

# **Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Friday, 20th June, 2025

## **HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Members present: Councillor N Brennan.(Chairperson);  
Councillor McDonough-Brown (Deputy);  
Alderman McCoubrey; and  
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,  
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,  
Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin  
Murphy, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth and Whyte.

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. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood  
Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property & Projects  
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development;  
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;  
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;  
Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, Belfast Stories; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance  
Manager.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd and 30th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June, 2025.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest under item 4(f) Social Value Levy Fund Update in that he was on the Board of Group associated with a project and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Beattie declared an interest under items 2(d) Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25, 2(f) Community Support Plan and 4(f) Social Value Levy Fund

Update in that he was associated with groups/organisations which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Councillor RM Donnelly declared an interest under item 8(b) Requests for the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in that she was associated with an organisation which had submitted an application and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

### **Restricted Items**

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

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

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

### **2024-25 Quarter 4 Finance Report**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 4 2024/25.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 4, the Departmental had an underspend of £2.56, representing 1.4% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director then provided updates on the Year end Outturn 2024/25, committed and additional reallocation proposals, the specified reserves position, capital financing, capital projects and the rates finalisation 2024/25.

### **Proposal**

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to allocate £100,000 of the remaining balance available for committed and additional funding requests to HERe NI.

**Further Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor RM Donnelly,

That the Committee agrees that the £2m included in the medium-term proposals for a National Music Award bid be removed and reallocated towards the implementation of the Irish Language Policy.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded Councillor Long,

That the Committee agrees the proposal standing in the name of Councillor Murphy be amended to provide that the £2m included in the medium-term proposals for a National Music Award bid be removed and reallocated to the remaining balance available for committed and additional funding requests, with consideration to the reallocation balance being undertaken following the Committee's workshop to be held in September.

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

A Member requested and it was agreed that a report providing an update on the Irish Language Policy be submitted to the Committee in August and that the consideration to the reallocation balance being undertaken, following the workshop to be held in September, include funding being allocated to the implementation of the Irish Language Policy.

It was further agreed that a report be submitted on additional funding for the city centre cleansing to include the wider city areas.

Accordingly the Committee:

- noted the report and agreed the year end position;
- agreed to the recommended realignment of year end balances, subject to:
  - £100,000 being reallocated to HERe NI, which would also be subject to due diligence;
  - The £2m for a National Music Award bid being removed and reallocated to the remaining balance;
  - Agreed that a report providing an update on the Irish Language Policy be submitted to the Committee in August;
  - Consideration to the reallocation balance being undertaken following the workshop to be held in September, including funding being allocated to the implementation of the Irish Language Policy; andA report being submitted on additional funding for the city centre cleansing to include the wider city areas; and
- noted the attached Quarter 4 Treasury Management report.

**Public Local Inquiry for Dalradian Gold Application**

The Committee considered a report which provided a response to a motion which had been submitted by Councillor Groogan requesting the Council to intervene in the Public Inquiry into the Curraghinalt Project (Dalradian Gold Mine) applications being held by the Planning Appeals Commission.

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Groogan addressed the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to adopt a similar approach to Derry and Strabane in outlining the Council's opposition to the Commission but not actively engaging in the Inquiry but request that Fermanagh and Omagh District Council keep us informed particularly in respect of the concerns on the impact of the drinking water in the Sperrin Mountains which feeds into Lough Neagh which supplies the drinking water for Belfast; and that a letter also be forwarded outlining the Council's concern regarding the lack of transparency and public access to the Inquiry.

**Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in relation to an invitation from the Bloomberg Philanthropies to participate in phase 1 of the Mayoral Challenge competition.

The Committee:

1. noted Belfast City Council's success in being accepted into Phase One of the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayoral Challenge programme;
2. approved acceptance of a Letter of Agreement to deliver Phase One and agreed to accept the \$50,000;
3. approved officer participation in the initial innovation workshop (noting that all travel costs would be met by Bloomberg Philanthropies); and
4. noted that officers were available to meet with interested Members to share further details of the programme.

**Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25**

The Committee considered a report regarding an update on the implementation of the 2024/25 Hardship Programme which helped to alleviate the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crises across the city.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on the implementation and impact to date of the 2024/25 Hardship Programme; and
- ii. noted the current budget position for Hardship programmes for year 2025/26

### **Belfast Tartan**

The Committee considered a report which sought permission for the Council to provide a letter of support to a local company which was seeking to register a new tartan design as 'Belfast Tartan'.

The Committee granted the permission sought, subject to further discussions with the City Solicitor on the terms

### **Community Support Plan**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st March, it had agreed the following with regards to the Community Support Plan 2025-2029:

- that a detailed update on the 2 stage engagement process findings be brought back to the Committee in June for the following work
  - Stage 1 Formal Consultation and Survey
  - Stage 2 Engagement with current funded groups to identify deficits in funding; and
- that the June report should also include information on the programming, footfall and activity in our community centres, as well as the cost for running each directly managed and independently managed community centre.

Accordingly, the Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which outlined the findings of the engagement process, and the information gathered from the above work, and which sought a decision on a way forward for the new Community Support Plan (CSP). The report included a request to proceed with the delivery of a new funding programme that would consist of both a large grant as well as a small grants scheme to cover April 2026 – 31 March 2029. This would also replace the previous Revenue and Capacity Grants delivered via the previous CSP.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the findings from the information on the programming, footfall and activity in our community centres, as well as the cost for running each directly managed and independently managed community centre and that some information was included in the report, with further detail contained in the presentation and supporting documents (appendix 1, appendix 2 and appendix 3).
- II. Noted the findings from the two-stage engagement process outlined in paragraph 1.1 – and that some of the highlights were included in the report, with further detail contained in the presentation (appendix 1).
- III. Noted and approved the timelines at paragraph 3.20 for delivering on a new funding programme, with ratification to be confirmed at the July Council meeting.
- IV. Noted the equality screening document that accompanied the CSP document. (appendix 6).
- V. Approved the CSP Framework document as outlined in the report (appendix 4).

- VI. Agreed to the delivery of a new CSP and associated funding programme including the proposed criteria and eligibility criteria that is referenced in this report (and appendix 5).
- VII. The maximum funding award limit for the large grants programme being set at £60,000, with, at this stage, no upper limit to set for the budget but that a report be submitted to a future meeting following the application process which would outline the possible cost associated with the successful applicants.
- VIII. Agreed to host a workshop in the Autumn to discuss the next stage community centres provision.

**Leisure Transformation Programme –  
Update and proposed next steps**

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the £105m Leisure Transformation Programme and the proposed next steps in relation to the next phase of leisure.

The Committee:

- noted the update on the next phase of the Leisure Programme; and
- agreed that Party Group Members' workshops and Area Working Groups (AWGs) be organised for September to progress with the next phase of the Leisure Programme, with both the East and South AWGs to consider the Ozone complex.

**New Crematorium Update**

The Committee considered a report which gave an update on the status of the proposed new Crematorium project at Roselawn and which sought approval to hold a dedicated workshop to inform a Strategic Analysis and Options Appraisal on the proposed project.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and granted the approval sought.

**Update on Fleadh Cheoil**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with a report which sought approval to allocate funding to facilitate the transaction of expenditure on pressing operational requirements to facilitate the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026. The Director explained that the Initial budget allocations were to support early planning work and associated deposit and early booking requirements.

The Committee noted:

- the Strategic and Economic Case; and
- the continued engagement with event organisers and funding partners;

The Committee also approved the:

- associated spend against immediate pressures to allow for packages of work to be brought forward to support hosting contracts, Wexford activation, professional services, marcomms development, volunteering and deposits required to support operational delivery and noted that the Budget would be drawn from specified reserves of £1.25m as approved in Revenue Estimate process 2025/26; and
- increase in the establishment in Place and Economy Section by one Grade 12 (PO9) post to enable support for the Fleadh Cheoil.

### **Summer Community Diversionary Programme Update**

The Committee approved the issuing of a funding agreement to the Lower Oldpark Community Association for £20,433.41 in line with proposed Summer Community Diversionary Programme.

### **Assets Report - Restricted**

The Committee:

- Paisley Park Sports Grounds – proposed transfer from Department for Communities** – deferred consideration of the matter until August.
- Conacre / Grazing Agreements** - Approved conacre licences for the grazing and grass cutting on agricultural lands at Council lands at Cavehill Country Park, Glencairn, Lagan Meadows, Ballygomartin Road North, Sir Thomas & Lady Dixon Park, and Roselawn.

### **Targeted Acquisition**

The Committee:

- agreed that a conditional without prejudice offer be made to acquire the property referenced in the report on the basis as outlined and, subject to Council ratification, to acquire the property on terms to be agreed by the City Solicitor and the Director of City Regeneration and Development. Noted that completion of any acquisition would be subject to title/legal due diligence; and
- noted the update on the Placemaking Action Plan Pilot for the wider area with further detail to be brought back to the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as appropriate.

### **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

### **Notice of Motions - Quarterly Update**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which SP&R Committee is responsible for.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 It is recommended that SP&R Committee:**

- Note the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that SP&R Committee is responsible for and
- Agree to the closure of Notice of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance 49, 74, 167, 189, 197, 264, 341, 342, 351, 366 and 367 as referenced in Appendix 1 and paragraph 3.4 below.

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

**3.1 At SP&R Committee on 25th October 2019, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:**

‘That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:

1. Date received
2. Notice of motion title
3. Submitted by which Councillor
4. Council meeting date
5. Committee motion is referred to
6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated
7. Month it will be reported back to committee
8. Other action to be taken.’

**3.2 Following a review exercise, a new database containing all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance at Committee was created and quarterly reporting to Committee commenced in March 2021. Appendix 1 is the latest quarterly update showing all active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which SP&R Committee is responsible for.**

**3.3 Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance**

At SP&R Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:



- Notices of Motion which contained an action(s) that has been completed; and
- Notices of Motion have become Council policy.

3.4 SP&R Committee are asked to agree that the following Notice of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance are now closed:

**Category 1 Recommended Closure:**

- **Childcare provision (341)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to explore ways to support childcare provision, including considering whether council supported schemes during school holidays could be expanded. Whilst Council host a number of summer and play schemes, childcare is a specific function regulated by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. As such Council does not provide registered childcare schemes. However £80,000 was committed to support the enhancement of the provision of summer schemes for children with additional needs during the summer of 2024. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- **Mental health accessibility audit (342)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to work with MindWise to conduct an online survey across the council district to gather information around accessibility to mental health support. Following exploratory work it is evident that there are other organisations who are fulfilling this obligation. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

**Category 2 Recommended Closure**

- **Market gardens and urban farming (49)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to establish an urban farm for community use and market garden development on an existing site within the Belfast City Council land bank. A draft Sustainable Food Strategy for the city has been developed through engagement with area working groups and includes the consideration of the potential for market gardens and urban farming in the city. The UPSURGE and UP2030 projects are also looking at the use of green space and nature based solutions and will include community and urban food growing opportunities. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- **Disabled people and older people (74)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to commit to a number of actions around ensuring access and inclusion

for disabled people, older people and carers. These actions are now being taken forward through the Disability Working Group and recommendations are being progressed in relation to delivering an accessible city for all by 2035. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

- Violence against women and girls (167) – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to support the Executive's Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and commit to a number of actions to make Belfast more safe for all women and girls. At the December meeting of the People and Communities Committee, a series of actions were agreed to support the delivery of this strategy and the Strategic Director of Place and Economy was appointed as an internal champion. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- PEACE IV to PEACEPLUS Programme (189) – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to write to the Executive Office and SEUPB to ensure the seamless transition of the current PEACE IV to PEACEPLUS programmes. As the PEACEPLUS programmes are well underway, it is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- The rights of nature (197) – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to explore how the rights of nature could be expressed and embedded in community plans, corporate plans, improvement objectives and other strategic frameworks. This has been considered within the Council's Climate Action Plan, which was brought for approval in May 2025. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- Electric vehicle charging points strategy (264) – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to examine the potential for increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points on council properties. Work is continuing on the implementation of Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Low Emission Vehicle Strategy. This includes a commercial assessment and market testing of council land assets to assess the feasibility of locations for low emissions infrastructure investment. It is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- Right to grow on Council owned land (351) – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to adopt a right to grow on council owned land identified as suitable for cultivation. Following a mapping exercise, this initiative is being considered as part of the development of a Sustainable Food Strategy. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

- **Gender pay gap recording and reporting (366)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to commence gender pay gap reporting, alongside a commitment to explore the further reporting of pay gap information in relation to disability and ethnicity. Gender pay gap reporting has been incorporated into the human resources programme of work and is due to be completed by December 2025. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- **Housing Crisis (367)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to support co-housing schemes by identifying suitable sites within its own land that could be used for co-housing and include provision for co-housing within any development site it brings forward that is appropriate for housing. The housing led regeneration programme provides the basis to actively seek to identify suitable sites that could be used for co-housing. The strategic site assessments, supported by the Council's private sector partner for the delivery of housing led mixed use regeneration development, will look at sites through the lens of mixed tenure, which comprises all housing product types. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

### **3.5 Financial & Resource Implications**

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

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

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

At the request of Members, the Committee agreed not close off number 49 – Market gardens and urban farming; and number 264 Electric vehicle charging points strategy.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- noted the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that the Committee was responsible for; and
- agreed to the closure of Notice of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance numbers 74, 167, 189, 197, 341, 342, 351, 366 and 367 as referenced in Appendix 1 and paragraph 3.4 of the report.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Belfast Region City Deal – update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

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

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the progress on project development and delivery across the pillars of investment.
- Note the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel.

**3.0 Main report**

**Deal Delivery**

- 3.1 Progress on the delivery of the deal continues with a total of 16 Outline Business Cases (OBCs) and 3 Full Business Cases (FBCs) approved with a combined approximate project value of £650m and 13 Contracts for Funding signed for projects. Studio Ulster and the UK Digital Twin Centres have been moving into full operations, there are 2 projects in construction/fit-out stage, 13 projects at design phase, 5 with planning approvals, and 4 skills assessments completed. All of which represents significant momentum since deal signing for the programme of investment.
- 3.2 Key highlights on progress across the pillars of investment since the last update in December include:

**Innovation**

- 3.3
- At Studio Ulster, specialist virtual production equipment worth almost £20m and funded by City Deal has been installed and filming has commenced over recent months. The official launch of the project has been scheduled for June at its site in Giant's Park in North Belfast. The project is engaged in a number of employability & skills programmes, both on site at Studio Ulster and further afield – providing training opportunities for young people in the creative sector.

3.4

- Following the official sod cutting ceremony in February 2025 for iREACH Health, the construction phase for the world-class clinical research centre continues. The demolition phase nears completion on the Lisburn Road site, adjacent to the City Hospital. The centre is scheduled to open in Spring 2027, it will accommodate up to 360 staff and bring together all the essential parts of the clinical trial ecosystem in one space.

3.5

- In relation to Momentum One Zero, QUB have now completed the tender evaluation for the Main Construction Contractor for the site in the Titanic Quarter. QUB are moving through the approvals phase for the Full Business Case ahead of a target construction commencement in September 2025. The project is part of a consortium which has recently been successful in attracting c.€10m for a One Health project bringing together experts in innovation in human, animal and environmental health.

3.6

- Construction work continues at the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) at Global Point Park, due for completion in early 2026. The Economy Minister recently announced an investment of £1.8m which will see Angoka in partnership with AMIC and Invest NI develop a new COSMIC solution for the advanced manufacturing sector. The initiative will help to provide a solution to protect manufacturing systems from cyber attacks creating a market leading technology.

3.7

- The Contract for Funding was signed for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology in December and the project is progressing well. A demolition contract has been awarded and work will commence at Northland House over the summer period, following positive engagement with a local school.

Digital

3.8

- The Digital Twin Centre project led by Digital Catapult was officially launched in May marking a major milestone in the UK's digital innovation landscape. The Centre's first six-month Accelerator Programme is now open for pre-application expressions of interest which will support partnerships between tech SMEs and industry to fast-track digital twin adoption. Significant interest in the accelerator programme has

been noted. Use cases with founding industry partners in sectors such as maritime and aerospace have been progressing well and capabilities were showcased at the launch event for the centre, which is located in Belfast City Centre.

3.9

- The Augment the City project has continued to successfully deliver through the SBRI model and is designed to provide City Deal partners with learning on the application of XR technologies in the tourism sector. Over 100 people attended the Augment the City Phase Two dissemination event at Belfast City Hall on 3rd April 2025. The six participating companies shared learning about their Proofs of Concepts and have been invited to apply to Phase 3 of the programme. A maximum of three will be chosen and will receive up to £100,000 R&D funding to turn their proofs of concepts into working prototypes – with the project completing early in 2026.

3.10

- The learning from the delivery of Augment the City has informed the design of the larger c.£5m BRCD Regional SBRI programme which will support a series of SBRI competition calls each of which will focus on a unique challenge area that will be agreed between the six council partners. Each council will have the opportunity to lead on at least one challenge during the lifetime of the programme. A business case has been developed for the project and will be refined by BRCD partners in the coming weeks before formal submission to the Department for Economy. Depending on approval timescales it is envisaged that the first competition will launch in late 2025.

3.11

- Proposals are also being developed for an AI Adoption Programme (c.£5m), which aims to accelerate the adoption of AI by organisations in both the private and public sectors. The work is being led by Belfast City Council's City Innovation Office in collaboration with other bodies including SIB and the AI Competency Centre. The programme is expected to offer grant funding and support via a series of competition calls aimed at both public and private sector organisations that are seeking to adopt AI solutions into their systems and processes. Funding would allow these organisations to lower the risk associated with the innovative adoption of AI. The solution providers would be expected to be based (or have a significant economic footprint) within the Belfast Region. Work has commenced in relation to a business case which is expected to be considered by BRCD partners in coming months.

3.12

- An OBC addendum has been completed for the i4C Cleantech Innovation Centre at St Patrick's Barracks with the Contract for Funding signed in May 2025. The addendum reflects planned scaling at the project in response to inflationary pressures in the construction sector. The centre will provide a physical base for businesses and will focus on the development of clean technology.

3.13

- Good progress has been made in relation to finalising a draft Contract for Funding for the Ards & North Down Innovation Hub, a hub focused on the creative sectors with plans to integrate with Studio Ulster and South Eastern Regional College. Ards & North Down Borough Council continue to finalise plans in relation to the site for the project before it can be further progressed.

3.14

Tourism and Regeneration

- At Bangor Waterfront, the Operator for Pickie Fun Park has been appointed, marking an important milestone for this project as operator input is essential in the design development. The concept designs for both Pickie Fun Park and Ballyholme Yacht Club projects are being developed and the procurement of design teams for the Urban Waterfront and Public Realm and Marina projects are being progressed.

3.15

- Key survey works and engagement with both the public and statutory bodies is being progressed at the Gobbins and Carrickfergus Regeneration to allow finalisation of concept designs and completion of RIBA Stage 2 reports. The Operator procurement process for both these projects is also being progressed, to ensure Operator input into key design stages.

3.16

- A number of professional services teams have now been appointed for Destination Royal Hillsborough, with the last appointment expected over the summer. Engagement with statutory bodies to progress the planning application for the public realm element of this project is also ongoing. Following a change in business needs within Hillsborough since the development of the OBC, the proposed Social Enterprise Café within Hillsborough Forest is to be replaced with a Visitor Hub, and an OBC Addendum is being developed to address this change in scope.

3.17

- Following approval at the BRCD Executive Board, the Belfast Stories OBC was formally submitted to Departments for review in May, with the DfE Casework Committee scheduled for September. The professional services team continue to progress the development of the design throughout the OBC approval process.

3.18

- The procurement process for the contractors for the Theatre & Conference Centre and Civic Hub projects in the Newry Regeneration programme has concluded and the FBC has been formally submitted to DfC for approval. NMDDC await final planning approval for the Civic Hub project, to enable appointment of Contractors and commencement of works on site.

3.19

Infrastructure

- The Infrastructure Minister announced the next steps for Phase 2 of the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT2) project in February, which will see the Glider service extended to north and south Belfast, with an additional £13m allocated from the Department of Infrastructure to deliver a park and ride on the O'Neill Road. The OBC is being finalised and following approval work is expected to begin on this first phase later this year.

3.20

- The Infrastructure Minister also confirmed in April that the next stage of the procurement process for the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge is now underway. A shortlist of contractors has been invited to bid for the contract to design and construct the scheme. This is the start of the second stage of the procurement process and it is anticipated that the scheme will commence in autumn 2025.

3.21

- The statutory public consultation process for Newry Southern Relief Road commenced with the Orders exhibition on 21 January 25 and ran until 4 March 25. Following consideration of the feedback from this process, the Minister will determine whether to convene a public inquiry.

3.22 Employability and Skills (E&S)

Work continues to develop collaborative proposals from BRCD partners including councils universities and colleges to advance the recommendations and actions aimed at addressing the skills gaps identified through skills assessments. This has involved working across



BCC departments including Business and Enterprise and City Innovation to ensure alignment of programmes on skills activity.

- 3.23 The BRCD draft Benefits Realisation Framework is currently being refreshed to ensure that benefits are effectively delivered and captured in alignment with the overall programme objectives. Engagement has also taken place with other UK City Deals to explore their approach to developing benefits realisation frameworks. A visit from Cardiff City Deal's Employability and Skills Manager is planned for September providing an opportunity to share lessons learned on benefits realisation and explore potential for future collaboration with other city deals.
- 3.24 A number of events are being organised to support the effective delivery of social value and to promote upcoming opportunities across the BRCD programme. As more projects progress to the construction phase, a Social Value Training Workshop will be held in June for project leads, contract managers, and those involved in ongoing construction. The workshop will ensure that all participants are fully aware of, and up to date with, SIB social value reporting requirements, enabling them to effectively monitor contractor submissions. Additionally, the team is working with the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) to deliver a Contractor Market Engagement event. This will promote upcoming procurement opportunities within the BRCD programme and highlight the employability and skills support available through city deal partners.

**Mourne Mountain Gateway**

- 3.25 Members will be aware that The Mourne Mountain Gateway Project (MMGP) was a proposal from Newry Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) for a gondola from Donard Park to a visitor centre at the former Thomas Quarry site in the Mournes. The Thomas Quarry site is owned by the National Trust and NMDDC require a lease from the National Trust to build the visitor centre.
- 3.26 On 1 May 2025, National Trust issued a media statement confirming that a lease for Thomas Quarry will not be granted for the MMGP project. The withdrawal of the support by the National Trust means that the project cannot go ahead. NMDDC are very disappointed by this decision, particularly as an Environmental Impact Assessment was being prepared to consider and address the specific concerns raised by the National Trust.
- 3.27 When the Deal was being developed the BRCD Partnership agreed principles that if a project does not go ahead the first option would be to allow the project sponsor (in this case NMDDC) to explore an alternative

option within the region. This is to maintain regional balance and spread of the funding. The BRCD Executive Board have therefore agreed that NMDDC can explore alternative options for consideration, and they are in the first instance assessing a similar proposal to the MMGP in Kilbroney Forest Park. The Council have been engaging with BRCD PMO, TNI and DfE and are aware that any new proposal will be subject to full business case approval.

**BRCD Council Panel**

3.28 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held in September 2025 and will be hosted by Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

3.29 The minutes from the meeting hosted by Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council on 25 September 2024 are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

3.30 **Financial & Resource Implications**

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

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

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Belfast Stories Update**

The Programme Director, Belfast Stories, presented for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 Purpose of the report**

- To update Members on the Belfast Stories programme as part of the Belfast Region City Deal including

findings of the public consultation as part of RIBA stage 2 Concept Design development.

- To outline activity to support the next phase of development with regards to story gathering, engagement and communications.
- To update on the development of a draft ethical framework and the process for developing the story gathering programme including curatorial guidelines.
- To update on key findings from consumer testing.

## **2.0 Recommendation**

### **2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of this report and update on progress against the delivery of the Belfast Stories programme.
- Note the findings of the consultation exercise and the equality impact assessment and the rural needs screening as summarised in the report and detailed in Appendix 1 and 2.
- Note the consumer testing findings.
- Agree the actions set out in the work plan detailed in Appendix 3
- Note the *draft* ethical framework detailed at Appendix 4 and agree to receive a detailed report in September 2025.

## **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 in 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** In August 2024, Members of Committee received an update on plans for a public consultation to take place in late 2024 / early 2025.

### **Belfast Stories Programme**

**3.3** All programme 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 Belfast Stories.

- 3.4 A 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.
- 3.5 The reach of this consultation included 2,755 visits to the online consultation hub, 149 responses to online survey and polls, 65 consultation workshops and 1,148 direct participants.
- 3.6 Whilst the feedback received during this 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.

**Second Public Consultation, Nov 2024 – Mar 2025**

- 3.7 From an early stage and in line with Council's consultation and engagement framework, the project has 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 was undertaken. This second public consultation took place over a 16-week period from November 2024 – March 2025. Documents and information are available [here](#).
- 3.8 Feedback from this second consultation has already informed the next steps of the emerging concept designs from the design teams. Throughout the public consultation period updates were provided on a fortnightly basis to the design teams to ensure feedback was taken on board as the designs developed through RIBA stage 2. Key members of the design team also attended and co-facilitated several consultation events in Belfast.

**What we consulted on**

- 3.9 The information presented during this consultation was commensurate with the current design phase. As such it

did not present detailed designs, however, it offered 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 public consultation, Belfast Stories and the design teams received 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 continues to ensure the potential of the project to deliver on inclusive growth through focusing on positive economic, social and environmental impacts. The full report including findings and recommendations is available at Appendix 1 and summarised in Appendix 2.

#### Design Concept

- 3.10 Emerging proposals seek to 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 aimed to place significant emphasis on inclusivity and generosity, making spaces for stories and for a multiplicity of uses. Proposals focus on making spaces for both visitors and local people. The purpose of the consultation was to test whether the proposed approach to date, was successful in delivering on the ambition.

#### Facilities Mix

- 3.11 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.

- 3.12 Defining the proposed facilities mix further will continue to be an iterative process as we progress through the business case and design development processes. However, the consultation provided an important opportunity to test the balance of proposed facilities and uses.

**Story Gathering**

- 3.13 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. Given the level of feedback on the proposed themes during the first public consultation in 2022, this second consultation provided an important opportunity to test how the emerging concept had responded to previous concerns.

**Purpose of the consultation**

- 3.14 The specific objectives of this consultation were 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.
- 3.15 Activities and opportunities for feedback during the public consultation focused on the:
- Emerging design concept to reflect the current stage of the project, RIBA Design stage 2 of an industry standard eight-stage RIBA process
  - Proposed facilities mix including public space, visitor attraction and creative hub
  - 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.
- 3.6 Consultation activities were 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.

**3.17 A summary of consultation activities and reach is included below:**

- consultation hub welcomed over 4,900
- 514 responses to the online survey
- 97 responses to questions on the draft equality impact assessment
- Information was available in a range of formats: Easy Read, British sign language BSL, Irish sign language ISL, HTML online, easy read, Irish language
- The online consultation documents were downloaded by 272 users
- Over 2,500 hard copy consultation documents were distributed across the city
- 102 in person consultation sessions
- 1014 in person participants across a range of stakeholder groups
- Reaching an audience of over 4000 people during all activities in person
- Media coverage across 38 media outlets
- Social posts reaching audience of over 5000 people throughout public consultation.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

**3.18 As well as a detailed report (Appendix 1), a consultation summary report including next steps is included at Appendix 2 and will be circulated publicly to all who took part during the consultation and available on the Belfast Stories YourSay hub page. Keys areas of feedback and analysis arising from the consultation responses and EQIA is summarised below. This is not an exhaustive representation of consultation feedback. The Belfast Stories Programme Management Office and design teams have reviewed and are continuing to consider the detailed information presented in the full report.**

### **Support for the Belfast Stories concept**

**3.19 During the public consultation, feedback was gathered across a range of groups, and there was broad support for its concept and potential impact. Responding to the overarching concept of Belfast Stories, when asked if they were likely to visit it, 84% of survey respondents agreed that they would visit, including 57% who would 'definitely' visit and 27% who would 'probably' visit. 82% of survey respondents were likely to recommend Belfast**

Stories to a friend visiting Belfast. Support was even stronger at face-to-face engagements such as workshops and focus groups. Survey results indicate people from some Section 75 categories may have concerns that should continue to be monitored going forward.

**Architectural concept**

- 3.20 Across both RIBA stage 1 and 2 public consultations, consultees generously shared their lived experience and advice to help make Belfast Stories inclusive and welcoming. Some of this feedback has already been used to inform the initial architectural concept, including multiple, broad entrances; a wide, open courtyard; and accessible public space.
- 3.21 The design team will now further consider new evidence and review architectural plans to maximise the sense of welcome and inclusion, particularly in relation to access and thresholds, signage, public space and accessibility.

**Curatorial/Ethical framework**

- 3.22 Compared to the first public consultation, when stories were to be curated by theme, the time and space curatorial framework has been well received, and there appears to be fewer concerns that it will present a partisan, binary or narrow perspective of Belfast.
- 3.23 Nevertheless, residual concerns are likely to be a barrier to equitable story gathering and curation. It is proposed that these concerns should be addressed through long-term, ongoing, and targeted engagement and mitigation, such as targeted outreach, embedded in story gathering processes.
- 3.24 A *draft* Ethical Framework has been developed in response to this feedback and is included in Appendix 4. It is proposed that further engagement on this takes place with an updated version alongside details of the story gathering programme presented to Committee in September 2025.

**Story Gathering**

- 3.25 It is recommended that Council should prioritise testing story gathering processes and tools with groups that are less likely to share stories, in particular older people and the very elderly whose stories are otherwise at risk of being lost. The potential for this activity to be delivered via partnerships should be considered.



**Language strategy**

- 3.26 Belfast Stories is an opportunity to promote access to and awareness and inclusion of Irish, Ulster Scots, BSL and ISL. This may in turn enhance good relations by affording respect and recognition to native minority language in keeping with local and international policy and best practice.
- 3.27 Belfast Stories will continue to consult closely the city's language communities, including in relation to the development of the building, story gathering, exhibition and overall experience. Resulting language policy or practice should support the council's Language Strategy and draft Irish Language Strategy and be subject to an equality screening. Language should be a key area included in initial story gathering activities. Further recommendations will be presented as part of the report to Committee in September 2025.

**Travel and transport**

- 3.28 Consultees have identified that travel and transport may be a major barrier for some Section 75 groups including disabled people, older people, younger people, carers and parents. Ongoing engagement is required with city stakeholders in relation to accessible parking, sustainable transport, drop-off and streetscaping.

**Safety**

- 3.29 Another major barrier identified across consultees and that may affect some Section 75 groups in particular is perceptions of safety in the immediate vicinity of Belfast Stories and the city centre in general. Ongoing engagement is required with public and private sectors including Belfast City Council departments, government, other developers and stakeholders to maximise regeneration and reduce concerns around blight, safety and anti-social behaviour.

**Ongoing engagement**

- 3.30 Survey responses may point to underlying systemic issues of trust and representation which reinforce Belfast Stories' intent to continue to target engagement at people and groups most likely to feel excluded. The next stage of engagement is an opportunity to continue to build on messages of welcome and inclusion while gathering evidence as to how this can be achieved, practically and ideologically, from those key equality groups. This is particularly important as concepts and ideas become plans for structures and layouts during RIBA stage 3.

3.31 Consequently, Belfast Stories engagement plan and stakeholder mapping will be reviewed and revised in light of lessons learned and additional evidence uncovered during this public consultation. Ongoing engagement will prioritise those stakeholders and groups that may be most at risk of missing out but also have most to offer in terms of how inclusion can be designed in. This includes:

- young people
- older people
- people from minoritized ethnic communities
- disabled people
- parents
- carers
- people from the LGBTQ+ community
- people from neither a Protestant nor Catholic community background
- different language communities including Irish, Ulster Scots and sign language.

3.32 An updated engagement plan with proposed actions will be presented to Committee in September 2025.

Operational model

3.33 There were high levels of interest among stakeholders as to how Belfast Stories will be run after its opens in 2030. This included the need for further detail on the operating model, staffing, pricing policy, opening hours and marketing and communications.

3.34 At a meeting of SP&R Committee in April a report was presented on the Outline Business Case for Belfast Stories including initial consideration of operator models. It was agreed that further work be undertaken to develop options and that this would include ongoing engagement with Members in advance of any decision point, which is currently anticipated as end of 2026. Details of this proposed programme of work will be included in September update to Committee.

Equality consultative forum

3.35 The equality consultative forum proved a valuable tool for engagement throughout second the consultation. Many of its participants had been involved in the first public consultation and now couple lived experience with expertise in the development of Belfast Stories. Actions and next steps include a recommendation that a standing equality consultative forum be established to provide continuity and advice between and throughout public consultation.

**Consumer Testing**

- 3.36 Between December 2024 and April 2025, market testing was conducted via focus groups, engagement with tour operators and online surveys covering international and domestic consumers in Northern Ireland, Great Britain, Ireland, USA, France and Germany.
- 3.37 Overall, the Belfast Stories experience was received very positively by the travel trade representatives interviewed, with each suggesting that they would include it in travel itineraries.
- 3.38 Almost three-quarters (74%) of survey respondents overall would consider visiting the Belfast Stories experience with around four in five (83%) survey respondents overall felt that the Belfast Stories experience was exciting, whilst 63% felt that it was unique. Of the three key elements of the Belfast Stories experience, the public spaces were most likely to have been ranked first in terms of appeal, followed by the main, paid exhibition, then the creative hub.
- 3.39 The potential sustainability of Belfast Stories is supported by these initial results. In particular there is a strong level of interest in the breadth of the offer and from across several markets both domestic and international including day trippers (e.g., ROI 64% would consider daytrip) and overnight stays. Similarly, almost 80% of respondents to the survey indicated that Belfast Stories could be either the main reason for visiting Northern Ireland or a factor in decision-making, supporting the ambition to increase dwell time as well as overall visitor numbers.

**Next steps**

- 3.40 A summary of recommendations is included in Appendix 2 Public Consultation Summary with an initial workplan including engagement, communications and stories gathering set out in Appendix 3.
- 3.41 It is proposed that detailed programmes are developed and presented to SP&R in September 2025 to cover:
- Final RIBA stage 2 Concept Designs highlighting how feedback has been incorporated
  - Final Ethical Framework
  - Story Gathering Programme including criteria for partnerships
  - Operator Model programme, actions and engagement.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

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

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

- 3.43 An Equality Impact Assessment and a Rural Needs Impact Assessment were undertaken during the second public consultation and the equality decision report is available [here](#). These will be reassessed and updated in line with emerging designs and as part of the next public consultation.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report and the update on progress against the delivery of the Belfast Stories programme;
- ii. noted the findings of the consultation exercise and the equality impact assessment and the rural needs screening as summarised in the report and detailed in Appendices 1 and 2;
- iii. noted the consumer testing findings;
- iv. agreed the actions set out in the work plan as detailed in Appendix 3;
- v. noted the draft ethical framework detailed at Appendix 4 and agreed to receive a detailed report in September 2025; and
- vi. agreed that a future report be submitted on inclusive growth.

**Consultation on the Death, Still-Birth and Baby Loss Bill**

The Committee approved the officer submission (as set out in Appendix 2 to the report), as the Council's formal response to the Consultation on the Death, Still-Birth and Baby Loss Bill; and agreed that the Council would bear any future costs of Still Birth Registration.

**Planning Information**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

**City Regeneration Members Working Group**

The Committee agreed that the City Regeneration Members' Working Group be solely utilised as an appropriate forum to engage with Members on the PSP housing led regeneration programme in advance of matters being brought back to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval. The Committee also noted the updated draft Terms of Reference and that these would be brought to the Working Group for its consideration.

### **Social Value Levy Fund Update**

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

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.0 The purpose of the report is to update the committee following engagement sessions that took place with elected members in December 2024. It had been agreed at the May 2024 meeting of the People and Communities committee that elected members from the respective DEA's would be engaged first to agree a suitable methodology for delivering projects funded by the social value levy and to also put forward project ideas that communities impacted by concerts and events have lobbied for.
- 1.2 From the member engagement sessions, a number of different methodologies for delivery at the three sites have emerged. This paper sets these out for members to consider.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- Note the contents of this report.
  - Note that this is in an interim position and that all works identified will be required to be taken through the Council's capital process.

#### **Main Report**

- 3.0 Three meetings took place in December 2024 with councillors from Balmoral, Botanic, Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEA's. The agenda covered methodology for delivery and potential projects.
- 3.1 Social levy monies are to be spent on projects within the park where the events take place or the immediate area surrounding the park. Members are also reminded that the monies can be allocated to both capital and revenue projects.
- 3.2 It was also noted at the meetings that the amounts of money are unlikely to be as sizeable again in the future and that this opportunity should be maximised.
- 3.3 Members are reminded that Council officers have been working over a number of years to establish stakeholder forums at the key concert venues to assist and enable Event Promoters, Key Agencies and Council to improve the delivery of the events and to co-design mitigations that

benefit those most impacted by the events. Members noted that these stakeholder forums have proved extremely valuable.

#### Ormeau Park

- 3.4 All Councillors from Botanic, Lisnasharragh and Titanic were invited to attend the engagement session in December 2024 . The members present were confident that they could put forward projects based on prior engagement with their constituents and the general feeling was that once costings are available that projects can be narrowed down by elected representatives and progressed via the Council's Capital process. It was agreed that when projects are finalised that this will be communicated effectively with key stakeholders. Projects nominated for costing included:

- A dog off lead enclosure – Approx costings £45k-65k. Please note that costs may vary depending on the size and scale of the project)
- Upgrade the outdoor basketball and tennis courts – The upgrade to the Basketball courts is to be delivered via the capital programme.
- Upgrades to the bowling pavilion – still to be costed
- Refurbish the bandstand – Still to be costed
- Commission a feasibility study for the Nettlefield MUGA – approximately £10K

#### Boucher Playing Fields

- 3.5 Councillors from Balmoral and Botanic DEAs were invited. The members present felt that the residents and local stakeholders should firstly be engaged to determine what sort of projects would benefit those most impacted.
- 3.6 Members agreed that it was best to proceed by inviting local residents and established stakeholder groups to a public engagement session to brainstorm and discuss what they would like to see the money invested in. A resident's group has been established now for a number of years to work on the concerts and events, but it was agreed that invitations will also extend further via a letter drop to other established groups in the area.
- 3.7 It was noted that although Boucher Playing Fields might benefit from some investment that Musgrave Park was the more likely site to invest in that would benefit the local community.

**Botanic Gardens**

- 3.8 Councillors from Botanic DEA were invited to attend the engagement session in December. It was recognised that the amount of money available is unlikely to support any capital investment in the gardens. It was felt that the monies could contribute to the ongoing work to support the 200-year anniversary of Botanic. There is an established Friends group for the park for over 30 years and in addition a number of other key groups such as Stranmillis Residents Association and Open Botanic. These groups represent the residents and businesses surrounding the park and elected representatives considered best placed to decide suitable projects. Council officers meet regularly with these groups and could pick this work up as part of those meetings.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

Funds available are:

Ormeau Park £71,148.00

Boucher Road £60,742.00

Botanic Gardens £15,717.00

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

- 3.10 There may be equality implications if decided that different methodologies for delivery can be adopted.”

**Proposal**

Moved by Council Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the Committee agrees to ringfence £10k to commission a feasibility study for the Nettlefield MUGA.

A Member requested that the Committee also agrees to proceed with a dog off lead enclosure to be capped at maximum cost of £25k, with the costs of the remaining suggested projects, with the exception of the basketball court which would be progressed as capital project, to be brought back to the Committee.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Donnelly,

That the Committee agrees to defer progressing any of the projects until consultation with the residents/local communities affected had taken place across all three sites.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the amendment and ten against and it was declared lost.

The Committee:

- agreed to proceed with a dog off lead enclosure to be capped at maximum cost of £25k;
- agreed to ringfence £10k to commission a feasibility study for the Nettlefield MUGA;
- noted that the upgrade to the Basketball courts was to be delivered via the capital programme; and
- agreed that further consultation be undertaken with the local communities on the remaining proposals.

### **Pilot Sunday City Animation Project**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The report sets out the results of recent engagement on a proposed Sunday Trading and animation pilot in the city centre and proposes an amended approach to undertaking the pilot for Summer 2025.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and the results of the recent engagement and either:**

- 1. Agree to a Sunday trading and animation pilot in Summer 2025 by designating the city centre (as defined in draft BMAP) as a Holiday Resort under paragraph (9) of the Shops (Sunday Trading &c) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 and agree that a review of the pilot will inform a decision in early 2026 whether to continue the Holiday Resort designation, extend the Holiday resort designation or revoke the designation, or**
- 2. Agree not to run a pilot in Summer 2025 but to undertake further consultation and engagement specifically on Holiday Resort designation to inform a decision in early 2026 on whether to designate the City Centre or other areas of the city as a Holiday Resort on an ongoing basis and agree that the proposed animation set out in the report can be run in Summer 2025.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **Background**

- 3.1 At its meeting in April 2025, Members agreed that officers should look to engage with the BIDS and Belfast Chamber to ascertain whether there is an appetite for the**



pilot Sunday trading and animation project and the timescales for implementation.

- 3.2 Since April, there have been a number of discussions with key stakeholders in relation to the pilot including management at Victoria Square, Castle Court and the Kennedy Centre, Belfast One, Cathedral Quarter and Linen Quarter BIDs, Belfast Chamber, Retail NI, NI Hotel Federation, Visit Belfast, Translink, USDAW and the Department for Communities.
- 3.3 Shopping Centre management teams were generally supportive of any proposal to extend hours of opening on Sundays, suggesting that retailer buy-in to the proposal shouldn't be an issue. Views were expressed that flexibility was key for retailers and their workers and that most would probably want to open from 11am onwards rather than anything earlier. Concerns were expressed around the timing of a pilot over summer and the ability to get a proposal in place within weeks of the decision and be able to communicate and promote that consistently.
- 3.4 The BIDS were also all generally supportive of the proposal for longer opening on Sundays with strong indication that it would be preferable to move towards Holiday Resort status to give more certainty for retailers over the proposals. There would be significant input from the BIDS in relation to the animation proposed in the City over the summer and it was felt that the longer opening hours would support this. Concern was also expressed by the BIDs in relation to the ability to put a proposal in place quickly and promote it.
- 3.5 Belfast Chamber were also supportive of the proposal for longer opening on Sundays and indicated that it would be preferable to move towards holiday resort status, but if a pilot was to be undertaken then it should be longer than six weeks. This reflects concerns around the required lead in time for a pilot and to be able to engage with staff and communicate and promote the proposals consistently. The need to have an appropriate mechanism in place to evaluate the impact of the pilot /designation was also highlighted.
- 3.6 Hotel Federation & Visit Belfast were both supportive of the proposal and considered that animation in the city would be significantly different without a retail offering. Figures have shown that overnight trips may be reducing, and with competition for overnight stays elsewhere in the UK and Europe, it was considered that Belfast should do all it can to attract visitors and with earlier Sunday opening commonplace across many cities, it is expected when people visit. Over the summer months, there are expected to be 330,000 cruise ship

visitors with 21 ships and 54,000 people docking in Belfast on Sundays over the summer.

- 3.7 Retail NI & USDAW wrote to all members and made a deputation to the Council in May 2025 outlining their opposition to any pilot, and discussions covered many of the topics set out in the deputation, which largely mirrored previous representations on this issue. Figures were provided from surveys undertaken when hours were extended in 2012 which showed: 33% of stores were almost empty, 32% were quiet, 30% had the same number of customers as usual on a Sunday and only 5% were very busy. The same survey showed that during the 8 weeks of extra opening 23% of stores did not increase staff numbers, 26% of stores used only volunteers to increase staff numbers, in 51% of stores staff were pressured to work extra hours and 56% of reps reported staff were put under pressure work extra hours.
- 3.8 Translink outlined that further Metro services were introduced on Sunday mornings during covid and remain in place, with rail services providing good frequency on a Sunday morning. It would be challenging to introduce any additional services or increased frequency in time to facilitate a pilot over the summer as advance notice is needed for any timetable changes.
- 3.9 The Department for Communities were unable to comment in detail on the pilot as a definitive proposal on the details of the pilot had not been submitted. The Department were clear that the Minister would need to consider their view if the Council were to temporarily relax enforcement of the relevant legislation.
- 3.10 Officers have taken on board the views of DfC and also considered the representations made by Retail NI and USDAW. Officers consider that a further formal consultation is highly unlikely to demonstrate a change in position from those who object to extended Sunday opening hours.
- 3.11 Therefore, if a pilot is to be run in Summer 2025, officers would strongly recommend that instead of temporarily relaxing the enforcement of the Shops (Sunday Trading &c.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 the Council should instead look to designate an appropriate area as a Holiday Resort based on the significant amount of previous consultation undertaken as well as recent engagement. It should be noted that previous engagement on designation as a Holiday Resort was focussed on the City Centre and therefore if any designation is to rely on the previous consultation, it should also be limited to the city centre.
- 3.12 The designation as a Holiday Resort will be a pilot and the outcomes will be evaluated after the end of September. It is considered that this will allow members

to make an informed decision as to whether the designation should continue. As part of that review process, there will be further engagement with stakeholders and possibly some further public consultation to consider the impacts of the pilot. On the basis of that evaluation, the Council could then determine whether to continue to designate the City Centre as a holiday resort, seek to extend the designation to other areas in the city (based on appropriate consultation) or revoke the designation.

**3.13 Designation as a Holiday Resort**

Under paragraph (9) of the Shops (Sunday Trading &c.) (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 a Council may designate '*any area in its district as a holiday resort*'. Designation means that for 18 Sundays between 1 March and 30 September in any calendar year (apart from Easter Day) a shop may open on Sundays in accordance with notice given to Council.

**3.14** Before making any designation, the Order is clear that a Council should consult those likely to be affected by the proposed designation. The council has consulted on the designation of the city centre as a holiday destination under the legislation on a number of previous occasions, most recently in 2019. The terms of reference for the 2019 engagement exercise included:

- Identifying barriers accessing the city centre on Sundays and engage with partners to collaborate on solutions
- Understanding approaches in other cities and learnings relevant to Belfast
- Considering the socio-economic impact of city centre animation on Sundays
- Considering the impact that change to opening hours may have on the city centre
- Considering the investment required to boost visitor numbers to the city on
- Sundays
- Building a business case to lever resources from partner organisations, in the context of city revitalisation.

**3.15** On the previous occasions, there was engagement with a broad range of stakeholders including retailers (small and large); trades unions; statutory bodies; cultural sector; families; young people; tourism and hospitality representatives and transport providers. Previous Committee reports are included in Appendix 1-6.

**3.16** The issues behind the proposals to designate the city centre as a holiday resort were similar to the current position: ongoing challenges to city centre viability; a

desire to accommodate a growing tourism audience and a recognition that there was limited retail and hospitality provision in the city centre on a Sunday morning, compared to other days of the week.

- 3.17** The most recent engagement has confirmed that the positions taken, and views expressed in previous consultations remain relevant.
- 3.18** For the purposes of a pilot, members should note that previous consultation focussed on the City Centre and therefore members should consider designation of the City Centre as defined by draft BMAP and shown in Appendix 7. This is justified by previous consultation and would provide a robust definition for the purposes of the pilot. Should members wish to extend Holiday Resort Status beyond the City Centre, appropriate consultation as set out in the Order would have to be undertaken. This could take place as part of the review of the pilot with the results to be considered in early 2026.
- 3.19** The 1997 Order sets out in paragraph 10 that any resolution to designate a Holiday Resort can only take effect from a specified date, which must be at least one month after the date on which the resolution is passed. Should a decision be taken at this Committee, following due process the specified date on which the decision could take effect would be Sunday 10 August 2025. The Council will also have to publish notice of the designation in such a manner as it considers appropriate. The pilot could therefore run from Sunday 10 August 2025 for 8 weeks until Sunday 28 September.
- 3.20** These timescales are later in the summer than suggested by some of the shopping centres and BIDS in the recent engagement, but the Holiday Resort designation and timings are set out in legislation and are considered to provide a significantly more robust approach to the pilot for the Council and retailers than relaxation of enforcement. It would also allow a longer period of time to put in place co-ordinated communication around the pilot.
- 3.21** The Council would be required to keep a register of shops that have given notice of their intention to open which would be available to inspection by members of the public at all reasonable times. Shops wanting to open for longer on Sunday 10 August would need to give notice to the Council by Friday 25 July (14 days before the start of the pilot, unless the Committee agrees that a shorter period is required).
- 3.22** If it is the intention of the Council to run a Sunday trading and animation pilot. Designation as a Holiday Resort would enable shops to open (subject to appropriate

notice being given) on Sundays until the end of September 2025. Following this, officers will review the impact of the pilot, once again engaging with stakeholders and with the potential for public consultation. A report would then be brought before this Committee in early 2026 and a decision could be made to either continue with the Holiday Resort Designation on a permanent basis or revoke the designation and return to the current Sunday opening hours.

#### Animation

- 3.23 Officers have identified a number of events and venues that are providing activity across the July & August period and are accessible on Sundays. These are outlined in Appendix 8 and could form the basis of promotional activity to encourage Sunday footfall.
- 3.24 In addition officers have engaged with the BIDs to understand what would be possible to support additional animation and uplift activity across the summer period with expenditure up to the value of £120,000.
- 3.25 This would be split across the BIDs to support activity as below, members should note that these are indicative planning assumptions while detailed plans are finalised and are focussed on July and August and may need to be reviewed and aligned with pilot period.
- 3.26 CQ Bid are providing activation each week in July and August to animate Writers Square. With additional support they would look to include the following:
- Urban beach at the riverside near the lagan lookout. Sand area for kids to play with seating for parents. This would be available every day in July and August.
  - Sunday Craft/Art/Makers market along Hill St. Sunday from Am to 3-4pm. Subject to road closures.
- 3.27 LQ Bid are also providing activation across July and August. With additional support of up to they would look to extend and include the following:
- Pick up and play pétanque at Blackstaff Square. The sessions will be facilitated by staff on location from Linen Quarter BID, with expert support from Ormeau Pétanque Club.
  - Musical animation. This will be at high footfall areas – Grand Central Station have agreed four of six Sundays and engagement has occurred with Halt to suggest a collaborative music with street food combination.

- Arts Ekta cultural animation. Includes mini-Mela type activities in high footfall locations in the Linen Quarter, probably co-located with other activities – e.g. Blackstaff Square, Grand Central Station, or Halt.

3.28 Bid One have outlined an Animating Sunday's programme for 6/8 weeks, strategically focused on enhancing the vibrancy, dwell time, and visitor experience within Belfast city Centre.

3.29 With additional support they would look to extend and include the following:

- Teddy Bear's Picnic at City hall grounds
- Belfast One Outdoor Summer Cinema Series at City Hall Grounds (extended by a further two dates)
- Street Performers & Roving Acts.

3.30 Financial and Resource Implications

The costs of the proposed animation programme for 2025 will be met through existing budgets on a one-off basis.

3.31 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.”

### Proposal

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Nelson,  
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with option 1 as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed not to proceed with a Sunday trading and animation pilot in Summer 2025 but to revisit the matter again after the Summer.

### Physical Programme and Asset Management

#### Physical Programme

The Director of Property and Projects submitted the following 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 and an update on the Fleet Programme 2025/26 - replacement of the Lord Mayor's car, and signage at Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Olympia Leisure Centre.

## 2.0 Recommendations

### 2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- Capital Programme Movements -
  - IT Programme – Service Desk Management System Solution - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme and 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
  - Black Mountain Pathway/ Greenway - 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
  - Historic Cemeteries – Health & Safety Works at Clifton Street Cemetery - Agree that this project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and that a satisfactory tender return has been received for the works that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £231,000 be allocated
  - Beacon Programme - Agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £103,250.

- Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works - Agree that the project is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
- Open Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.
- Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.
- Note the update on the Fleet Programme 2025/26 - replacement of the Lord Mayor's car at 3.12 and agree if they are content to approve the lease of the Skoda Enyaq Estate for the Lord Mayor's Car instead of the previously agreed Kia EV6
- Note the update re the timelines for the installation of dual-language signage at Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Olympia Leisure Centre at 3.13

### 3.0 Main report

#### Key Issues

#### Physical Programme

- 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. The Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

#### Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 As outlined above 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
IT Programme – Service Desk Management System Solution	Implementation of a new IT service desk solution	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i>
Black Mountain Pathway/ Greenway	Connections from land at Upper Whiterock to Black Mountain	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i>
Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street	Health & Safety works at Clifton Street Cemetery	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i>
Beacon Programme	Provision of beacons as an alternative to traditional bonfires.	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i>
Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works	Enabling works for active travel container and gate improvements	Move to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i>
Open Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme	Rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery which is beyond its lifespan	Add as <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i>
Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System	Procurement and implementation of a new Asset Management Integrated Work Management System (IWMS).	Add as <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i>

### 3.3 IT Programme – Service Desk Management System

This project will enable the implementation of a new IT service desk solution to enhance operational capability and efficiency, user experience, and service response. It will replace the current inhouse legacy CRM system and align IT services with organisational goals. This project is part of the overall IT Programme and a business case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme and 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. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

### 3.4 Black Mountain Pathway/ Greenway

This proposed project will improve access to the Belfast Hills via lands and pathways at the top of the Upper Whiterock Road with a view to connecting this to existing National Trust pathways on Divis Mountain. This project is part of the overall Access to the Hills/ Connectivity Programme and a business case has been submitted. A series of community consultations have been undertaken and the project received positive feedback

and support from the local community and key stakeholders. 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. Match funding opportunities are being explored for this project. Members are also asked to note that work is ongoing on the other Access to the Hills/Connectivity projects.

### 3.5 Historic Cemeteries

SP&R, at its meeting last month, noted that the first phase of the historic cemeteries project to be brought forward would be health and safety monument works. The first works to be undertaken are immediate health and safety works at Clifton St Cemetery. Members are asked to agree that 'Historic Cemeteries - Clifton St Cemetery monuments safety works' is moved to Stage 3 – Committed; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £231,000 be allocated to this project.

### 3.6 Beacon Programme

Members will be aware that demand is increasing for beacons as a managed, environmentally more acceptable alternative to traditional bonfires. Members are asked to agree that this project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a capital allocation of up to £103,250. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

### 3.7 Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works

This project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* in April 2025. Members will recall that capital monies were received from UKSPF for existing schemes last financial year, which freed up resources for additional schemes including the Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works. The project involves the transfer of 2 existing Council owned containers to Strangford Avenue Playing Fields and the associated enabling works in preparation for the delivery of these 2 containers. It is envisaged that one container is fitted for bike storage, the other is fitted with a small kitchenette and will act as an outdoor classroom/ parks outreach hub, improving accessibility and enabling further

community programming in the park. Members are asked to agree that 'Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works' is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

**3.8 Open Street Scene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme**

The project is a rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery to maintain service provision across the Council's estate. Members are asked to agree that the OSS Machinery Replacement Programme is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.

**3.9 Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System**

The project is to procure and implement a new Asset Management Integrated Work Management System (IWMS). A single corporate asset register is fundamental to the management of assets and the Council's ability to take a strategic approach to the planning and use of assets, the management of risk and delivery of value for money and quality. Members are asked to agree that the Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.

**3.10 Fleet Programme 2025/26 - replacement of the Lord Mayor's car**

Members will recall that in February 2025 an update was presented on the Fleet Programme for 2025/26 including the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car. Members considered a range of options and agreed to the lease of the KIA EV6 Electric Estate for a period of 4 years under the Fleet Programme for 2025/26, with the amount of £6,711 per year and a total of £26,844 over the four-year contract period.

**3.11 To ensure that value for money is obtained further market analysis which has been undertaken in advance of the new lease being undertaken. This analysis identified a cheaper, larger capacity vehicle, a Skoda Enyaq Estate, than the previously agreed Kia EV6 Electric Estate. A comparison of the two models is outlined below.**

MODEL	Range (miles)	Annual cost of lease	Total cost of lease (over 4 years)
<b>KIA EV6 Electric Estate</b> 239kW gt Line 84kWh (Agreed in February 2025)	443	£6,711	£26,844
<b>Skoda Enyaq Estate</b> 210kW 85 Edition 82kWh	440	£5,529	£22,116

**In summary**

- The Skoda Enyaq Estate lease is £1,182 less per year, providing a saving of £4,728 over the 4-year lease plan and thus demonstrates better value for money;
- The range is similar to the Kia EV6 Electric Estate model;
- It has a larger luggage capacity and provides greater rear legroom.

**3.12 Members are asked to note the information provided and agree if they are content to approve the lease of the Skoda Enyaq Estate for the Lord Mayor's Car.** If agreed the proposed new lease will be £5,529 per year which equates to a total of £22,116 over the four-year contract period. This represents a saving of £4,728 over the four-year period compared to the current proposed model (KIA EV6 Electric Estate).

**3.13 Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Olympia Leisure Centre – signage**

Members will recall that last month it was agreed that an update on the timeline for the implementation of dual language signage at Olympia and Forth Meadow Community Greenway would be brought to Committee this month in line with Committee agreements on these. Members are asked to note the updates for both projects as below -

- **Forth Meadow Community Greenway** –Design team appointment for the dual language versions has commenced and will be appointed by August. Installation, following design, approval and manufacture is programmed to take place early next year. Lead-in time for the physical signage is approx. 4 months. Members will be kept up to date re progress.
- **Olympia Leisure Centre** – work is underway with all signs to be installed by the end of September 25.

Scope of works is based upon existing templates in Andersonstown and Brook.

**3.14 Financial & Resource Implications**

***Financial Implications –***

**Historic Cemeteries – Clifton St Cemetery immediate H&S works** – up to £231,000.

**Beacon Programme** - capital allocation of up to £103,250.

**Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26** – this is an existing rolling allocation of £2.2m on the Capital Programme relating to the Council's fleet including the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car, estimated at £22,116.

The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council.

***Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.***

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

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

During discussion, a Member referred to a previous decision of the Committee in November at which it had been *agreed that the Council explores options for bringing the Courtyard at Fernhill back into active use space linked to the Access to the Hills project and building on the success of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway and authorised officers to discuss this opportunity with potential partners; and that officers investigate whether the Wolfhill Road project could be linked in as part of the Access to the Hills project also* and he provided further clarification on the proposal, including the possible acquisition of land/property to progress the project.

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2 of the report and noted the update in relation to the Access to the Hills project.

**Asset Management**

The Committee:

- i) Parkgate Avenue Car Park – Licence Extension** - Approved the extension of an existing Licence agreement with the Directors of Argento Contemporary Jewellery Ltd for a right of way over Council owned lands at Parkgate Avenue Car Park.
- ii) Smithfield Market – Update on Unit Lettings** – Noted the recent lettings and rent reviews at Smithfield Market approved under delegated authority to the Director of Property & Projects.
- iii) Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) – Licence Agreement with Friends of the Field** - Approved the grant of a further Licence

Agreement between the Council & Friends of the Field to cover their continued use of portion of Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) as an agroecology community garden in conjunction with the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project.

- iv) Benview Community Centre – New Licence – deferred – see below.**
- v) Commission House – New Lease –** Approved the lease of Commission House for office use to The Parent Rooms
- vi) Overflow Parking Area adjacent Cregagh Youth & Community Centre – New Licence -** Approved of a new licence to Irish Rugby Football Union (Ulster Branch) for their occasional use of the overflow parking area adjacent to Cregagh Youth & Community Centre.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the new Licence at Benview Community Centre pending an updated report to clarify the current usage of Belfast City Councils Play Teams within Benview Community Centre, but that the current licence be extended until the issue was resolved.

#### **Update on Area Working Groups**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of North Area Working Group of 27 May, West Area Working Group of 29 May and the East Area Working Group of 5 June 2025.

### **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

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

The Committee:

- noted the summary of the work of the Panel during 2024/25 as set out at Section 3 of the report;
- approved the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 at Appendix A, and particularly the disclosure of the significant governance issues contained in the statement;
- approved the updated Raising Concerns policy; and
- approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel on 3 June 2025 at Appendix B.

#### **Contracts Update**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions (STAs) in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3);

- noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4); and
- agreed that a report be submitted providing details on the tender for Advertising space at Belfast City Airport:

### Appendix 1

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
VAT Consultancy Services	Up to 3 years	£45,000	T Wallace	Evolving VAT legislation and transactions requiring expert VAT advice
Crematorium Café	Up to 3 years	Income based contract	S Toland	Requirement for a franchise contractor for the crematorium café.
Supply of forcing and bedding bulbs	Up to 3 years	£90,000	S Leonard	Forcing and bedding bulbs are required for planting in parks, cemeteries and open spaces
Provision of artist-led community resources - Tool for Togetherness	Up to 9 months	£100,000	K Forster	Provision of artist-led community resources to activate public spaces, including idea conception, co-design with communities, resource development and delivery, testing in community settings and implementation of feedback.
Facilities management service at the Mary Peters Track	Up to 5 years	£800,000	D Sales	Contract for the operation and management of the Mary Peters Track which will end in March 2026.
Hire of ancillary equipment for Council Events	Up to 4 years	£375,000	D Martin	Hire of a range of equipment to support the delivery of Council run events
Production management service	Up to 4 years	£500,000	D Martin	Provision of production management to support the delivery of City events and activities
Public address, staging and lighting equipment	Up to 4 years	£1.1m	D Martin	Hire of specialist PA, staging and lighting equipment to support the delivery of Council run events. Includes contingency for Fleadh in 2026

Provision of dog kennelling facilities and related services	Up to 4 years	£320,000	D Sales	The Dog Warden Service requires a provider to supply dog kennel facilities to keep, return and rehome stray and other dogs which come into the care of the Council. This would include kennelling of illegal breeds and other related services such as provision of veterinary care to dogs housed at the facilities
Purchase PCSP crime prevention Equipment	Up to 3 years	£90,000	D Sales	The equipment aims to provide a tool to improve policing and community safety and help people to feel safer. The Community Safety Unit's Anti-Social Behaviour Officers and PSNI have in the past welcomed the availability of such community resources as an engagement tool, offering practical support for residents and community groups across Belfast.
Removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers	Up to 5 years	£3,600,000	D Sales	This is a critical service that ensures filled skip containers are transported and emptied in a timely manner ensuring there is no downtime or closures of household recycling centres or other operational OSS sites due to skip availability.



**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Provision of specialist cremator maintenance service to crematory plant in City of Belfast Crematorium	Up to 34 months	£661,000	D Sales	Due to the specialist nature of the maintenance support including technical and operational support Facultatieve Technologies are the only supplier capable of providing this essential maintenance support. Note retrospective STA for 2 months (May & June 2025) – see Table 4 below. See additional information below	Facultatieve Technologies (FT)	3.
Hire of the vessel, 'Galleon Adulucia' for the 2025 Belfast Maritime Festival	Up to 5 days	£35,000	K Forster	Attraction for the 2025 Belfast Maritime Festival	European Maritime Events	3.
Advertising space at Belfast City Airport	Up to 3 years	£137,505	E McConville	There is only one airport within the Belfast City Council area and all advertising requests are managed by the airport's	George Best Belfast City Airport	3

				sales team and charged directly to George Best Belfast City Airport.		
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**Table 3: Modification to Contract**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Original Contract Duration</b>	<b>Modification</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
Measured term contract for installation of new soft floor covering for repairs, maintenance & minor works at various Council properties and locations - ITT35380	Up to 51 months	Additional 3 months and £30,000	S Grimes	3-month extension required to allow for additional time for the re-tender exercise to be completed and ensure continuity of services. Note - Original expiry on 31/03/25 and contract modification approved for 3 months in January 25 due to resourcing issues within the unit to allow procurement to take place. These issues have not been resolved which has led to further delays in procurement.	JJ Hennebry & Sons Ltd
Measured term contract for swimming pool filtration systems, maintenance & minor works at various Council properties and locations - ITT35297	Up to 53 months	Additional 3 months and £50,000	S Grimes	3-month extension required to allow for additional time for the re-tender exercise to be completed and ensure continuity of services. Note - Original expiry on 14/02/25 and contract modification approved for 5 months in	WJM Building Services Ltd

				January 25 due to resourcing issues within the unit to allow procurement to take place. These issues have not been resolved which has led to further delays in procurement.	
T2015 – Supply and delivery of paints & sundries	Up to 52 months	Additional 3 months and £6,000	S Grimes	3-month extension required to allow for additional time for the re-tender exercise to be completed and ensure continuity of supplies. Note - Original expiry on 28/2/25 and contract modification approved for 4 months and £6k in Feb 25 SP&R. The new tender, T2517, is at evaluation stage and this approval is sought for 3 months to allow the evaluation and award to take place.	PPG Architectural Coatings UK Ltd
T2034 - Supply of SCARAB Vehicles approved Parts	Up to 3 years	Additional 1 year and £30,000	D Sales	1 year extension required to allow for additional time to research and engage with the market to see if other manufacturers can supply the equivalent OEM part at a more competitive cost and a quicker lead time.	McCreath Taylor Ltd

T2312 - Supply of DAF Vehicles approved Parts	Up to 3 years	Additional 1 year and £30,000	D Sales	1 year extension required to allow for additional time to research and engage with the market to see if other manufacturers can supply the equivalent OEM part at a more competitive cost and a quicker lead time.	TBF Thompson (Garvagh) Ltd
T2284 - Supply of IVECO Vehicles approved Parts	Up to 3 years	Additional 1 year and £30,000	D Sales	1 year extension required to allow for additional time to research and engage with the market to see if other manufacturers can supply the equivalent OEM part at a more competitive cost and a quicker lead time.	NI Trucks
T2211 - Supply of Dennis Eagle and specialist Refuse Collection Vehicle approved parts	Up to 4 years	Additional 1 year and £100,000	D Sales	1 year extension required to allow for additional time to research and engage with the market to see if other manufacturers can supply the equivalent OEM part at a more competitive cost and a quicker lead time.	Manvik Plant Hire
T2212 - Supply of Holder and Schmidt specialist Cleaning / Sweeper machine approved parts	Up to 4 years	Additional 1 year and £30,000	D Sales	1 year extension required to allow for additional time to research and engage with the market to see if other manufacturers can supply the equivalent OEM part at a more	RD Mechanical

				competitive cost and a quicker lead time.	
<p>T1974 – Security Guarding Services</p> <p>Lot 1 – Manned security guarding Lot 2 – Event stewarding Lot 4 – Keyholding Lot 5 – Mobile Patrol</p>	Up to 4 years	Additional 3 months and £330k	N Largey	<p>3-month extension required to allow for additional time for the re-tender exercise to be completed and ensure continuity of services. Replacement tender has been advertised with evaluation and award due to be completed during July 25. Additional time may be required to allow for potential TUPE handover to new provider.</p>	<p>Cobra Security Services (Lots 1, 4 &amp; 5) Eventsec (Lot 2)</p>

**Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Provision of specialist cremator maintenance service to crematory plant in City of Belfast Crematorium	Up to 2 months	£39,000	D Sales	<p>Due to the specialist nature of the maintenance support including technical and operational support Facultatieve Technologies are the only supplier capable of providing this essential maintenance support. Note Retrospective STA for 2 months (May &amp; June 2025)</p>	Facultatieve Technologies (FT)	3.

				See additional information below		
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**Appendix 1a**

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Fleadh Cheoil Belfast 2026 marketing and visitor servicing	Up to 1 year	£185,000	D Martin	There is currently a formalised agreement with Visit Belfast to act as the official Destination Marketing and Management Company. This STA is for additional work specifically for Fleadh Cheoil.	Visit Belfast	3

**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 9th June 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 9th June 2025 including:

**Presentation on The Climate Action Plan**

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.

**Asylum Dispersal Programme Update**

- The Shared City Partnership noted the update regarding the funds and agreed the proposal for use of the underspend, Shared City partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it agrees the approach outlined in the report.

**Community Recovery Fund – Update**

- Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and approved the proposed allocation of the Community Recovery Fund – Open Call Projects, as outlined in the accompanying report, including the proposed approach for distributing funds from the Good Relations Action Plan and the TEO Asylum Dispersal Fund to support a further six eligible applications that align with the objectives of these funding streams, and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note

the contents of the report and approves allocation of the said funds as outlined in the detail of the report.

**PEACE IV – Secretariat Update**

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

**PEACEPLUS Belfast City Council Local Community Action Plan – Update**

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed that Route 1F for the CRT4 – ‘Access to the Hills’ path development will start at Fernhill House, subject to SEUPB approval and delivery within the existing budget and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree the above recommendation.

**Maternity Pay Provisions**

The Director of Human Resources submitted the following report in relation to maternity pay provisions:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

At the SP&R committee on 23 August 2024, the Committee requested that a paper be brought back setting out the Council’s maternity pay provisions and benchmarking undertaken against other organisations in the public and private sectors.

- 1.2 This report informs Committee of the Council’s maternity pay provisions and comparisons with a selection of organisations as outlined at Appendix 1.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

**Main report**

**3.1 Statutory Maternity Leave and Pay**

Maternity leave and pay provisions are a statutory entitlement for any pregnant employee. All employees are entitled to 52 weeks maternity leave. This consists of 26 weeks ordinary maternity leave and 26 weeks additional maternity leave. Entitlement to maternity leave is not dependent upon length of service of an employee.

Employees are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) provided they have at least 26 weeks service with their employer prior to the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC) and they are earning, on average, an amount which at least equals the lower earnings limit which applies on the Saturday at the end of

your qualifying week. The lower earnings limit is currently £125 a week.

Provided an employee meets the criteria above Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for the first 39 weeks of maternity leave only and comprises of the following payments:

- for the first six weeks at 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings with no upper limit.
- for the remaining 33 weeks at the lowest of either the standard rate of £187.18\* or 90 per cent of your average gross weekly earnings.

(Average weekly earnings are an employee's average earnings for the eight weeks prior to the qualifying period. The qualifying period is the 15th week before the baby is due).

\*this is the lower limit SMP and is set by government on an annual basis

### **3.2 BCC Occupational Maternity Pay**

While statutory maternity pay is the minimum an employee is entitled to, many organisations provide additional Occupational Maternity Pay. In the Council the rates of occupational maternity pay are:

- For the first six weeks of maternity leave the employee will be entitled to 9/10ths of a week's pay offset against payment made by way of SMP.
- For the subsequent 12 weeks the employee will be entitled to half a week's pay plus SMP. If this figure exceeds an employee's normal pay, they will be paid full pay.
- For the subsequent 21 weeks the employee will be paid SMP only.
- Any maternity leave extending beyond the 39 weeks and up to 52 weeks will be unpaid.

It should be noted that the Council affords the employee an opportunity to have these payments spread across the period of maternity leave.

Therefore, the Council enhances the statutory maternity pay by providing the higher amount for the first six weeks where 9/10ths of a weeks' pay exceeds SMP and further additional payments at a rate of half a weeks pay plus the SMP for the subsequent 12 weeks. This is in line



with the current conditions as set out in the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book).

### **3.3 Comparisons with Other Organisations**

Benchmarking was undertaken against a number of other organisations' maternity pay provisions and a summary of these is included at appendix 1.

All organisations benchmarked had an occupational / company maternity scheme which provided enhanced payments for some period of time during the 39 weeks of maternity pay.

Local Councils, (seven of whom, provided maternity policies for this benchmarking exercise), the Education Authority, the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and the NI Housing Executive are like the Council, governed by NJC terms and conditions of service and provide the same enhanced provisions as Belfast City Council.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service provides maternity pay at a rate of full pay for the first 18 weeks of maternity leave, with the remaining 21 weeks paid at SMP only. Weeks 40 – 52 are unpaid.

Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, provide the same maternity pay provisions as per the Civil Service.

With regard to private sector companies, KPMG, provide 18 weeks normal monthly salary, while Marks and Spencer and Tesco both provide 26 weeks at full pay followed by 13 weeks at SMP only.

Local organisation, Kainos, provide an enhanced company maternity pay of 13 to 20 weeks full pay. Details of the criteria used to determine how many weeks full pay an individual may receive were not available.

The benchmarking indicates that some organisations provide an enhanced maternity pay packages to qualifying employees. All organisations provide payment over and above the statutory rate for the first 39 weeks of maternity leave.

It should be noted that during the half pay period (weeks 7–18), Council do continue to pay normal pay to the employee and this will include any contractual allowances an employee receives as a part of normal pay, e.g. shift allowance, weekend enhancements, essential car user allowance etc.

Furthermore, given that SMP is not paid pro-rata to hours worked, some employees who may work part-time and/or be on lower income can receive an amount equivalent to or close to full pay for this period.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

- 3.4 There are no additional finance or resource implications relating to this report.

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

- 3.5 There are no equality or good relations implications relating to this report.”

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that a further report on the JNC terms and conditions for Maternity Pay and a similar benchmarking report on Paternity Pay Provisions be submitted to a future meeting.

**Diversity Action Plans**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 To agree the budget and appropriate resources for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and LGBTQIA+ Action Plan year 2 activities.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Agree the proposed diversity action plans and associated year 2 costs.

**3.0 Main report**

Our Equality and Diversity Action Plan outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. It also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Actions are categorised under the following corporate plan priorities:

- Growing an inclusive economy
- Living here
- Cross cutting
- Organisational priorities

- 3.2 As part of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan the Council has committed to developing and delivering a Gender Action Plan, LGBT+ Action Plan and a Race Equality Action Plan. The three year Gender Action Plan and LGBTQIA+ Action Plan were approved at SP&R Committee in October 2024. Actions for Year 2 (2025/26) for both plans have been costed and are being presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

**Gender Action Plan (GAP)**

- 3.3 Gender inequalities are deeply embedded in our social, economic and cultural systems. There is overwhelming evidence that women disproportionately experience disadvantage and discrimination, a reflection of historical unaddressed inequality, but also that inequalities have been exacerbated by austerity, welfare reform and by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics affirm the persistence of gendered inequalities, which continue to inhibit women's life opportunities in Northern Ireland. Men will benefit from gender equality as they too face gender-specific issues such as lower life expectancy, bad health, lower education levels and are impacted negatively by rigid gender norms.
- 3.4 The GAP 24-27 was agreed following consultation with the Women's Steering Group and the Women's Network Group. Achievements in 2024/25 include:
- Delivery of the annual International Women's Day event for staff in City Hall with a focus on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
  - Ongoing financial support to raise awareness of the Raise Your Voice to help address misogyny, sexual harassment and violence
  - Funding and delivery of a programme of development for the Women's Network Group covering leadership and development, resilience, leading meetings
  - Managing in a Political Environment Training - for all relevant officers
  - Retention of the NI Gender Diversity Chartermark - Silver level (work continues towards Gold level)
  - Onus Domestic Violence Charter (employer award) – retained Platinum level
  - Onus Safe City Accreditation - retained
  - Funding provided for external International Women's Day event in city centre
  - Women's Spaces event to promote work of WSG and the Gender Action Plan

- Targeting of Employment and Upskilling Academies to women in low paid (female dominate) sectors including the provision of childcare

3.5 Year 2 actions are set out in Appendix One. In addition to the financial resources required, the plan also identifies the role that individual business units and departments have in delivery of the plan. Chief officers are asked to allocate the necessary resources to ensure delivery of the actions or ensure where appropriate that actions are incorporated into existing projects and work plans.

#### LGBTQIA+ Action Plan

3.6 The LGBTQIA+ Action Plan for 2024-27, was developed in collaboration with the staff network 'Proud' and this is also being presented, with costs for Year 2, for approval. Please see Appendix Two. The plan has been developed to ensure that our organisational culture and working environment allows staff to feel comfortable to be their whole selves at work and that policies and practices empower talent development at all levels and the removal of any form of discrimination. It also aims to increase the understanding of the wider workforce of issues facing the LGBTQIA+ communities.

3.7 Achievements in 2024/25 include:

- LGBTQIA+ inclusion and awareness training
- LGBTQIA+ awareness training for senior leaders
- Delivery of unconscious bias training
- Fundraising bake sale with WNG and ABLE staff network
- Transgender Day of Remembrance
- Collaboration with staff network groups in other employers - lunch and learn session
- Mental Health First Aid for Proud network members
- Continued promotion, visibility and growth of staff network
- Participation in Belfast Pride
- Network Planning Day
- LGBTQIA Heritage walk
- The display of Rainbow and Trans flags and lighting up of City Hall.

#### Disability Action Plan

3.8 Members will be aware that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ('DDA') Section 49 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, and to the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. Our current Plan runs, approved by the Equality Commission

for Northern Ireland and reported on annually, runs from 2022 until 2025.

- 3.9 There are many 'live' actions still being delivered which fall under the Disability Action Plan 2022-25. Engagement with key stakeholder groups on the new Disability Action Plan from 2025 has also commenced. Central to this engagement is understanding the needs of disabled people in Belfast. This information will be combined with statistical data to develop an increased understanding of the actions Council can take, both strategically and operationally. The improvements being made will inform closer alignment of the statutory duties with the corporate planning cycle through establishing more defined outcomes for all nine equality groups including disability.
- 3.10 Members will be aware of the approval for a workshop to explore options for an Accessible City by 2025, with a key focus being inclusion of disabled people. The workshop is scheduled to take place in Autumn 2025, to align with the formal public consultation on the Disability Action Plan, as required by our statutory duties.
- 3.11 Detail on all of the actions delivered as part of the Disability Action Plan, the Gender Action Plan and the LGBTQIA+ Action Plan are included in the annual report to the Equality Commission due in August 2025.

#### Race Equality Action Plan

- 3.12 Following one-to-one coaching facilitated by Dr Lucy Michael to identify and develop appropriate departmental actions, CMT has now agreed Race Equality Actions for 2025/26. The director of City and Organisational Strategy, SRO for the Race Equality Action Plan is working with Dr Michael to finalise a full report for Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

#### Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.13 The cost of delivery of the proposed Gender Action Plan year 2 activities is estimated at £35,500. The cost of delivery of the LGBTQIA+ Action Plan year 2 is estimated at £9600. Both plans will be met from the existing Organisational Development budget.
- 3.14 The plan also identifies the role that individual business units and departments have in delivery of the plan.

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

- 3.15 The delivery of the Gender and the LGBT+ Action Plans will result in positive outcomes. The promotion of equality and diversity entails more than the elimination of discrimination, it requires proactive action. The actions contained within both plans will not only impact on internal operations but also have a positive impact externally on women and men and the LGBT+ community in our city.”

The Committee agreed the proposed diversity action plans and associated year 2 costs. It was further agreed that Gender Pay Gap Reporting should be included as an action in the Gender Action Plan.

**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 12th June 2025.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and to a late request which had been received from the Active Communities Network for the use of the City Hall in September:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Belfast Asian Women's Academy	9 August 2025	<b>South Asian Cultural Celebration</b> of the rich cultures, histories and contributions of South Asian communities living in Northern Ireland. Awards, speeches, performance and lunch.	C	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending – 150			
1st Battalion Irish Guards	5 September 2025	<b>Irish Guards 125th Anniversary Reception</b> following Remembrance Service at Belfast City Hall Garden of Remembrance  Numbers attending – 150/200	C	Current rate free as Not for Profit Group	Tea and Coffee Reception as significant anniversary
Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP)	9 September 2025	<b>GSP 30th Anniversary Celebration</b> Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, and entertainment.  Numbers attending – 150	C	Current rate free as Not for Profit Group and Charity	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary
NI Veterans' Commission	25 September 2025	<b>NI Veterans' Commissioner Reception for Iraq/Afghan Veterans</b> Guided Tour, Dinner and speeches  Numbers attending – 125	C	Current rate free as Not for Profit Group  Tour Free	

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Centre for Competitiveness	9 October 2025	<b>C for C 25th Anniversary Celebrations</b> Reception, Dinner and entertainment to recognize the work of C for C helping organisations improve their productivity and growth through the provision of recognised training certifications and bespoke in-house staff and process development.  Numbers attending – 200	C	Current rate free as Not for Profit Group	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary
Rhythms of India Dance and Performing Arts	10 October 2025	<b>Award Ceremony and Cultural Celebration of NI October Mahotsav</b> a multicultural celebration with singing and dancing designed to highlight Belfast's growing cultural richness fostering Indo-NI friendship.  Numbers attending – 50	C	Room hire £450  <i>(getting support from QUB/ UUU)</i>	



NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Guide Dogs NI	18 October 2025	<b>40th Anniversary Celebration</b> Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations of Long Service Volunteers and entertainment to recognize the work and achievements of Guide Dogs NI service.  Numbers attending – 250/300	C	Current rate free as Charity and Charitable event	Drinks Reception as significant anniversary
Belfast School of Theology (formerly Belfast Bible College)	19 December 2025	<b>Graduation and Post-Graduation Reception</b> –to make the achievements of the students at the college.  Numbers attending - 80	C	Room hire £450	
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful	19 February 2026	<b>Live Here, Love Here Community Awards –</b> Drinks reception, dinner and awards ceremony to celebrate the work of volunteers and groups who participate in Live Here Love Here campaign.	B&C	Current rate free as Charity/ Not for Profit Group & Linked to Council projects.	

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending - 130			
Young Enterprise NI	30 April 2026	<b>YEA NI Awards 2026</b> Drinks reception, dinner and Awards Ceremony to celebrate the achievements of people across NI who completed YE Programmes. Numbers attending – 300	C	Current rate free as Charity and Charitable event	
FG Wilson	21 May 2026	<b>FG Wilson Global Diamond 60th Anniversary Celebration</b> Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, and entertainment.  Numbers attending – 150/ 200	C	Room hire £1250	
Abbey Conferences	22 June 2027	<b>Belfast Pathology 2027 Conference – Welcome Reception</b> for guests attending 3-day conference  Numbers attending - 200	A &B	Room hire £1250	

**Minutes of the meeting of the**  
**Social Policy Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Social Policy Working Group of 17th June 2025.

Chairperson