

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 3rd June, 2025

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Alderman S. Copeland; and
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Collins,
M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Doran, Flynn,
Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Murray, McKeown
and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet,
Open Spaces and Streetscene;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

There were no apologies received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June. It was noted that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 22nd May, had referred two motions to the Committee for consideration, viz., 'Support for Endometriosis Patients' and the 'Stranded Dreams Report - Anaka Women's Collective'. Both motions would be considered by the Committee at its meeting scheduled for 5th August.

Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson declared an interest in item 3 (d) 'Summer Schemes Additional Needs' in that she was a member of the board of governors of Mitchell House School. Regarding item 2 (b) 'Ending Violence Against Woman and Girls - Change Fund Agreement' Councillors M. Donnelly and R-M Donnelly declared interests in that they worked for, or were associated with, organisations which had applied for support under the terms of the fund. In respect of item 2 (d) 'Healthwise and Physical Referral Update' Councillor McKeown declared an interest in that his employer was associated with the programme.

Since none of the aforementioned items became subject to debate, the Members were not required to retire from the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

Restricted Items

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

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

The Committee was advised that the content of the ‘restricted’ reports and any associated discussion should be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that such information could not be disclosed as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.

Reconsidered Item - Closed Bin/Bin Liner Policy

(Mr. E. McConville, Director of External Affairs, Communications and Marketing, and Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager, Resources and Fleet, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th April, it had adopted a number of recommendations in relation to the abovementioned matter. At the meeting of the Council on 1st May, that decision had been referred back to the Committee to enable Members to consider further the steps that would be taken to enable householders to adapt to the proposed changes. Accordingly, the Committee considered a further report in this regard which outlined a phased approach, together with the levels of community engagement, that would be undertaken in the implementation of the policy. In addition, the Committee considered a communications plan which summarised the objectives of a publicity and operational campaign, together with a timeframe for its delivery.

After discussion, the Committee affirmed its decision of 8th April and endorsed the next steps and phased approach to be applied in the implementation of the policy. In addition, the Committee approved the publicity and operational campaign, together with the timeframe for its delivery.

It was noted that reports would be submitted for the Committee’s consideration in August and September to provide updates in relation to the roll-out of the policy.

Ending Violence Against Woman and Girls - Change Fund Agreement

The Committee, at its meeting on 3rd December, 2024, had considered a report which contained several proposals outlining the steps that the Council would take in supporting the implementation of The Executive Office’s ‘Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls’ (EVAWG). At that meeting, the Committee had adopted the recommendations and delegated authority to the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to reallocate any underspends across the nine thematic areas

identified within the associated action plan. Accordingly, the Committee considered a further report in this regard which outlined funding proposals to be made under Tiers 1, 2 and 3 of the strategic framework.

The Committee approved the funding for the Tier 2 and Tier 3 grant applications; and noted the pending Tier 1 awards to be made under the director's delegated authority; and

- noted that a request had been submitted to The Executive Office for additional funds; and
- noted that there was a cross-Council commitment to support the EVAWG strategic objectives and an intention to submit a further report to outline the achievements to date and future actions.

Dog Fouling

At its meeting on 6th May, the Committee had resolved that a review of the Council's Dog Warden Service be undertaken as a matter of priority with a view to examining current resourcing levels, shift patterns and identifying future requirements. It was agreed also that the review would re-examine fines/penalties currently levied and the Council's powers to address dog fouling within byelaws. It was noted that any additional resourcing requirements would be considered as part of the overall rate-setting process for 2026/27. Accordingly, the Committee considered a comprehensive report which detailed the initial findings of a review which had been undertaken and which outlined a range of proposals to tackle dog fouling across the city.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report, subject to those elements relating to the indicative growth bids being forwarded for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee's efficiency workshop, which was scheduled to take place on 13th June.

Healthwise and Physical Activity Referrals – Six Monthly Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report in respect of the above-mentioned matter.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) – Six- Monthly Update re: Contract Compliance and Performance

The Committee noted the contents of a six-monthly report which provided details in respect of GLL's contract compliance and performance.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) – Feasibility re: One Free Activity for Belfast Residents

At its meeting on 6th May, the Committee had noted the contents of a report which had outlined the level of community engagement work undertaken by GLL, particularly with underrepresented and target groups. Arising from discussion, it had

been moved by Councillor Abernethy, seconded by Councillor Bell, and agreed that officers would engage with representatives of GLL regarding the feasibility of providing one free activity within the Council's leisure centres for every Belfast resident and that a report in this regard, to include projected costs, be submitted for consideration. Accordingly, the Committee considered a report in respect of the aforementioned mentioned.

The Committee noted the information provided within the report and agreed that a further report be submitted for consideration that would examine the reasons/barriers preventing people from joining and using leisure centres and identifying how the Council could encourage greater usage.

Operational Issues

Pride of Place Awards 2025

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the IPB Pride of Place Awards was an annual competition which sought to recognise excellent work undertaken by communities across the island of Ireland. The competition highlighted and recognised best practice in delivering community activities, particularly those which demonstrated partnership working with their local councils. He reported that four organisations from across Belfast had been nominated by the Council for the 2025 awards ceremony, which would take place in Limerick City on 7th November.

After discussion, the Committee noted the four community organisations which had been nominated for the IPB Pride of Place Awards 2025 and their categories for nomination, as set out below:

- Sólás - Inclusive Communities;
- RCity/She Project - Community Youth Initiative;
- Half Moon Lake/ Men's Shed – Community Wellbeing Initiative;
- and
- East side Arts – Creative Communities.

In addition, the Committee:

- approved the attendance of the Chair of the Committee (or her nominee) and the Director of Neighbourhood Services (or his nominee) at the awards ceremony in Limerick in November 2025; and
- approved the budget associated with nomination, judging panels and the attendance of up to eight community and two Council representatives at the ceremony in November, the cost of which was estimated to be in the sum of £8,580.

Play Service Rental Agreement

In accordance with its decision of 6th May, the Committee reconsidered the above-mentioned report which outlined details of a request which had been received from Benview Residents Association to extend an existing play service rental agreement Benview Community Centre for a period of five years. At its previous meeting, the Committee had agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable further

engagement to be undertaken between officers and locally Elected Members in respect of the agreement which, if approved, would incur a yearly cost of £4,225 to the Council.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Verner,

That the Committee agrees to extend the current play service rental agreement with the Benview Residents Association for a further period of five-years.

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and nine against and it was declared carried.

Partnership Agreements

The Director of Resources, Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene reminded the Committee that the Council had worked for several years in partnership with local organisations to help achieve common strategic objectives. In this regard, support had been provided to several organisations to assist them to achieve such objectives, which were measured against an outcomes-based framework. It was reported that a review had been conducted on the Council's existing agreements which had concluded that they continued to provide value for money and were in alignment with strategic objectives. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee approve the payments for 2025/26, as set out below:

Project	Funding
Belfast Hills Partnership	£36,900
Outdoor Recreation NI (promotion of mountain bike trails)	£5,250
Belfast Mela	£20,000
Belfast International Arts Festival	£20,000
TOTAL	£82,150

The Committee approved the allocation of funding for 2025/26 to each of the partners listed, that being in the sum of £82,150, and noted that the Council was not in a position to provide an inflationary award since there existed no additional in-year budget.

Summer Schemes - Additional Needs Grants

At its meeting on 6th February, the Committee had deferred consideration of a report regarding the above-mentioned matter to enable a request to be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee with a view to increasing, from £80,000 to £120,000, the sum provided to support children with additional needs attending the Council's summer schemes in 2025. That request had subsequently been acceded to by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It was explained that the grant scheme support children and young people between five and 17 years-of-age with disabilities and/or additional needs.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided within the report and agreed to open the Summer Scheme Additional Needs Grant for 2026/27, on the terms outlined, with a maximum grant amount of £10,000 available, per applicant, per annum. It was agreed also that the 'open call' for the grant scheme would be overseen and administered by the Council's Central Grants Unit in accordance with the corporate approach to small grants.

Arising from discussion, it was agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would examine the costs incurred by community groups in building inclusivity within the summer schemes they administered, particularly those costs related to staff training and embedding such practices into their summer schemes.

Social Value Levy Fund – Update

The Committee referred the above-mentioned report for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committees at its meeting on 20th June.

Requests for the Use of Parks and Open Spaces

The Committee granted authority for the hosting of the following events, subject to the applicants meeting with and adhering to the stipulations as set out within the report, viz.,

- Lyndon Fest – Ormeau Park;
- East Belfast Night Market – CS Lewis Square; and
- Twilight Walk - Barnetts Demesne.

Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee considered a report which outlined the details of eleven applications which had been received for the erection of second street signs in Irish, viz., Antrim Road, Harberton Drive, Marlborough Park Central, Balmoral Avenue, Finaghy Road North, Deerpark Parade, Marsden Gardens, Glandore Avenue, Linden Gardens, Greenhill Grove and Shandon Park.

Discussion ensued on the application for a second street sign at Shandon Park, in respect of which 49.59% of residents surveyed had objected to the proposal. A Member suggested that, whilst the application had received the support of 16.8 per cent of residents, which was in excess of the 15 per cent threshold required under the Council's policy, it would be prudent to exercise discretion, given the significant number of residents who had objected to the sign. Other Members indicated that the Council's bilingual street sign policy had been adopted to promote and support minority languages and that any move to reject the application would be somewhat selective and contrary to the principles contained within the policy.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Verner,

That the Committee agrees to approve ten of the eleven applications for the erection of second street nameplates in Irish with the exception of the application for Shandon Park.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor R-M Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor JJ Magee,

That the Committee agrees to approve the eleven applications for the erection of a second street nameplates in Irish.

On a vote, ten Members for the amendment and ten against. As there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote against the amendment and it was accordingly declared lost.

The original proposal was put to the meeting whereupon ten Members voted in favour and ten against. Since there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote in favour of the proposal and it was accordingly declared carried.

Street Naming

The Committee approved the naming of Shipwright Way and Loftlines Way. In addition, the Committee ratified retrospectively the naming of two existing streets, viz., Marsden Gardens Flats and Marsden Garden Terrace, which had been omitted from the Belfast Street Register.

Items Raised in Advance by Members

Antisocial Behaviour in Marrowbone Park

The Committee noted a range of issues raised relating to ongoing antisocial behaviour at the Marrowbone Park and the Director of Resources, Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene undertook to investigate the matter and to provide an update in this regard.

Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to its August meeting to examine the feasibility of moving monthly meetings to the second Tuesday of the month should the Council meet on the first Monday.

Chairperson