innovation ecosystem;
- Delivery a service designed with the user in mind;
- Focus on adding value to existing support available in the ecosystem; and
- Providing regional coverage while ensuring that delivery reflects local differences/nuances.

The Committee was informed that the 'Go Succeed' provided a continuum of support from early-stage enterprise awareness through to starting, growing, and scaling a business. The concept was that the service would help people get the right support at the right time – and would also help maximise other available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.

The service had been established to deliver across three core areas – Start, Grow and Scale – with tailored support for clients aligned with their growth ambitions.

- **Start:** this element of the service aims to identify individuals with entrepreneurial intentions as well as reaching those individuals who do not have an intention to start a business but could be encouraged to do so.

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There is specific, targeted support for a range of underrepresented groups. The menu of support available included masterclasses, peer support networks and 1-1 mentoring;

□ **Grow:** this element of the service provides support for existing businesses. 1-1 mentoring is allocated based on the business' potential to grow and innovate. Masterclass and peer support network activity are also provided to support existing businesses to make key decisions on issues such as entering new markets or accessing finance for growth; and

□ **Scale:** this part of the service is geared to supporting start-ups that have the potential to go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years. Support is delivered through 1-1 mentoring which aims to enable access to finance or further support through Invest NI, Catalyst or others.

In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £4,000 (and up to 70% of capital/revenue costs) are available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.

The delivery was underpinned by investments such as a wide-reaching marketing and communications campaign; a call handling service to deal with phone enquiries as well as an online portal to deal with online requests for support and a regional CRM system to enable tracking of client engagement across the service.

Regional Performance Update

Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of regional performance:

- 18,793 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities;
- 3,204 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks);
- 2,514 businesses supported through growth activity 1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks); and
- 176 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.

The Committee was advised that the service provided an opportunity for councils to deliver a consistent approach to enterprise, start up and growth provision across the region. However, it also had the flexibility to adapt to meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs and businesses within local areas. To achieve this, councils had developed local-level annual service plans which identified key areas of focus for outreach and delivery activities.

Belfast Performance Update

It was reported that, since the service launched in November 2023, the Council had achieved the following:

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- 1,984 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities;
- From January-March 2024, the Enterprise and Business Growth team had also delivered inclusive mentoring support to 15 individuals with further barriers to engagement;
- 523 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
- 481 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks).

The Committee were advised that, 82 Belfast businesses had accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024, drawing down over £300,000. These grants had enabled businesses to purchase capital and/or revenue items which will support their future growth plans.

For the year ahead, planned activity included:

- Establishing, and building upon, relationships with key stakeholders across the city to put in place targeted interventions to engage with under-represented groups and work to overcome the barriers to starting or growing a business for those groups;
- Working with the council's Culture and Tourism teams to support a neighbourhood tourism programme promoting innovation and entrepreneurship across all city neighbourhoods and helping bring forward new tourism products;
- Continuing to raise awareness of the Social Economy sector, encouraging and supporting new and existing social enterprises and co-operatives; and
- Partnering with the council's Employability and Skills team to target self-employed sectors, including childminding, and delivering bespoke academies to break down barriers to self-employment.

It was highlighted that, for the future, it was critical that funding was secured to enable this service to continue. The SPF funding was currently scheduled to run out in March 2025 and there was no clarity as to the future SPF funding approach beyond this date. There had been some engagement with the Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Minister had been vocal in his support for the service. However, at this point, DfE was not making a financial contribution to support the delivery of NIESS – although councils were using some of resources allocated to them from central government for the delivery of their statutory duty to provide start-up support as their match funding contribution to the overall funding pot.

The Committee:

- Noted and endorsed the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service across Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses;

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- Noted the pending end date of the current funding in March 2025 and the lack of clarity around future resource availability at this point; and
- Agreed to support the work to secure resources for delivery beyond March 2025.

Sub Regional Economic Development - Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on work being led by the Department of the Economy (DfE) on sub-regional economic development, in line with the Minister’s Economic Vision set out in February 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the update on the work currently being led by DfE around sub-regional economic development.
- Note the pending development of sub-regional economic development plans and the timelines for council engagement in this activity.
- Agree to receive a future update on this work with a view to discussing the Belfast City Council priorities.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that, for some time, the NI government departments – led by DfE – have been considering sub-regional approaches to economic development. In June 2023, this committee agreed a response to a call for evidence issued by DfE in the context of ‘10X Place’. That call for evidence sought to build an understanding of how policy could be effectively flexed to meet local economic needs – and also to understand relative strengths across the region.

3.2 The council response covered a range of issues in line with the questions asked. A summary of the key points raised in that response included:

- Simply creating a sub-regional tier without additional transfer of statutory authority does not equal sub-regional economic development
- The critical issue is flexibility of approach to meet local needs

- Local authority boundaries can be building blocks for building up or drilling down – depending on the issue
- Concerns at creating another layer/partnership mechanism – propose that it would be more effective to use existing structures
- Request to understand what elements were ‘in play’ – all of DfE portfolio? Consideration that wider input/support was critical – particularly from DfC and DfI, given need for critical infrastructure investments to support any economic development activity.

3.3 Following the restoration of the NI Executive in February 2024, Minister Murphy set out his economic mission. It comprises four key themes, namely:

- Increase the proportion of the working-age population in ‘Good Jobs’
- Promote Regional Balance
- Raise Productivity
- Reduce Carbon Emissions

3.4 It is our understanding that the 10X Place work has effectively been replaced by the work around ‘promoting regional balance’. In our recent engagement with DfE and Invest NI regarding sub-regional economic development, we have continued to raise a number of key issues, namely:

- Role of Belfast as regional driver – research clearly shows that cities play a key role in generating wealth and opportunity. They need to be supported to play that role – and the benefits that accrue go beyond the city boundaries
- Ongoing inequities in Belfast – particularly within communities that face multiple disadvantage: there is a £3,474 yearly earnings gap for Belfast based on place of work and place of residence; 6 of the top 10 most deprived wards are in Belfast and the top 15 most deprived wards for the Education, Skills and Training domain of the Multiple Deprivation Matrix are all in Belfast
- Research also suggests that the underperformance of cities is one of the most significant contributing factors to low levels of productivity across the UK – policy needs to focus on removing barriers to growth rather than just trying to re-locate growth
- Need to ensure that this is not just about bringing all areas ‘up to the same level’ – productivity levels in NI already lag behind UK, ROI and many global metrics: Belfast’s level also needs to continue to improve (and this in turn can support the wider region).

- 3.5** In terms of tactical interventions that could support these ambitions, there are a number of areas of potential interest. These include:
- Maximising the impact of the City Deal investments – through innovation diffusion and SME access as well as skills interventions, including inclusive pathways
 - Supporting the development of key clusters in areas of competitive advantage – through targeted investment in finance; infrastructure and expert support
 - Targeted outreach and engagement support to develop inclusive pathways into new growth sectors.
- 3.6** With regard to next steps in this work, it is our understanding that DfE intends to move ahead with the development of a ‘sub-regional economic development plan’ in September 2024. That ‘plan’ is likely to be more of a broader set of intentions, with the ask that each council comes forward with their outline areas of priority and resource requirements. Council boundaries will be the building blocks for action – but they are open to collaborative activities, working across council boundaries on areas of shared interest e.g. sectoral priorities. No details are yet available on timelines, but it is likely that DfE will ask that plans are submitted in early 2025, to enable delivery from the new financial year. DfE officials have advised that engagement is taking place to try to secure additional resources for this work: However, we have made the point that it should not just be about new resources but, more importantly, considering how the existing resources can be flexed.
- 3.7** One other stipulation that DfE have flagged is that the plans will be brought together by local partnerships. They have not prescribed what these partnerships should be and have suggested that it is for councils to advise. This recognises the volume of existing partnerships that are already in place across all council areas, working on broader economic development issues.
- 3.8** It is likely that additional information on the proposed way forward will emerge in the coming weeks. At that point, officers will bring back a more detailed update and set out a proposed approach to ensure that the position of Belfast is recognised and appropriately supported through this work.
- 3.9** **Financial and Resource Implications**
- No specific financial or resource implications at this time.

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

DfE will be responsible for the overall equality impact assessment work on this activity.

It is intended that support will be available to all council areas – urban and rural.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 28th August, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Kelly, Lyons, F. McAteer, McCabe,
McDowell, R. McLaughlin, McKay and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Douglas, Duffy, Hanvey, McDonough-Brown and I. McLaughlin.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item 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.

Translink - Belfast Grand Central Update

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. McAllister, Head of Belfast Grand Central Station Programme, Mr. D. Bannon, Central Area Manager, and Ms. L. Shannon, Corporate Communications Manager, representing Translink to the meeting.

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The representatives provided a progress update of the Belfast Grand Central Station/ Weavers Cross Transport Led Regeneration Project which included details of station and street works, public transport interventions, access trail and wayfinding, rail systems progress and the combined social value of the live construction,

They provided an overview of Translink's operational readiness, bus and rail timetable changes, event management and customer information and accessibility.

The representatives thanked the Committee for its support and continued engagement for the Bus station opening set for 8th September. Ms. Shannon advised that an information leaflet would be shared with the Committee for dissemination and highlighted that the key message for customers was to plan and check their travel early, together with using the Journey Planner application.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of questions in relation to the potential for future night-time services and events management, the safety and railway validation process, the future of Great Victoria Street Bus Centre, retail offerings at the new Grand Central Station, Public Realm works and the pedestrian and traffic management plan and employment projections of the regeneration project.

In response to a Member's question, in relation to the success of the recent night-time events services, Mr. Bannon advised that a further update could be provided to the Committee in relation to the statistics and review of the services.

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

The Committee noted the contents of the Presentation and that the Committee would be invited to a tour of the new station.

Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes

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 2nd September for ratification.

Chairperson

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 21st August, 2024

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM

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

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. L. Hillis, Principal Building Control Surveyor;
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th June, 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 1st July, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Delegated Matters

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

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications for licenses which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

The Committee noted a list of applications which had been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation during June and July 2024.

**Muriel's, The Spaniard and The Jeggy
Nettle - Entertainments Licence Variation**

The Committee considered an application from JK Pubs Limited, for the variation of their 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licences based on the Council's standard conditions, to provide music, singing, dancing or any other entertainment of a like kind, for the following three premises:

- Muriel's, 12-14 Church Lane, Belfast BT1 4QN;
- The Spaniard, 3 Skipper Street, Belfast, BT1 2DZ; and
- The Jeggy Nettle, 12 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, BT9 5AA

The Principal Building Control Surveyor outlined that the days and hours during which entertainment may be provided at the establishments, under the terms of its current Entertainments Licence, were:

Muriel's

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 1.00am the following morning
- Sunday 12:30pm to 1.00am the following morning.

The Spaniard

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 1.00am the following morning
- Sunday 12:30pm to 1.00am the following morning.

The Jeggy Nettle

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 1.00am the following morning
- Sunday 12:30pm to 12.00 midnight.

She explained that, at present, entertainment was provided in the form of DJs and live bands on the following nights:-

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Muriels and The Spaniard

- Friday and Saturday nights.

The Jeggy Nettle

- Monday and Wednesday to Sunday nights inclusive.

The Committee was advised that the licensee had stated that they would like the variation to extend the permitted hours until 2.00am as the Licensee feels that the three premises are an integral part of Belfast's nightlife and that an increase in operating hours would allow them to compete within the sector, which was essential for the commercial success of the businesses.

Public notice of the application had been placed and no written representations were lodged as a result of the advertisement.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service had both been consulted in relation to the application and they had both confirmed that they had no objection to the application.

The Members were advised that no noise complaints had been received by the Service in relation to the venue in the past 12 months.

The Chairperson welcomed the applicant to the meeting, Ms. J. Kane.

In response to a Member's question in relation to what sound mitigation measures had been implemented for residents near the Jeggy Nettle, Ms. Kane advised that policies and procedures were in place to manage noise and staff were experienced in the dispersal of customers in a timely manner. She pointed out that the Jeggy Nettle had a good track record in regard to the emergency services and highlighted that, if agreed, the variation would be utilised, when required, to compete with other businesses in the area.

During discussion, one Member suggested the requirement for an additional condition of engaging with the Stranmillis Residents' Association.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the applications for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence to vary the hours during which entertainment may be provided as follows:

Muriel's

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 2.00am the following morning; and
- Sunday 12:30pm to 2.00am the following morning.

The Spaniard

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 2.00am the following morning; and
- Sunday 12:30pm to 2.00am the following morning.

The Jeggy Nettle

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 2.00am the following morning;
- Sunday 12:30pm to 2.00am the following morning; and

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- Subject to the condition that the applicant meets with Stranmillis Residents' Association. The Committee delegated authority to officers to finalise the wording of the condition.

Restricted Delegated Matter

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

Proposed Revocation of an HMO Licence

The Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Manager presented the details of the report to consider the revocation of the HMO licence.

He advised that the applicant had been granted a HMO Licence by the Council in October, 2021. He informed the Committee that a complaint had been received in March, 2024 from the tenants residing in the accommodation and the HMO Unit had carried out an inspection of the accommodation in March, 2024.

He highlighted that the results of the investigation had found that a number of serious breaches of licence conditions which were set out in this report. He pointed out that the Committee were asked to consider the revocation of the HMO licence given these breaches.

The HMO Manager informed the Committee that the applicant was not in attendance, however, since the report had been published, correspondence had been received from the applicant and a response had been issued from the HMO Manager. He provided details of the correspondence for the Committee.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. Corbett, Neighbourhood Engagement Officer, Queen's University, to the meeting. Mr. Corbett provided an overview of his attendance at the property and the tenants experience.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to revoke the HMO licence outlined in the report for the following reasons:

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- i. the owner of the HMO was not a fit and proper person;
- ii. the owner of the HMO had committed a serious breach of a condition of the licence; and
- iii. there had been more than one breach of the conditions of the licence.

The Committee also noted that the City Solicitor would draft a communication statement to outline HMO accommodation standards for tenants.

Non-Delegated Matters

Airbnbs and Short Term Let Accommodation

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To consider the responses from the Department for the Economy (DfE), the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department for Communities (DfC) to recent correspondence from the Committee regarding the regulation of short term lets, such as Airbnbs, in Northern Ireland.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the responses received from DfE, DfI and DfC.

3.0 Main report

3.1 At the Licensing Committee meeting on 20th March 2024, the Committee agreed to write to the NI Executive regarding the regulation of short term lets, such as Airbnbs, in Northern Ireland. (Copy letter at appendix 1)

3.2 The Committee thought it important that the Executive ensure that an appropriate model is in place for the management of short term lets, and the extent to which they exist in any city and beyond, given the direct impact that they are having on communities, not least in terms of the affordability of buying or renting property.

3.3 The Minister for the Economy responded on the 24 May 2024 (Appendix 2) recognising that this is a complex area to deliver change in, with policy and operational responsibilities spanning a number of Executive Departments, Councils and other agencies.

- 3.4 The DfE has responsibility for the implementation of the Tourism (NI) Order but the scope of the Order is tightly defined and limits Tourism NI to inspecting properties to ensure that they meet a minimum standard of safety, cleanliness, and the provision of facilities.
- 3.5 The response sets out that due to significant growth in the number of self-catering properties certified by Tourism NI they will shortly be carrying out a review of the role of the certification of visitor accommodation. This review will examine options for the future regulation of visitor accommodation. However, any changes which are considered following the review will require new and/or amended primary legislation to be debated and approved by the Assembly.
- 3.6 In a response from the Department for Infrastructure on 20th May 2024 (Appendix 3) they advise that rent regulation is a specific responsibility of DfC under the Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and that DfC also has overall responsibility for housing policy including the provision of decent, affordable and sustainable homes.
- 3.7 In addition, DfI maintains that councils have the important responsibility for setting a vision for the long-term future development of their areas through the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs). In doing so councils have the flexibility to bring forward bespoke approaches to dealing with any local issues which affect their communities. Information in relation to Belfast City Council's approach set out in our LDP is included in Appendix 5.
- 3.8 The response from DfC is included at Appendix 4. It sets out that policy responsibility for Airbnbs and short-term tourist accommodation lies with the Department for Economy and, its Arm's Length Body, Tourism NI. It therefore suggests that the Council write to the Department for Economy about the issues raised in the letter.
- 3.9 Members are advised whilst we are well aware of the Council's responsibilities and powers under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, it is the view of Officers that the necessary regulation of short term lets would go beyond the assessment of acceptability of such uses in land use terms.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 There are currently no financial or resource implications as a result of this report.

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

3.11 There are no issues associated with this report.”

During discussion, one Member expressed his disappointment in the responses and raised his concerns on the impact of Airbnbs such as Anti-Social behaviour experienced by residents, rises in property prices and rent costs. He suggested that the Council was limited in enforcement as it could only currently apply to individual properties and legislation was required to cap the numbers of short term lets in areas to sustain communities. He suggested that planned regulation of this accommodation was required to protect the integrity of neighbourhoods and well being of residents, visitors and legitimate operators.

During discussion, the Director of Planning and Building Control suggested that the Committee could write to the Department for the Economy and Tourism NI to reiterate the need for legislation and highlight the impact and concerns raised by the Committee, and request that the Council be involved in the review that had been outlined in the correspondence.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the responses received from the Department for the Economy, Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities; and
- Agreed to write to the Department for the Economy and Tourism NI to reiterate the need for legislation and highlight the impact and concerns raised by the Committee, and request that the Council was involved in the review that had been outlined in the correspondence.

Restricted Non-Delegated Matter

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 21st August, 2024**

**HMO Review of Licence Scheme Charges and
Proposed Increase in Licence Fee from 1 October 2024**

The HMO Unit Manager summarised the review of the Licence Scheme Charges and the proposed increase in Licence Fee from 1st October, 2024.

He advised that, since the report had been published, correspondence had been received from the Landlords Association of Northern Ireland requesting that the item should be open to the public and that LANI could contribute to the debate.

He informed the Committee of his response which outlined the reasons for the restriction and explained the Regulations the Houses of Multiple Occupation (Fees) Regulations (NI) 2019. He also informed the Committee that a joint meeting between the Department for Communities, LANI and the Council had been scheduled for the 25th September, 2024 and the increase in fees, if agreed, would be on the agenda.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the increase of the HMO licence application fee to £45, the maximum permissible under the 2019 Regulations.

The Committee also agreed to increase the costs of varying an HMO licence as follows:

Licence variations	
Item	Cost
Addition of a new managing agent.	£225
Addition of a new occupant	£225 for each new occupant+ £100 inspection fee (per visit)

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Thursday, 27th June, 2024

MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Anglin, Bell, T. Brooks,
Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Hanvey, G. McAteer,
McCabe 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;
Mr. C. Campfield, Acting Principal Planning Officer
Mr. M. McErlean, Senior Planning Officer;
Ms. U. Caddell, Senior Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillors Abernethy and Murphy.

Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson (Councillor Carson) declared an interest in relation to item 4c - LA04/2023/2557/F - 260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works. - Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove, in that he had been involved with both Radius Housing and Choice Housing, had facilitated meetings and had lobbied for a puffin crossing at the application site, he left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillors T. Brooks and Groogan declared an interest in relation to item 4h - LA04/2023/4607/F - Removal of existing temporary sectional buildings and construction of new three storey childcare building with external play area, associated landscaping and alterations to existing access. Parkmore Building, 284A Ormeau Road, in that they were Members of the South Belfast Area Based Working Group which had recommended the allocation of funding from the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund for the proposal, and they left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to item 4c - LA04/2023/2557/F - 260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works. - Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove, in that Radius

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Housing was a client of the company he worked for and he left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Withdrawn Item

The Committee noted that the following item had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- 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.

Miscellaneous Reports

Delegation of Local Applications with NIW Objections

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Planning and Building Control, those local planning applications to which NI Water had objected to.

Confirmation of Listed Buildings - International Research Centre for Experimental Physics, including Railings, Retaining Walls, Queen's University, Belfast University Road Belfast

The Committee agreed the confirmation of the listing of the building.

New Planning Applications

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 Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of the proposed uses;
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on heritage assets;

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- Impact on amenity;
- Climate change;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Natural heritage;
- Waste management;
- Employability and Skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

He reported that the Council's Waste Management Unit had confirmed that it was content with the amended plans and layout and pointed out an error contained within the report at paragraphs 1.2, 5.61 and 5.93, in that the report should have referred to City Quays Gardens rather than Cathedral Gardens.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that the application would be approved, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. D. Lyle, Mr. M. Gordon and Mr. H. McConnell to the meeting, who attended on behalf of the applicant.

Ms. Lyle stated that she welcomed the recommendations of the Planning officers and explained that Belfast Harbour was very keen to progress onsite and therefore would welcome the Committee's endorsement of the recommendation.

In response to a query from a Member with regard to the proposal's impact on the view of the Belfast Harbour Office building, Mr. McConnell explained that there had a robust assessment of the application from both the Council and HED, and consideration had been given to the views of the Grade A Listed Building.

Mr. Brian McKervey, HED, who was in attendance, added that the proposal was appropriate for the setting and would be a good neighbour to the Grade A Listed Building.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and 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 issues that may arise.

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**LA04/2024/0190/F and LA04/2024/0203/LBC -
Renewal of planning permission
ref: LA04/2018/1991/F for the demolition of
existing non listed buildings and redevelopment
of site with 6-8 storey buildings to accommodate
office led mixed use development comprising
Class B1 (a) office, ancillary Class B2 industrial
floorspace, active ground floor uses retail (A1),
restaurants, cafes and bars (sui generis);
basement parking and associated access and
circulation. Proposals include the retention
and restoration of the listed Seaver building
comprising façade restoration; new roof and
reintroduction of dormers, replacement
windows and reinstatement of original entrance
to southern façade. - Former Belfast Telegraph
complex at 124-144 Royal Avenue and, 1-29 Little
Donegall Street**

The Planning Manager outlined the proposal to the Committee and explained that planning permission and Listed Building Consent had been granted in February, 2019 and that the application sought to renew the full planning permission and was accompanied by a fresh Listed Building Consent application.

He pointed out that there were no differences between the previously approved application and the current application for renewal and that it included, where relevant, updated reports and information as required by the Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy.

He explained that no objections had been received from third parties and that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that Ms. D. Lyle and Mr. P. Stinson, Turley, were available to answer questions from the Members.

In response to a question from a Member, who had enquired as to what consideration had been given to reusing the structure rather than demolition, Mr. Stinson explained that the focus on retaining the original building had been worked through extensively, however the previous use and practicalities of converting it into the proposed use for offices had not been feasible. The Planning Manager added that there was a need for modern office space and that the current building presented as unattractive and explained that a condition had been recommended which required the reuse and recycling of building materials, where possible, to minimise and mitigate any environmental impacts.

After further discussion, the Committee granted full planning permission and Listed Building Consent, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to deal with any other matters that might arise, to include the further consultations from DAERA NIEA (NED), provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Thursday, 27th June, 2024**

(The Deputy Chairperson (Councillor T. Brooks) in the Chair.)

LA04/2023/2557/F - 260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works. - Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues for assessment of the application:

- Principle of development;
- Site layout, density and design;
- Open space provision;
- Affordable housing;
- Trees and landscaping;
- Traffic, movement and parking;
- Climate change;
- Impact on amenity;
- Contaminated land;
- Drainage and flooding;
- Natural heritage;
- Impact on protected sites;
- Employability and skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application community consultation.

He explained that a response had been received from DfI Rivers, following the receipt of a Flood Risk Assessment, which had offered no further objection, subject to a condition that would require the submission of a final drainage assessment prior to the construction of the drainage network.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan and relevant material considerations, the proposed development was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and 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 issues that might arise.

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LA04/2024/0438/F - Section 54 application to vary condition 27 (parking, servicing and circulating), condition 28 (parking facilities), condition 29 (vehicular access) , condition 30 (cycle parking) and condition 31 (service management plan) of planning approval LA04/2019/2756/F (alterations to vacant Gaol wing (Wing A) to facilitate change of use to operational whiskey distillery with tourist centre. - A Wing, Crumlin Road Gaol 53-55 Crumlin Road

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee which sought to vary conditions of planning permission LA04/2019/2756/F under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

She explained that an amended proposed site plan had been submitted to supersede the previously approved proposed site plan and that DfI Roads had offered no objection in its consultation response.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, and in the planning balance, the proposed development was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

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 might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

(The Chairperson (Councillor Carson) in the Chair.)

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 Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and outlined the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of a school/nursery at this location;
- Loss of employment land;
- Provision of community infrastructure;
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on amenity;
- Climate change;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Environmental protection;

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- Natural Heritage;
- Flood risk and drainage; and
- Waste-water infrastructure.

She explained that, in the planning balance, it was considered that the benefits of the proposal, in terms of providing a community and education use, outweighed conflict with the Development Plan, namely, the temporary loss of employment land.

She stated that no objections had been received from statutory consultees and that the Council's Environmental Health Service and DfI Roads had raised no objections. She added that, two third party objections had been received and eleven letters of support.

She reported that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, and in the planning balance, it was recommended that planning permission was granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. L. Ervine, the applicant, Mr. T. Bell and Mr. R. Dougan to the meeting.

In response to questions from Members with regard to community consultation and concern with regard to the application, Ms. Ervine explained that 17,000 leaflets had been delivered in the east Belfast area and had received over 200 expressions of interest from parents in the area and 60 applications had been received to commence the school year in September, 2024.

She added that she had attended a number of community events in the east Belfast area and had received a lot of positivity.

She stated that consultations had been undertaken with local church groups and Resolve NI, a community resolution organisation, which had spoken to community leaders in the Clonduff estate and Lisnasharragh PSNI, and no concerns had been raised with regard to the proposal.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to no public consultation having been carried out by the Council with local residents, the Principal Planning Officer explained that neighbour notification was carried out, in line with statutory requirements, and the application was advertised, as required, in local newspapers. It was confirmed that as the application was not for Major development, there was no requirement for the applicant to carry out formal Pre-Application Community Consultation.

The Chairperson put the officer recommendation to the Committee and upon audible dissent, called for a vote to be taken.

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On a recorded vote, 11 Members voted for the recommendation and five against and it was declared carried.

For (11)	Against (5)
The Chairperson (Councillor Carson); The Deputy Chairperson (Councillor T. Brooks); and Councillors Anglin, Bell, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann and Whyte.	Aldermen Lawlor and McCullough; and Councillors Doran, S. Douglas and Ferguson.

Accordingly, 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 issues that might arise, to include those raised in further consultation responses.

LA04/2023/4215/F - Proposed 3no. residential apartments blocks (19no. Cat 1 Elderly apartments and 2no. Wheelchair apartments, 21 units in total) Associated car parking, site works and landscaping. - 141-147 Upper Dunmurry Lane

The Committee deferred consideration of the application in order to undertake a site visit.

LA04/2024/0044/F - Change of use from HMO to single dwelling and rear dormer (amended description). 17 Lower Courtyard, BT7 3LH

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and referred to the following key issues to be considered:

- Principle of change of use back to a single dwelling;
- Scale, massing and design of rear dormer; and
- The impact on neighbouring amenity.

She pointed out an error in the report which had mistakenly referred to temporary planning permission and confirmed that the application was not for temporary planning permission.

She reported that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable, and it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. S. McFarlane, the applicant, to the meeting.

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Ms. McFarlane explained that some of her neighbours had objected the application and explained that there were at least three other properties within the development which had added a rear dormer and that the proposal would bring her house back to its original design of a three bedroom house, in line with the neighbouring properties.

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 might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

(Councillors T. Brooks and Groogan left the meeting as they had declared an interest in the following application.)

LA04/2023/4607/F - Removal of existing temporary sectional buildings and construction of new three storey childcare building with external play area, associated landscaping and alterations to existing access. Parkmore Building, 284A Ormeau Road

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application.

She referred the Committee to the following key issues to be considered:

- Principle of development in this location;
- Impact on open space;
- Access and transport;
- Environmental considerations;
- Flood risk and drainage; and
- Waste-water infrastructure.

She explained that the site was within the settlement limits and zoned open space within the BUAP and also within the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 and DBMAP (2014v).

She stated that the proposal would provide dedicated on-site parking to service the proposed building and was considered acceptable, given the highly sustainable location of the site.

She reported that the application proposed to deliver a purpose-built building designed to meet the needs of children and young adults with special needs.

She concluded by stating that, having regard to the development plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

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Thursday, 27th June, 2024**

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 might arise, provided that they were not substantive, to include those raised in the final consultation response from Environmental Health.

LA04/2024/0819/F - 47 Greystown Park (Single storey rear extension and front elevation changes to facilitate conversion of garage to playroom / home office

The Committee considered the report and the officers' recommendation and 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 might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Restricted Item

Draft Purpose Built and Managed Student Accommodation - Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager provided an overview of updated Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) that related to Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA).

He explained that the existing SPG, adopted in June 2016, had been reviewed following the adoption and Local Development Plan (LDP) Plan Strategy in May 2023 and he asked the Committee to approve the revised draft SPG for public consultation.

The Committee agreed to the publication, for public consultation, of the revised draft Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 13th August, 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, Magee, McCabe, McCann
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; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Alderman Lawlor.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th June, 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 1st July, 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 Murphy declared an interest in relation to item 9a - LA04/2024/0344/F and LA04/2024/0321/LBC - Construction of a new South Wing of the RBAI Campus to include multi-purpose dining hall, 15 general classrooms, a drama suite, a 25m swimming pool, a Board Room suite, living accommodation for the School Steward with PV panels on roof and new, small extension to the Soane Building, to provide improved accessibility and upgraded WC facilities, with associated refurbishment and re-modelling of first and second floor classrooms to the southern end of the Soane Building, the development of landscaped zones including the under-croft area at the Common Hall and new boundary treatment at Durham Street and demolition of the existing dining hall, swimming pool, school steward's house and W-Block. - The Royal Belfast Academical Institution College Square East, in that he had previously met with the Board of Governors regarding the application and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 13th August, 2024**

Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the site visits which had taken place on 25th June, 2024.

Notification of Provision/Removal of Accessible Parking Bay

The Committee noted the notifications regarding accessible parking bays at the following locations:

- Provision at 93 Clarawood Park;
- Provision at Ballyhackamore;
- Provision at 25 Ballynafoy Close;
- Provision at 33 Ballysillan Drive;
- Provision at 56 Locksley Gardens; and
- Removal at 244 Ravenhill Avenue.

Notifications of Abandonment and Extinguishment

**Notifications from Statutory Bodies – Footway
between Peters Hill and Clifton Street /
17 Aughrim Park**

The Committee noted the correspondence in relation to the confirmation of an Abandonment Order for sections of footway between Peters Hill and Clifton Street and the extinguishment of a Public Right of Way at the rear of 17 Aughrim Park.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in April, 2024.

Miscellaneous Reports

**Advance Notice of Listed Buildings - 143 Malone
Road and Inchmarlo Prep School, Cranmore
Park**

The Committee agreed to support the proposed listing in respect of:

- Inchmarlo Prep School, Cranmore Park; and
- 143 Malone Road, Belfast, BT9 6SX

Local applications subject to NI Water objections

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Planning and Building Control those Local Planning Applications to which NI Water had objected.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 13th August, 2024**

Planning Applications previously considered

LA04/2023/3030/F - Erection of 201-bed Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation scheme and retail unit (11-storey) (amended description and plans). - 41-49 Dublin Road and 3-5 Ventry Street

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and explained that the Committee had approved the proposal in December, 2023 and had delegated authority to resolve a final response from DfI Roads and to negotiate a Section 76 Planning Agreement.

She reported that DfI Roads had subsequently provided a response and offered no objections and that the Section 76 Planning Agreement had been significantly delayed due to land ownership issues.

She informed the Committee that the Section 79 Planning Agreement had been agreed in July and that a late objection had been received and therefore required the application to be presented to the Committee for consideration. She stated the objection had since been withdrawn but that the Committee would also need to consider a new application for the redevelopment of the adjacent Fanum House with a Purpose-Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) scheme. She reported that the proposed PBMSA schemes at Dublin Road, Ventry Street and Fanum House were broadly compatible.

She explained that the recommendation remained that planning permission be granted.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, and 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 issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

New Planning Applications

LA04/2024/0344/F and LA04/2024/0321/LBC - Construction of a new South Wing of the RBAI Campus to include multi-purpose dining hall, 15 general classrooms, a drama suite, a 25m swimming pool, a Board Room suite, living accommodation for the School Steward with PV panels on roof and new, small extension to the Soane Building, to provide improved accessibility and upgraded WC facilities, with associated refurbishment and re-modelling of first and second floor classrooms to the southern end of the Soane Building, the development of landscaped zones including the under-croft area at the Common Hall and new boundary treatment at Durham Street and

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 13th August, 2024**

demolition of the existing dining hall, swimming pool, school steward's house and W-Block. - The Royal Belfast Academical Institution College Square East

The Planning Manager outlined the application for the Committee and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on the special architectural and historic qualities of the Listed Building and setting of adjacent Listed Buildings;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- Design and placemaking;
- Climate change;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste management;
- Natural heritage;
- Employability and skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application community consultation.

He pointed out that the Listed curtilage buildings which had been proposed for demolition were later additions that were not of architectural or historic significance and had only benefited from Listed Building status through being curtilage buildings. He added that they were unsuitable for modern educational needs, would be replaced by high quality buildings and that DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) had offered no objection to the demolition and concluded that the demolition of the Listed Building was wholly exceptional.

He explained that the demolition of W Block, a later addition to the Soane Building, was wholly exceptional as it was not the most significant or authentic part of the Listed Soane Building, it was unsuitable for educational needs and that most of the interior had been lost through the years. He stated that the proposal would facilitate the redevelopment with a much better building.

The Planning Manager reported that Environmental Health required additional information in relation to land contamination, odour and noise He added that DfI Roads had also sought further information, however, the Planning Manager advised that there would be no increase in pupils, staff or vehicular trips.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission, Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent would be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. Flemming, Flemming Mountstephen Planning, to the meeting who was attending on behalf of the applicant.

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Mr. Flemming outlined the campus vision and explained that the school attracted over 1,000 pupils into the city centre daily and that the proposal would address all of the school's short and medium-term needs which was a critical element in the realisation of the long-term vision for the school campus.

He stated that the proposed development had three inter-related elements, namely, demolition, new development and landscape works. He explained that, in recent years, the school had invested heavily in its built heritage, Christ Church had been restored in partnership with the Belfast Buildings Preservation Trust for use as the school library and IT Centre and the Soane Building was the subject of a careful and award-winning restoration scheme. He added that other facilities in the school had been upgraded to ensure that 'Inst' as a city centre school remained attractive and provided the best quality education in all its forms.

Mr. Flemming stated that the proposal would enhance the Listed Soane Building, the school campus and the City Centre Conservation Area and fully aligned with the vision, aims, objectives and strategic policies of the Belfast Local Development Plan Strategy.

The Committee granted planning permission, Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, to resolve whether Conservation Area Consent was required, in view of the application for Listed Building Consent. and to deal with any other issues that arise, to include the final consultation responses from DfI Roads and Environmental Health, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2021/1593/F - Retrospective application for construction of new seated viewing stand with a capacity of 228 people in same location as previous seated viewing stand now demolished which had 255 capacity - Recreational grounds at Blanchflower Playing Fields, Holywood Road

The Planning Manager outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- The principle of development;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- Impact on amenity;
- Drainage;
- Access and Parking; and
- Impact on natural heritage.

He reported that there were no objections from statutory consultees or Environmental Health and that no third party representations had been received.

He stated that it was recommended that the application would be approved, subject to conditions.

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

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conditions and to deal with any other matters that may arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2024/0358/F - Proposed change of use from Office (Use class B1) to Health Care Hub (incorporating use classes D1, A1 and A2), external alterations to the façade of the property and other ancillary site works (Amended Description). Park House, 87-91 Great Victoria Street

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and referred to the following key issues:

- Principle of medical use at this location;
- Provision of community infrastructure;
- Access and transport; and
- Environmental considerations.

She explained that the proposed use was considered acceptable within the sustainable city centre locations and in compliance with retail and community infrastructure policies contained within the LDP Plan Strategy.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

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 that they were not substantive.

LA04/2024/0656/F - Proposed roof space conversion creating dormer to rear of dwelling with 2no rooflights. - 41 Owenvarragh Park

The Committee considered the report and 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 that they were not substantive.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 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 Committee meeting during discussion on the following items as, due to their nature, 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.

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**Planning Application LA04/2023/3821/F –
Proposed change of use from offices to
aparthotel (136 rooms) 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 Planning Manager reported an error in the processing of the planning application which had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in June.

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed not to take any further action in relation to the matter.

Quarter 4 Finance Report

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented the report on the Quarter 4 financial position for the Planning Committee.

The Committee noted the report and the associated reporting pack.

Chairperson

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Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 8th August, 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, T. Brooks, Bunting, M. Donnelly,
Flynn, Long and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
Mr. M. Mulholland, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors R. Brooks, Doherty, S. Douglas and McCabe.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th June were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Retrofit Workshop Agenda

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 At the meeting of the Climate & City Resilience Committee on 21st of June 2024, it was agreed that a retrofit workshop would be arranged for elected members in September 2024, with expert members of the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub invited to attend. The Committee agreed that a draft agenda would be considered by the Committee at its meeting in August.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 To review and approve the proposed agenda and suggest amendments as required.

3.0 Main Report

Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub takes a consortium approach to catalysing retrofit activity across the public, commercial and private building sectors in Belfast. Belfast City Council's Climate Team convenes and supports the Hub's activities as part of the wider support the team provides for the Belfast Community Planning Partnership. Progress on the Hub's activities is reported regularly to the Climate and City Resilience Committee (and to the Resilience and Sustainability Board) with their most recent meeting generating a request for a retrofit themed workshop for elected members.

Proposed approach

The Retrofit Hub and the Council's UP2030 team recently ran a joint mapping exercise event with retrofit experts to help visualise the need and opportunities for a neighbourhood retrofit programme, focusing on the UP2030 pilot area which includes the Linen Quarter and adjacent communities living in Sandy Row, Donegall Pass, the Market and Barrack Street. This area was selected as significant groundwork has already been done with communities to help identify what a net zero community might look like, in order to develop a methodology that can be rolled out to other parts of the city.

The activity used data from the Local Area Energy Plan to create maps that visualised existing buildings' energy performance rating, building type and tenure, as well as retrofit measures already in place, to help participants understand the challenges and opportunities around retrofit.

The Climate Team propose to repeat this approach drawing on Member's diverse range of expertise and their working knowledge of community needs while also enabling Members to explore what a retrofit neighbourhood approach might look like when applied to real life settings across different building types and tenures in the UP2030 area. The event will be supported by Retrofit Hub members with expertise across the various building types, technologies and with experience of working with communities on retrofit and fuel poverty. The proposed agenda is shown below:

1. Welcome & event outline (3 hour event). Date to be confirmed.
2. Introduction to retrofit – Climate Team members and sectoral leads from the Retrofit Hub outline the main concepts, technologies, challenges and opportunities:
 - Public sector buildings

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- **Commercial sector**
 - **Residential**
3. **Mapping exercise** – using detailed maps and a series of questions with support from expert Hub members, work in groups to explore case study sub-areas of the UP2030 area:
- **Public buildings – e.g. Cecil Ward building**
 - **Commercial buildings**
 - **Residential – selection of streets**
4. **Group feedback** – group leaders feed main findings back to wider group with scribes capturing key findings and future actions.

3.1 Financial and Resource Implications

None at this point.

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

None known.”

During discussion, a Member requested that the workshop would be held in the evening to allow most Members to participate. She also requested that all Members for the UP2030 area would be invited to attend.

The Committee:

- i. reviewed and approved the proposed workshop agenda;
- ii. agreed that the workshop would be held in the evening to ensure high Member attendance;
- iii. agreed that all Members for the UP2030 area of the City would be invited to attend;
- iv. noted that Members were encouraged to spread the word of the workshop and to share the details with any experts to consider participating.

Resilience and Sustainability Board - Annual Review

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reminded the Committee that, in December 2020, Belfast had launched a Resilience Strategy, a framework to safeguard the city against shocks and stresses which could threaten its safety and stability over coming years.

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The development of the Strategy had been led by the Belfast Resilience Commissioner, who had worked alongside a range of key partners to inform its development. She outlined that Belfast had become a member of the 100 Resilient Cities Network and had been able to draw upon valuable experience, insights and resources to help develop the Resilience Strategy.

The Committee was advised that the Strategy had been developed as a City document, to be delivered in partnership with external partners across the city. She explained that there had been significant progress made on many of the ambitions outlined within it, with regular reporting to the Climate and City Resilience Committee and the Belfast Agenda Resilience and Sustainability Board on ongoing climate activity.

The Members were advised that the Ambitions document comprised 30 projects designed to transition the city. The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reported that the Resilience and Sustainability Board oversaw the delivery and implementation of the Resilience Strategy. The Board had supported the embedding and delivery of sustainable development and resilience across all Belfast Agenda priorities, linking across Boards as appropriate, and reporting on progress to the Community Planning Partnership. Since 2020, when the Ambitions document had been developed, those projects had since progressed and new projects had emerged across the city. The Board's first Annual Review was intended to capture the progress of all of the projects which had supported the transition.

Each Board member had completed a template which captured the aims of the project, what had been delivered and the next steps. The template had also been completed for new projects, delivered by board members organisations, but not highlighted in the Ambitions document. The review had been structured around the updated Belfast Agenda (Our Planet) so that it aligned with current ambitions:

- Re-naturing the city and increasing resilience to climate change;
- Creating a sustainable circular economy; and
- Innovating to net zero.

The report had also highlighted the UN Sustainable Development Goals which were covered through the list of projects.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted that the update gathered together projects currently taking place in the city that ultimately aimed to support the transition to an inclusive, resilient and low emission economy;
- ii. agreed that the document would be issued to all Members and published on the Council website; and
- iii. agreed to hold a future meeting under the theme of sustainable transport/Electric Vehicles, with Translink to be invited.

Net Zero Belfast Pathfinder project - update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

To provide an update on the Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder project which is de-risking two strategic projects to decarbonise the built environment in Belfast: a heat network and a solar PV project.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 To note the contents of the report, specifically that:

- I. the one year project commenced on 1st June 2024 and will be implemented over in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult;
- II. the project will de-risk and progress two priority projects (heat network and a solar PV project) from the Belfast Local Energy Action Plan (LAEP) and Queen’s Island Decarbonisation Plan;
- III. a Project Assessment is currently underway (to scope the projects) with a market readiness assessment and business model development due to start in August;
- IV. Alongside this work, two separate projects are progressing to determine the potential for adoption of rooftop solar PV and to provide Council with an understanding of the technical and commercial factors surrounding the introduction of a low carbon heat network in Belfast; and
- V. Shared Island funding has also been secured with Cork under Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) Strand 1A to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Context

3.2 The Belfast Local Energy Action Plan (LAEP) and Queen’s Island Decarbonisation Plan (developed by the Energy Systems Catapult with a local energy consortium) were presented to elected members in April 2024. The LAEP included five outline priority decarbonisation projects as cost effective and deliverable interventions that could deliver significant energy savings and emission reductions while also unlocking growth and job opportunities across the city. These comprised: domestic retrofit, heat network, solar PV on public buildings, solar car port with EV charging and oil boiler to heat pump transition. There were also two modelled scenarios for Queen’s Island (a Heat network and Solar Photovoltaic Carports).

- 3.3 Members gave approval to establish a LAEP delivery group to support the delivery of decarbonisation projects across the city; and establish a community of practice to ensure that the data generated by the modelling is fully utilised by key stakeholders across the City. This work is underway and a report will be brought back to update elected members in due course.
- 3.4 Members were also notified in March 2024 that funding (£150K) had been secured from the Innovate UK Net Zero Living Pathfinders competition to de-risk two of the priority projects identified by the city's LAEP and the Decarbonisation Plan for Queens Island area of Belfast. The two projects are a heat network and a solar PV project which are assessed to have the greatest potential to reduce emissions from the city whilst also delivering significant socio-economic benefits for local communities.
- 3.5 The Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder project enables Belfast to act immediately upon delivery of the LAEP and QIDP to progress two projects using a whole systems approach to decarbonise a local area. The project commenced on 1st June 2024 and will be implemented over the coming year in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult.

Overview of the project

- 3.6 The project will focus on overcoming the following non-technical barriers to the delivery of the two decarbonisation projects identified in the LAEP and QIDP, specifically around:
- low maturity / readiness of market/supply chain to progress net zero innovation;
 - capacity of the Council to progress decarbonisation projects;
 - appropriate business models (e.g. off-taker arrangements) to enable an attractive value proposition to investors;
 - optimum legal and commercial arrangements for Council to engage with private sector to enable net zero projects; and
 - potential public resistance to decarbonisation projects and their impact on the local area.
- 3.7 By accelerating and de-risking the delivery of two priority decarbonisation projects identified in the LAEP and QIDP, the project will support ongoing efforts by the Council and its partners to reduce emissions from the city's built environment which is the largest source of emissions in the City. Project activities include:

1. Project Assessment

- a. Determine objectives for two priority decarbonisation projects (heat network and solar PV) from the LAEP / QIDP
 - b. Analysis of non-technical barriers to delivery (above)
2. Assess the maturity / readiness of market actors (potential off-takers, investors etc) to engage and deliver low-carbon projects
 3. Develop capacity of key stakeholders including Council to take forward LAEP / QIDP outputs
 4. Commercial viability and routes to finance
 - a. Business model analysis (value and finance flows)
 - b. Define optimum legal and commercial arrangements for Belfast City Council (BCC) to catalyse investment - this will enhance the capacity of BCC to engage the private sector in developing and delivering complex clean energy projects.
 5. Identify opportunities for downstream investments to upskill and empower excluded groups and communities through consultation and engagement
 6. Assess economic, environmental and social impacts of the interventions

Progress

- 3.7 The Energy Systems catapult have commenced the Project Assessment which will scope out each of the two projects in more detail. This will provide the necessary information for the subsequent work packages. Procurement of a commercial and legal firm to deliver 4b is also underway with an initial workshop planned for August. The market readiness assessment and business model development will also commence in August.
- 3.8 Alongside this work, an initial district heat network feasibility study is being commissioned to provide Council with an understanding of the technical and commercial factors surrounding the introduction of a low carbon heat network in Belfast. This work is being overseen by an internal Heat Working Group which has an overarching remit to inform and lead on the development of the Councils approach to incentivising the development of a heat network in Belfast. The work will take place from August through to November and will include:

1. Energy Demand and Supply Analysis – this will include energy profiling of the target area (see Appendix A) to identify key anchor loads;
2. Heat Mapping and Profiling – to identify opportunities for the supply and use of heat;
3. Energy Masterplanning – to identify promising demand clusters, potential locations for an energy centre, private wire opportunities, provide an optimised solution and initial route map as well as an initial techno-economic assessment; and
4. Heat Mapping & Masterplanning Outputs – summarised in a technical report with proposed next steps.

3.9 A separate project is also progressing to determine the potential for the adoption of rooftop solar PV in the same target area. This is a follow-on project from an earlier solar PV study of selected council buildings presented to members in August 2023. The results of this study will be presented to members once the work has been completed.

3.10 Shared Island funding has also been secured with Cork under Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) Strand 1A to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre which was selected as it had the strongest potential for generation and lowest payback (as evidenced in the solar PV report by GIA).

These four strands of work are being coordinated by the Climate Team working closely with Property and Projects, Legal Services and Procurement.

3.1 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None at this point.

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

None known.”

In response to a Member’s question, the Climate Commissioner advised that she would follow up on whether any battery storage was planned for the Donegall Pass Community Centre site. A further Member also queried whether planning permission was required for the solar PV as, if so, that could slow down the project.

The Committee adopted the recommendations as laid out within the report.

Shared Island Fund

Shared Island Fund update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in relation to the Shared Island Initiative, and the role of officers in securing funding opportunities for the Council and also promoting these opportunities with organisations across the City.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:

- that an online information session was held for local organisations on 22 July 2024, with presentations on the Shared Island Initiative, Shared Island Civic Society Fund and Reconciliation Fund provided by officials from the Shared Island Unit (SIU) and Department of Foreign Affairs (DfA), the presentation slides are provided at Appendix A for Members information;
- two successful bids between Belfast City Council and Cork City Council under the Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) Strand 1A; and
- that local organisations have recently been successful in received funding under the Shared Island Creative Youth Partnerships funding.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Committee will recall that it has received two presentations and updates on the Shared Island Initiative, in June 2022 and February 2023, delivered by the SIU which operates within the Department of the Taoiseach. As well as these presentations the Committee has received updates on Belfast City Council Shared Island projects in September 2023 and February 2024.

Shared Island initiative

3.2 The Shared Island initiative is a whole of Government priority to engage with all communities and political traditions to build consensus around a shared future on the island, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement. The Shared Island initiative is backed by the Government’s Shared Island Fund, with at least €1 billion

out to 2030 ring-fenced for delivery of all-island investment commitments and objectives in the Programme for Government and revised National Development Plan 2021-30; and informed by a programme of engagement with people across the island through the Shared Island Dialogue series and a comprehensive policy research programme, which provides a stronger evidence base and analysis of the island of Ireland across a range of economic, environmental and social areas.

Shared Island Civic Society Fund Round 3 – Online Information Session

- 3.3 Following the announcement by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DfA) of a third round of the Shared Island Civic Society Fund at the end of June. Officers engaged with departmental officials to arrange an online information session for Belfast organisations to provide guidance to local organisations on the process for applying to this fund, which closed on 2 August 2024.
- 3.4 The information in relation to this funding opportunity and online session was also circulated to all elected members to disseminate across their local community networks. Allowing for the holiday period this session was well attended with a number of local organisations represented. During this session officials from the DfA and SIU delivered presentations on the Shared Island Initiative, Shared Island Civic Society Fund and the Reconciliation Fund.

Community Climate Action Fund Strand 1A

- 3.5 The Committee is also invited to note the recent confirmation that two Shared Island bids between the Council and Cork City Council under CCAF Strand 1A have been successful. The successful projects are:
- Solar-Powered Community Services in Cork and Belfast €87,024 total for both cities with €46,620 to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre.
 - Delivery of capital-only community gardening and growing elements of the food proposal €30K in total (€15 for Belfast City Council)

Following these awards officers will engage with partners to progress the delivery of these projects.

Creative Youth on Shared Island

- 3.6 The Committee are also invited to note that last week the Taoiseach, Simon Harris TD, and Minister for Tourism, Culture,

Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, announced the awarding of funding to six successful Creative Youth on a Shared Island projects as part of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027. The successful projects were created as a result of direct consultation with children and young people. Successful projects involving Belfast organisations include:

- ‘The Shared Island Songwriting Project,’ a series of residential ‘hot houses’ with children and young people from Laois, Offaly, and across Northern Ireland. Led by Music Generation Laois the project will culminate in the creation of twelve original compositions that will be showcased at festivals and arts centres.
- ‘Macnas’ ‘Future Parade,’ bringing together young people from Belfast and Galway for a series of workshops and residential experiences to create parades that celebrate their collective creativity.
- Extern Northern Ireland, working with twenty young people from Greater Belfast and Dublin, who have multiple and complex needs by providing a safe space for them to tell their stories using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques.
- ‘Creative Connections - Shared Writing Across the Island’ with Fighting Words, which will engage children and young people aged 15-24 from communities up and down the island through connected creative writing initiatives, including scriptwriting, poetry, prose, and songwriting.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

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

None associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

**Shared Island Update on
Belfast City Council Projects**

The Strategic Policy and Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the projects which the Council was involved in under the Shared Island Funding Initiative.

Noted.

Chairperson