

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



**Belfast
City Council**

18th August, 2025

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Lavery Room, City Hall and remotely via Teams on Friday, 22nd August, 2025 at 9.30 am, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. **Routine Matters**

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

2. **Restricted Items**

- (a) 2025-26 Quarter 1 Finance Report (Pages 1 - 20)
- (b) Medium Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme (Pages 21 - 28)
- (c) Organisational Reviews and Change Programme (Pages 29 - 36)
- (d) Asset Management (To Follow)
- (e) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (To Follow)

3. **Matters referred from Council / Notices of Motion**
 - (a) Notices of Motion - Pathways to Work Green Paper (Pages 37 - 40)
 - (b) Response received from Tanaiste re extending voting in Irish Presidential Elections (Pages 41 - 46)
4. **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**
 - (a) Belfast Region City Deal – update (Pages 47 - 82)
 - (b) Draft Irish Language Policy - Update on Consultation (To Follow)
 - (c) Planning Information (Pages 83 - 102)
 - (d) Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26 (Pages 103 - 114)
 - (e) 30 Under 30 Climate Change-Makers Initiative 2025-6 (Pages 115 - 120)
 - (f) City Innovation programme update (Pages 121 - 126)
 - (g) Draft response to Department for Communities Anti-Poverty Strategy Consultation (Pages 127 - 154)
5. **Physical Programme and Asset Management**
 - (a) Physical Programme Update (Pages 155 - 166)
 - (b) Asset Management (To Follow)
6. **Finance, Procurement and Performance**
 - (a) Contracts Update (Pages 167 - 176)
7. **Equality and Good Relations**
 - (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 4th August 2025 (Pages 177 - 222)
8. **Operational Issues**
 - (a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum (To Follow)
 - (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 223 - 228)
 - (c) Request for use of City Hall grounds for two events in Autumn 2025
 - (d) Minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group (Pages 229 - 236)

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

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Notices of Motion – Pathways to Work Green Paper
Date:	22nd August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager
Contact Officer:	Barry Flynn, Committee Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number ☐	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To advise the Committee of a response which has been received from the Minister for Communities in respect of the “Pathways to Work Green Paper” motion which had been adopted by the Standards and Business Committee on 28th April.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: Note the receipt of the correspondence and to agree that the motion be closed.
3.0	Main report
3.1	At the meeting of the Standards and Business Committee on 28th April, the Committee exercised its delegated powers to adopt the undernoted motion, which had been moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and seconded by Councillor de Faoite. <i>“This Council strongly opposes the proposed Welfare reforms as part of the Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper from the UK government, which will have disproportionate impacts on vulnerable people in the North; commits to writing to the First and Deputy First Minister asking them to lobby the UK Government to reverse changes that will negatively impact vulnerable people; further commits to writing to the Minister for Communities to prepare a business case for a mitigation package which provides protections for current and future claimants from reductions in social security entitlements outlined in the Pathways to Work Green Paper.”</i>
3.2	A response has since been received from the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons, MLA, in which he acknowledges the Council’s concern regarding the possible implications of the legislation. In addition, the Minister points out that he had relayed his “strong opposition” to the Secretary of State and government ministers at Westminster. He adds that he is committed to delivering a welfare system that “protects those who need it the most” and that his officials will continue to work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to assess the full implications of the legislation in Northern Ireland.
3.3	The Minister adds in his correspondence that the Department for Work and Pensions would be hosting a consultation event on Monday, 16th June. However, as the correspondence was received late on Friday, 13th June, it was impractical to advise Members.
3.4	The consultation has now closed, and the Department is considering the responses.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.5	None.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.6	There are no equality or good relations implications for the Council.
4.0	Appendix – Document Attached
	Appendix 1: Letter received 13.06.2025 from Minister for Communities.



Department for

Communities

www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn

Pobal

Department for

Commonities

From: The Minister

Level 9

Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7EG

Telephone: (028) 90512692

e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk

Our ref: CORR 0351-2025

Date: 13 June 2025

Cllr Tracy Kelly
Mayor
Belfast City Council

Via email: lordmayorsoffice@belfastcity.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Kelly,

**WELFARE CHANGES: THE PATHWAYS TO WORK: REFORMING BENEFITS AND
SUPPORT TO GET BRITAIN WORKING GREEN PAPER**

I refer to Barry Flynn's letter dated 15 April 2025, detailing Belfast City Council's concerns regarding the UK Government's recently published 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working' Green Paper.

I acknowledge the Council's concern about the changes and the uncertainty created by the UK Government proposals. I have made clear my strong opposition to the proposed welfare cuts, and I have raised my concerns directly with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Labour Government Ministers.

I am committed to the delivery of a welfare system that protects those who need it most; encourages employment for those who can work; promotes the skills and advancement of people in employment; and that supports people who can't work.

My officials continue to work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to understand the full impacts and implications for Northern Ireland.

DWP will be holding a consultation event in Northern Ireland on the afternoon of 16 June in Belfast. The details are available on the Department for Work and Pensions website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/pathways-to-work-reforming-benefits-and-support-to-get-britain-working-green-paper>) Places at this event will be limited, but of course you can also submit your views online/in writing/by email. I would encourage you to engage with the consultation process. It is important that key stakeholders bring their views to the table and make Northern Ireland's voice heard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Lyons', written in a cursive style.

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities

Cc Barry Flynn Barry Flynn FlynnBarry@belfastcity.gov.uk



Subject:	Response from the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade re: extending the right to vote in elections for the President of Ireland
Date:	22nd August, 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
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After Council Decision	☐								
Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To note the correspondence received from the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Harris TD.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: Note the correspondence as set out in the report and agree to the closure of the motion.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that, at the Council meeting held on 2nd June, 2025, the following motion was passed:
3.2	Moved by Councillor Róis-Márie Donnelly, Seconded by Councillor Natasha Brennan:
3.3	“That this Council notes that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both; recalls that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 counties the right to vote in presidential elections; further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland.”
3.4	The Committee is advised that a response has been received from Mr Simon Harris TD, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.
3.5	In his response he advises that a Private Members Bill on Extending Voting Rights in Presidential Elections to citizens of Northern Ireland and the diaspora was debated in the Dáil Éireann on 24th May, 2025.

3.6	He outlines that the Government did not oppose the motion and that extending voting rights to citizens outside of the jurisdiction of the Republic of Ireland would require a referendum and the Government would continue to reflect on the matter. <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.7	None associated with this report. <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.8	None associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Response from Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Harris TD.

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From: [Tánaiste Harris's Office](#)
To: [Louise McLornan](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Response to your correspondence - DFAT-THO-03294-2025
Date: 01 August 2025 15:08:08

CAUTION: This email originated from outside our organisation. Do not click links, open attachments, or enter any details unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe. If you think the email is suspicious please complete the Suspicious email form on interlink.

Reference No: DFAT-THO-03294-2025

Your Ref No: LM/02.06.2025

Dear Ms McLornan,

The Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Simon Harris TD, has asked me to thank you for your recent correspondence on the Belfast City Council motion in relation to extending the franchise of Irish Presidential Elections to Irish citizens in Northern Ireland which was passed on to him by the Taoiseach.

A Private Members Bill on Extending Voting Rights in Presidential Elections to citizens in Northern Ireland and the diaspora was debated in Dáil Éireann on 24 May. The Government did not oppose the motion.

As was noted during the Dáil debate, extending voting rights to citizens outside this jurisdiction would require a referendum and the Government continues to reflect on the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Aisling O'Boyle
Private Secretary to the Tánaiste and
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Subject:	Belfast Region City Deal – update
Date:	22 nd August 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services

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After Council Decision	☐								
Sometime in the future	☐								
Never	☐								

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and seek approval for the BRCD Annual Report 2024/25.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the BRCD Annual Report for 2024/25 • Note the update in relation the Implementation and Financial Plan
3.0	Main report
	Annual Report 2024/25
3.1	The agreed reporting arrangements for all City and Growth Deals requires the production of an Annual Report and the requirement to meet with the Northern Ireland Delivery Board in order to discuss deal progress as part of an 'Annual Conversation' which is arranged to take place at the end of August this year.
3.2	A high level, outward focused Annual Report has now been produced for 2024/25 and outlines the specific progress made at the overall programme level with some very tangible progress achieved in this reporting year. Key highlights as of 31 March 2025 include: • A total of 16 projects with Outline Business Cases (OBCs) now approved alongside three Full Business Cases (FBCs) with a combined project value of £620m. • Following FBC approval this year iREACH Health hosted an official sod cutting ceremony in February 2025, with the construction phase for the world-class clinical research centre having now commenced. • In June 2024, construction commenced at the state-of-the-art Factory of the Future at Global Point in Newtownabbey marking a major milestone for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC). Due to open in early 2026, the innovation centre with capacity for 150 staff, is set to reinvigorate local industrial potential and address the future technology and skills challenges faced by the region's manufacturing sector. • Augment the City successfully progressed through and completed the first two phases of its 3-phase SBRI programme. • Four Contracts for Funding and funding agreements were signed – including Gobbins Phase 2 and Destination Royal Hillsborough. • 21 contracts associated with BRCD projects now include social value clauses, to date these contracts that have commenced reporting to the SIB portal have committed to delivery of a total of 10,935 Social Value Delivery Points. Mainly through interventions such as paid employment opportunities for apprentices, student placements and graduates, health and wellbeing initiatives and climate change and carbon reducing training.

	• Studio Ulster moved into full operation and as previously reported the official launch took place in June 2025 marking a new era for virtual production, creating opportunities and positive economic impacts for Belfast residents, and for our city and region. • Two additional cross deals skills assessments were completed for the Virtual Production and Digital Sectors and a review of identified actions is underway to determine those suitable for inclusion in a BRCD Collaborative Employability & Skills action plan.
3.3	The Annual Report, which was approved by the BRCD Executive Board on 18 June 2025, is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration. The individual BRCD partners will also be seeking approval for the Annual Report through their own governance structures. The report will be formally published after all approvals have been secured.
3.4	The report will then be shared with the Department of Finance in advance of the Annual Conversation.
3.5	Moving into Year 4 (2025/26) and as partners focus on delivery and maximising the benefits of the investment, we will see significant progress across the programme with: • The opening of Studio Ulster and the UK Digital Twin Centre already completed. • Construction continuing at pace at both iREACH Health and AMIC and contractors expected on site at Momentum One Zero, Newry City Centre Regeneration and Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge. • Approval of the OBC for Belfast Stories anticipated by the end of 2025. • 3 additional CfFs currently in process for approval – committing an additional £140m • 2 FBCs at advanced stages of the approval process • The BRCD draft Benefits Realisation Framework being refreshed to ensure that benefits are effectively delivered and captured in alignment with the overall programme objectives. • Completion of the Life and Health Sciences (LHS) skills assessment Financial and Implementation Plan
3.6	The overarching deal document is supported by a Financial and Implementation Plan and the annual submission for 2024/25 was produced alongside the Annual Report. As the programme is now firmly in delivery phase this year's financial and implementation plan was combined into one document. The document includes the expenditure profile of all the projects broken down annually and the high level project milestones based on the Quarter 4 financial and performance returns. The PMO engaged closely with partners and following consideration by the Finance Directors' Group and the Executive Board it was formally submitted to the Department of Finance in June as required by the Contract for Funding.

3.7	During 2024/25 a further £46.3m was drawn down from both the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities demonstrating the positive progress being made across the programme. Up to 31 st March 2025, claims totalling £41m have been processed by Programme Management Office (£36m in FY24-25).
3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that; <i>‘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.’</i>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Appendix 1 – BRCD Annual Report 2024/25 – RESTRICTED

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Subject:	Planning Information
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer(s):	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Contact Officer(s):	Ed Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management)

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To provide an update on Major planning applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The report is for notation.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	The Committee received an update on Planning Performance at its meeting on the 27 th August 2024. At that meeting and previously, the Committee sought a regular update on Major applications and applications that have been determined by the Planning Committee, especially those where a Decision Notice has yet to be issued.
3.2	All Major applications must be determined by the Planning Committee. The Key Performance Indicator (given in weeks) is calculated from when an application is considered to be valid to when the Decision Notice ("Green Form") is issued. This means that any delays either pre- or post- committee will impact on the KPI. The target for determining a Major application is 30 weeks.
	<u>Major applications</u>
3.3	Appendix 1 sets out the Major applications that are currently with the Council to determine. Details are given on the location, proposal, the validation date and target date for determination (using the 30 week target set out in the Key Performance Indicator) as well as a status update.
	<u>Applications determined by Committee</u>
3.4	Appendix 2 sets out the applications that have been determined by Committee since February 2022 which are yet to issue. For completeness information is also given on those applications determined by Committee which have had their Decision Notice issued. Details are given on the time taken (in weeks) to bring the applications before Committee and where decisions are yet to be issued, information is given relating to the main reason for the delay.
3.5	Following further discussion at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in May 2025, this table has now been amended to include a new non statutory target date and to give more detailed reasons for any delays in determination.

3.6	<u>Conclusion</u> This report will be brought to each Planning Committee and to each Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for information on an ongoing basis.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.7	There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.8	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Major planning applications at August 2025 Appendix 2 – Applications determined by Committee at August 2025

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Live Major Applications not previously considered by Committee @ 05.08.25

Number	Application No.	Category	Location	Proposal	Date Valid	Target Date	Status
1	LA04/2022/0809/F	Major	Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews Belfast.	Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) & ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated and ancillary works.	21-Apr-22	17-Nov-22	Under Consideration
2	LA04/2023/2633/F	Major	St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights, Belfast BT11 8ER	Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 4G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities.	14-Mar-23	10-Oct-23	Under Consideration
3	LA04/2023/3799/F	Major	Vacant lands (partial site of the former Wolfhill Flax Spinning Mill) located to the south, of Wolfhill Manor, north of Wolfhill Grove and west of Mill Avenue, Ligoniel Road, Belfast, BT14 8NR	New single storey 10-class based primary school, separate nursery school accommodation and school meals accommodation to facilitate the relocation of St. Vincent De Paul Primary School and Nursery from existing site on Ligoniel Road, Belfast. Proposal includes new pedestrian and vehicular accesses onto Mill Avenue, car parking, covered cycle storage area and hard play areas. Hard and soft landscaping including wildlife walkway, fencing, retaining walls, underground drainage system to include the reinstatement of underground storm sewer and headwall into adjacent DFI River wayleave. Includes temporary contractors compound and all associated site works.	09-Oct-23	06-May-24	Under Consideration
4	LA04/2023/4181/F	Major	Lands comprising the existing Sydenham Wastewater Pumping Station west of Park Avenue, Connswater River and King George V Playing Fields, to the south of the Sydenham By-Pass, east of The Oval football stadium, north and east of Parkgate Gardens and north of Parkgate Crescent, Parkgate Parade and Mersey Street, Belfast	Demolition of existing Wastewater Pumping Station (WwPS) with reinstatement of site as a landscaped area. Construction of a replacement WwPS including associated control building and hardstanding, the raising of site levels, in-channel works, provision of new rising main, other ancillary buildings, the creation of an access road on lands within the King George V Playing Fields to serve the facility, landscaping and other ancillary works. Provision of a temporary working area on lands within the King George V Playing Fields, the creation of a temporary access road from Mersey Street to facilitate construction traffic on lands to the rear of 1-35 Parkgate Gardens, the creation of a temporary footway adjacent to 88 Park Avenue and other ancillary development and landscaping restoration works.	14-Nov-23	11-Jun-24	Under Consideration
5	LA04/2024/0015/F	Major	Lands at Cabin Hill, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4	Erection of 53 residential units (including 43 dwellings and 10 apartments) including creation of access, internal roads, landscaping and associated works (amended description and plans).	22-Dec-23	19-Jul-24	Under Consideration
6	LA04/2024/0570/F	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent property 37-39 Summerhill Park, Belfast.	Change of use of from hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration

7	LA04/2024/0569/O	Major	Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castlevue Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and Summerhill Park (nos. 37 & 39) and rear of 160 Barnetts Road, Belfast (amended address)	Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C3) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C1), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castlevue Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping.	04-Apr-24	31-Oct-24	Under Consideration
8	LA04/2024/0910/F	Major	70 whitewell Road, Newtownabbey, BT36 7ES Site at Hazelwood Integrated College	Redevelopment of Hazelwood Integrated College to include demolition of existing building and development of new school campus, new sports pitch, outdoor play areas, car parking, hard and soft landscaping and retention and refurbishment of the Listed Building (Graymount House) and other associated site works including a temporary mobile village during the construction process.	23-May-24	19-Dec-24	Under Consideration
9	LA04/2024/1121/F	Major	The Kings Hall And RUAS Site South Of Upper Lisburn Road/Balmoral Avenue West Of Harberton Park And North-east Of Balmoral Golf Club Belfast BT9 6GW	Vary of condition 6 of planning application LA04/2020/0747/F to extend timing of works from 3 years to 5 to accommodate design changes to elevations and vary of condition 7 of planning application LA04/2020/0747/F to accommodate design changes to the roof.	26-Jun-24	22-Jan-25	Under Consideration
10	LA04/2024/1836/F	Major	Lands between Ballygomartin Road and Upper Whiterock Road and to the west (rear) of Moyard Parade and New Barnsley Crescent, Belfast Co. Antrim BT13 3QZ	Proposed development of new walking trails linking Black Mountain Shared Space Project building (approved under LA04/2022/0853/F) on the Ballygomartin Road with the Upper Whiterock Road and Moyard Parade. Proposal to include gated accesses, stockproof fencing, seated areas, information signage, landscaping and associated site works.	25-Nov-24	23-Jun-25	Under Consideration
Page 88 12	LA04/2024/2024/RM	Major	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	41no. retirement living apartments at Plot 6, parking and landscaping in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	18-Dec-24	16-Jul-25	Under Consideration
	LA04/2024/2026/RM	Major	Royal Ulster Agricultural Society the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6GW	Multi Storey Car Park with ground floor units for local retail uses, restaurant and cafe uses, leisure and gym facilities at Plot 8, new public realm and amenity open space including a central plaza in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	29-Nov-24	27-Jun-25	Under Consideration
13	LA04/2024/2077/F	Major	Adelaide Business Centre 2-6 Apollo Road, Belfast, BT12 6HP	Proposed change of use from office space (B1) and storage or distribution (B4) to Bowling Alley, Restaurant, Indoor Golf, Children's Soft Play, VR Zone & Amusements, Smoking Area, Car Parking and Associated Site Works. Proposal includes changes to elevations. (Change to Description).	29-Jan-25	27-Aug-25	Under Consideration
14	LA04/2024/2145/F	Major	Lands at North Foreshore / Giant's Park Dargan Road, Belfast, BT3 9LZ	Creation of a new Adventure Park comprising a community / visitor hub building including café, creche, flexible exhibition / community space, ancillary office space and maintenance yard. Development includes community gardens, bmx track, crazy golf, dog park, walking/running/cycle paths, outdoor amphitheatre, bio diversity zones, and recreational facilities. Associated landscaping and infrastructure (drainage, lighting, car / coach parking, WC block etc).	15-Jan-25	13-Aug-25	Under Consideration

Page 899	15	LA04/2025/0012/F	Major	Lands at the Waterworks Park, located off the Cavehill Road; and lands at Alexandra Park, located between Castleton Gardens and Deacon Street; extending along Castleton Gardens and Camberwell Terrace to the road junction approximately 30 metres to the north west of 347 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 2HF	Refurbishment and safety work to the Waterworks upper and lower reservoirs, and Alexandra Park Lake reservoir, to be complemented with wider environmental, landscape and connectivity improvements. The reservoir works comprise of a new overflow structure with reinforcement and protection of the return embankment parallel to the by-wash channel at Waterworks Upper reservoir. Repairs to the upstream face of Waterworks Lower reservoir with the addition of wetland planting to reduce the overall capacity of the reservoir. Removal of an existing parapet wall and embankment reinforcement at the Alexandra Park Lake reservoir. Improvements at Waterworks Park comprise the demolition of the existing Waterworks Bothy and replacement with a new building to include public toilets, Changing facilities, multi-purpose community room and kitchenette. Extension to existing Cavehill Road gatehouse building. Entrance improvements, new events space including multipurpose decking; resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; a dog park; replacement platforms and viewing area. New 3-on-3 basketball court; replacement surface to existing small sided 3G pitch; and upgrades to existing Queen Mary's playground. Improvements at Alexandra Park include the resurfacing of footways; new pedestrian lighting along key routes; new reinforced grass event space; new lake viewing area; new public toilets and changing places; entrance improvements. 2no existing bridges replaced; new pedestrian entrance; reimagined peace wall; new multi-sport synthetic surface with cover; and upgrades to existing play parks. Streetscape improvements along Camberwell Terrace and Castleton Gardens include resurfacing of footways with new kerbs; resurfaced carriageways and new tactile paving at pedestrian crossings; and all associated works.	20-Dec-24	18-Jul-25	Under Consideration
		LA04/2024/2134/F	Major	Site of the former Dunmurry Cricket Club, Ashley Park, Dunmurry, Belfast BT17 0QQ, located north of 1-10 Ashley Park and south of 1-20 Areema Grove and Areema Drive, Dunmurry.	Mixed use scheme for new community recreational facilities, including basketball court, parkland and residential development comprising 40no social/affordable housing units with landscaping and associated works.	21-Dec-24	19-Jul-25	Under Consideration
	17	LA04/2025/0088/F	Major	Lands adjacent and south west of Monagh By-pass, north west of Nos. 17, 19 and 22 Black Ridge Gardens and c.150 metres south east of Nos. 38 to 70 (evens) Black Ridge View (part of the wider Glenmona mixed-use development), Belfast	Proposed mixed use development (in lieu of the previously approved employment zone under LA04/2020/0804/F) comprising 36 no. Category 1 (over 55's) social housing apartments and 7 no. Class B1/B2 Business/Light Industrial Units. Development includes 2 no. access points, car parking, landscaping and all associated site works	17-Feb-25	15-Sep-25	Under Consideration
	18	LA04/2025/0184/O	Major	38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, Belfast, BT9 6AA	Mixed-use development comprising Use Class B1 (c): Business, Research & Development and Use Class, D1: Community and Cultural Uses, including landscaping, parking, and servicing.	10-Feb-25	08-Sep-25	Under Consideration
	19	LA04/2025/0242/F	Major	2 - 10 Botanic Avenue, Belfast, BT7 1JG	Erection of hotel (164 beds) including ground floor bar / restaurant; proposed heights of 8 storeys (c. 26.8m to parapet) at Donegall Pass, reducing to 5 storeys at Botanic Avenue and 4 storeys at Ratcliffe Street; and associated works including demolition of existing building	13-Feb-25	11-Sep-25	Under Consideration
	20	LA04/2025/0974/F	Major	Site to the south of the former Knockbreda High School. Lands bounded by the A55 Upper Knockbreda Road to the south and south-east, Wynchurch Road to the north-east, Knockbreda Primary School to the north and Knockbreda Park to the west.	Development of a new primary school building for Forge Integrated Primary School. including development of a nursery unit, hard and soft play areas, landscaping, car parking, internal drop-off areas and new access arrangements onto the A55 Knockbreda Road via a new signalised junction; demolition of no. 138a Knockbreda Park and associated site works	04-Jun-25	31-Dec-25	Under Consideration

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Planning Applications Discussed at Committee Between 01 Apr 2019 and 05 Aug 2025

Decision Description		Totals
		23
Consent Granted		0
Consent Refused		0
Permission Granted		4
Permission Refused		0
Total		27

Application No.	Location	Proposal	Category	Date Valid	Statutory Target Date	Statutory Target Weeks	Current number of weeks	Committee Date	Weeks between Valid date and Comm date	Weeks Since Committee	Previous Projected Decision Date	New Non-Statutory Target Date	Reason decision not issued
LA04/2022/2059/F	Lands south of 56 Highcairn Drive Belfast BT13 3RU Site located at junction between Highcairn Drive and Dunboyne Park Belfast.	Proposed Social Housing Development Comprising of 12 no. 3p/2b semi-detached dwelling houses with incurtilage parking and associated site works. (amended description and site location plan)	LOC	04-Nov-22	17/02/2023	15	143	29/06/2023	33	109	N/A	31/08/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - land ownership issues on the applicant's side
LA04/2020/1858/F	Hillview Retail Park Crumlin Road Belfast.	Proposed residential development of 18 no. social housing units, comprising two terraces. Development includes associated car parking, gardens, landscaping, site access and all other site works. (amended plans uploaded to the Planning Portal on the 5th April 2023 that revise the proposed access and road layout, including the introduction of a traffic island).	LOC	08-Jan-21	23/04/2021	15	238	14/11/2023	148	90	N/A	31/08/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - delayed due to land ownership issues on the applicant's side. Issues recently resolved and s76 agreement recently signed; decision expected to be issued shortly

LA04/2021/2016/F	21-29 Corporation Street & 18-24 Tomb Street Belfast.	Demolition of existing multi-storey car park and the erection of 298no. build for rent apartments (19 storey) including ground floor commercial unit (A1/A2), car/cycle parking provision along with associated development. (Further information received).	MAJ	26-Aug-21	09/12/2021	30	205	16/01/2024	124	81	N/A	31/08/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - expected that outstanding issues around wording of agreement have now been resolved and that s76 agreement will be signed shortly
LA04/2020/2105/F	1-5 Gaffikin Street Belfast BT12 5FH	Residential development comprising 55no. apartments comprising 12 no social, and 43 no private apartments and associated site works.	MAJ	21-Oct-20	03/02/2021	30	249	19/03/2024	177	72			Permission Granted

LA04/2024/0483/F	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Proposed change of use from Office (B1) and restaurant (Sui Generis) to Hotel comprising of 88 no. bedrooms, two storey rooftop extension, restaurant and bar offerings, gym facilities, including new dormer windows on roof, internal and external refurbishment and alterations, and all associated site works.	MAJ	19-Mar-24	02/07/2024	30	72	15/10/2024	30	42	N/A	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - issues to be resolved on the applicant's side regarding clauses
Page 03 LA04/2024/0480/D CA	34-44 Bedford Street and 6 Clarence Street, Belfast	Part demolition of existing buildings (stripping back of roof, shopfront and other external alterations to facilitate change of use and extension of buildings to hotel use.	LOC	29-Mar-24	12/07/2024	15	70	15/10/2024	28	42	N/A	Unknown	See above
LA04/2024/0393/F	ECIT Building Queen's Road, Queen's Island, Belfast, BT3 9DT	Proposed 5 storey extension to the East of the ECIT Building (Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology), and 3 storey extension to the West, to provide additional research and development space with associated landscaping and site works	MAJ	21-Mar-24	04/07/2024	30	71	12/11/2024	33	38	N/A	31/08/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - s76 signed following recent receipt of satisfactory Travel Plan from applicant. Decision expected to be issued shortly

LA04/2024/0369/F	Lands at Former Monarch Laundry site, and Broadway Hall Site, No's 451 - 457 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 6HD.	Proposed Specialist Nursing and Residential Care Facility comprising approximately 158 no. beds, day/dining rooms, treatment rooms, staff rooms, office/store rooms, including car parking provision, cycle parking, refuse storage, landscaping, and associated site and access works.	MAJ	08-Feb-24	23/05/2024	30	77	12/11/2024	39	38	N/A	31/10/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreeemen and new contamination issues - development commenced without planning permission and updated contaminated land surveys required from applicant
LA04/2023/2557/F	Lands East of Meadowhill, North of Glencolin Court, North and East of Glencolin Rise, East of Glencolin Grove, North and West of Glen Road Rise, and North of Glen Road Grove. Belfast.	260 no. dwellings, children's play area and other ancillary and associated works.	MAJ	24-Feb-23	09/06/2023	30	127	10/12/2024	93	34	N/A	Unknown	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - applicant unable to agree clauses
LA04/2024/0754/F	Lands immediately north and south of existing film studios, north of Dargan Road (within wider Belfast City Council lands known at North Foreshore/Giants Park), Belfast.	Retrospective application for the construction of a landscaped earth mound, new fencing, the reconfiguration of internal access arrangements to provide a new turning head, and associated site works. (Amended description and plans)	LOC	26-Apr-24	09/08/2024	15	66	21/01/2025	38	28			Permission Granted

LA04/2024/0058/F	68 Fortwilliam Park, Belfast BT15 4AS	Demolition of existing 31 no. bed private nursing home and erection of 20 no. sheltered housing units (3 storey building) for the elderly; warden accommodation; communal facilities; landscaping; car parking and site works.	LOC	20-Dec-23	03/04/2024	15	84	13/05/2025	72	12	N/A	31/08/2025	Delegated authority given to resolve final response fom Waste Management. This is ongoing and expected to be resolved shortly
LA04/2023/4543/F	885 Shore Road, Belfast, BT36 7DH	Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting.	LOC	01-Feb-24	16/05/2024	15	78	17/06/2025	71	7	N/A		Outstanding consultations from DAERA NIEA and SES
LA04/2024/0095/F	3 Broadway Link, Belfast, BT12 6EX	Change of use from Dwelling to Short term let (retrospective)	LOC	17-Jan-24	01/05/2024	15	80	17/06/2025	73	7	N/A	N/A	Deferred for assesment of potential reasons for refusal

LA04/2024/1036/F	Lands to the east of the River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club and approximately 120 metres to the east of Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally Ave, Belfast BT8 7YA.	Lagan Gateway Phase 2 – Proposed greenway connection extending between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park. Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk (approximately 85m long); landscaping works, new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and all associated works	LOC	10-May-24	23/08/2024	15	64	17/06/2025	57	7	N/A	30/09/2025	Outstanding consultation from DAERA
LA04/2024/0267/F	11 Friendly Way, Belfast, BT7 2DU	Change of Use from Dwelling to 6no bed/6person HMO (amended description)	LOC	15-Feb-24	30/05/2024	15	76	17/06/2025	69	7	N/A	31/08/2025	June Committee resolved to delegate authority to refuse, decision notice being drafted

LA04/2024/0211/F	Existing Football Stadium The Oval Parkgate Drive Belfast BT4 1EW.	Redevelopment of the existing stadium by way of demolition of both existing stands and construction of two new spectator stands with reconfiguration of existing standing terracing at goal ends, new turnstiles and associated siteworks including new floodlighting, additional car parking and improved circulation routes to provide an overall capacity for 6000 spectators on site.	MAJ	15-Mar-24	28/06/2024	30	72	17/06/2025	65	7			Permission Granted
LA04/2024/1466/F	41 Rosetta Road, Belfast, BT6 0LR	Ground floor extension and alterations to provide 1 No. retail unit. Two storey rear extension. Rear dormer. Change of use of first & second floor level & part of ground floor level to 6 bed / 6 person HMO (amended description and plans).	LOC	30-Aug-24	13/12/2024	15	48	17/06/2025	41	7	N/A	N/A	Deferred for Site Visit
LA04/2024/1654/F	432 Falls Road, Belfast, BT12 6EN	Change of use from a 7-bedroom dwelling house (C1) to a 7 bed/ 9 person House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis)	LOC	21-Oct-24	03/02/2025	15	41	17/06/2025	34	7	N/A	N/A	Deferred for Site Visit

LA04/2024/1761/R M	Land forming Plot 9 of the Kings Hall development as approved by LA04/2020/0845/O.	Application for approval of reserved matters application for a medical facility in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details	MAJ	15-Oct-24	28/01/2025	30	42	17/06/2025	35	7	N/A	30/09/2025	Resolving condition issues.
LA04/2024/1865/O	Land between No 22 Squires View and Nos 57 & 59 Squires Hill Road, Belfast.	3no. detached dwellings part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended plans)	LOC	28-Oct-24	10/02/2025	15	40	17/06/2025	33	7	N/A	N/A	Deferred for Site Visit
Page 98 LA04/2024/1592/F	Marlborough House at no. 28-32 Victoria Street, Belfast and no. 8 and 10-12 Marlborough Street; 11 Prince's Street and 2-4 Prince's Court, Belfast, BT1 3GG	Residential development comprising the demolition of no. 8 Marlborough Street, partial demolition of existing Marlborough House, and the refurbishment of existing Listed Building (Princes Court) (3 storeys), for the erection of 103 no. apartments (mix of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3 bed units) (8 storeys), with provision of private amenity, and internal and external communal amenity spaces; and associated site and infrastructure works. (amended description)	MAJ	20-Sep-24	03/01/2025	30	45	17/06/2025	38	7	N/A	30/09/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - clauses currently being finalised

LA04/2024/1584/F	21 Skegoneill Avenue, Belfast, BT15 3JP	Subdivision of 6No. bed shared dwelling to provide 3No. self contained flats, with demolition of single storey rear return and erection of two storey rear extension to provide 1no self contained flat.	LOC	14-Oct-24	27/01/2025	15	42	17/06/2025	35	7			Permission Granted
LA04/2025/0122/F	Lands Between 14 and 16 Lancedean Road, Belfast, BT6 9QP	Demolition of 4 no garages and erection of 2 no. semi-detached dwellings, part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended description) (additional plans)	LOC	28-Jan-25	13/05/2025	15	27	17/06/2025	20	7	N/A	N/A	Deferred for Site Visit
LA04/2025/0399/F	Lands at Plot 4 of Kings Hall Healthcare Village, west of 25 Harberton Park and north of 27 Harberton Crescent	Additional 3 car parking spaces and additional landscaping to serve Plot 4 of Kings Hall development (planning permission ref: LA04/2022/0311/F)	LOC	03-Apr-25	17/07/2025	15	17	17/06/2025	10	7	N/A	31/08/2025	Finalising conditions before issuing.

LA04/2025/0535/F	Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane, Glanaulin, 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School Belfast	Variation of conditions 1, 2, ,3, 4 ,5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F to facilitate removal of 31 previously approved dwellings and retaining structure along northern boundary of site adjacent to Upper Springfield Road. Retention of existing sloping ground levels and landscaping at this location.	MAJ	27-May-25	09/09/2025	30	10	17/06/2025	3	7	N/A	30/09/2025	Awaiting final DFI Roads response and conclusion of S77 agreement (amendment to S76 agreement)
LA04/2024/2044/F	Lands at 39 Corporation Street, Belfast, BT1 3BA	Erection of 895 room Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) across 9-20 storey building blocks with communal facilities, internal and external communal amenity space including landscaped courtyard and roof terraces and ancillary accommodation. With additional use outside term time (no more than 50% of the rooms) as short-term let accommodation and (no more than 50% of the rooms) accommodation for use by further or higher education institutions	MAJ	05-Dec-24	20/03/2025	30	34	17/06/2025	27	7	N/A	30/09/2025	Awaiting Section 76 Agreement - negotiations around clauses remains ongoing

LA04/2022/1046/F	18 Annadale Avenue Belfast BT7 3JH	Proposed demolition of existing building and construction of a residential development consisting of 14 No. units (9 No. apartments within a three storey building and 5 No. two storey terraced dwellings) with associated landscaping and car parking (amended description).	LOC	04-May-22	17/08/2022	15	169	17/06/2025	162	7	N/A	N/A	Deferred so that the Commiitee has more time to consider latest restricted viability information
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Subject:	Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme (CSP) 2025/26
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community Provision

Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

☐

No

☒

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

Insert number

☐

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

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

☐
☐
☐
☐

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

☒

No

☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The main purpose of this report is; • Inform Members that Council has received the Letter of Offer for the Community Support Programme 2025/26 from the Department for Communities (DfC). The Department has provided an uplift of 9% across certain elements of the programme. • Seek agreement from members on the options to allocate the additional funding provided based on the detail provided in the report.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to: • Agree the preferred option relating to the Community Support General additional funding.(Table 2) • Agree the preferred option for the reprofiling of the budget for Advice and Tribunal services.(Table 3) • Agree the proposed additional funding allocation for: Community Support General, Advice Grant and Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension-Tribunal Representation.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	A report on the Letter of Offer received from the Department of Communities Department for Communities (DfC) Letter of Offer Community Support Programme 2024/25 was considered at the August meeting of the People and Communities Committee.
3.2	Members had asked that the following elements of the paper be referred to the August meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for consideration 1. Options relating to the Community Support General additional funding (outlined in Table 2) 2. Options for the reprofiling of the budget for Advice and Tribunal services (outlined in Table 3) 3. Note the proposed additional funding allocation for: Community Support General, Advice Grant, Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension-Tribunal Representation which are captured under points 1 and 2 above.
3.3	Members will be aware that the Department for Communities (DfC) provides an annual grant to Council through its Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer. This funding provides an element of the budget towards Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Building grant, Summer Scheme Grant as well as Generalist Advice. It also provides 100% funding for Social Supermarkets.
3.4	Council received the CSP 2024/25 Letter of Offer from DfC on 13 June 2025. There is an increase to this year's funding across several new and existing elements.
	Additional Funding by CSP Heading
3.5	Table 1 illustrates the additional 9% uplift and available budgets under the relevant headings to be considered by SP & R.

Table 1

CSP Heading	Additional Funds 2025/26
1. Community Support General	£82,007.26
2. Advice Grant	£60,108.77
3. Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Tribunal Representation- Appeals	£6,960.79

3.6

Proposed Allocation of Additional Funds

It is proposed that additional funding for elements 1-3 should be allocated using the approaches outlined below. Further detail is provided in Appendices 1-3

1. Community Support General

3.7

Members are asked to consider and agree their preferred option for allocating the additional funding provided under the Community Support General heading (£82,007.26) as outlined in Table 2. Further detail on the organisations funded through Capacity and Revenue awards is provided in Appendix 1

Table 2

Option	Description	Pro	Con
1	Allocate all the additional funding £82,007.26 to the 43 Capacity funded groups. Each group will receive a non-recurrent payment of £1,907.15	Capacity grant funding enables the provision of training, development and support programmes provided by 43 organisations to smaller organisations within communities. The funding contributes to staff and programme delivery running costs. As employers, Capacity funded groups have seen an increase in staff related costs this past year particularly in relation to National Insurance Contributions. They have also seen an increase to the costs running costs of their programmes. At Committee in March 2025, members agreed to double the funding allocation received by Revenue funded groups from a maximum of £20,629 in 2024/25 to £41,258 2025/26. Capacity funded organisations did not receive an uplift, this option would provide an increase in funding to these organisations.	Revenue organisations do not have access to these additional funds.
2	Allocate the funding to Revenue and Capacity funded groups. 130 organisations will receive a non-recurrent	Revenue and Capacity organisations will receive additional funding to meet their running costs and provide services.	This option does not take into account the fact that revenue funded groups have already received a significant uplift for 25/26.

		payment of £630.83		
	3	Use the funding to offset the council allocation that was used to double the revenue awards in 25/26.	This would offset the significant council investment that was made to double revenue awards in 25/26.	This option would not provide any additional support to funded organisations.
3.8	Appendix 1 provides a revised allocation for Capacity and Revenue based on options 1 and 2 above.			
3.9	Members will be aware that this is the final year of awards of Capacity and Revenue Grants 2023-2026 in its current form. An open call for our new Large Grant programme 2026-2029 was launched on 28 July.			
	<i>2. Advice Grant and Provision for Appeals.</i>			
3.10	Members will recall the Council agreed to provide £270,000 on a recurrent basis for the provision of an Appeals and Tribunal Service in the City. At Council in July, members agreed to extend the provision of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) provided by Ligoniel Improvement Association on behalf of the Belfast Advice Group (BAG) to the end of March 2026. Members also agreed that future services will be procured and for Officers to begin the process with the contract awarded and provider in place for April 2026.			
3.11	This year DfC provided an allocation of £84,302.81 towards the provision of Appeals and Tribunal Services. Including Council's contribution of £270,000 the total available budget is £354,302.81. BCTS requested £242,000 which was agreed by Council in July. Thus, there is a potential underspend in the budget of £112, 302.81.			
3.12	Funding relating to Advice and Appeals is a specific element of the Community Support Programme and ringfenced for the provision of related services. The review of Advice services which council completed in December 23 highlighted the rising delivery and staffing costs experienced by advice organisations, this additional funding will support organisations to address these issues. Members may also wish that a consultation on the DfC regional review of advice services opened on 11 th August, further detail on this will be presented to P&C committee at a later date. Members are asked to consider the reprofiling of the budget and agree a preferred option presented in Table 3 below.			
	Table 3			
	Option	Description	Pro	Con
	1	Redistribute the £112,302.81 providing an uplift for Generalist Advice and Appeals to the five area-based Advice Consortia using Council's allocation model. (Table 4 below)	Council currently funds 5 Area based Advice consortia that includes 14 independent advice providers in 19 locations and additional cover via extensive outreach provision. Providers have expressed concerns regarding the growing costs relating to staff such as National Insurance Contributions and operating overheads.	The demand for services and complexity of dealing with multiple needs is growing. This greatly impacts on the level of service provision. The additional funding is short-term for 2025/26 on a non-recurrent basis. Next year the provision may return to its current level thus the service capacity of the organisations will

		Staff retention has posed a significant problem for advice providers. Due to short-term contracts and lower salary compared to other agencies such as Housing Associations Providers have also discussed the growing need for the provision of services that meet the needs of more complex cases and also of a growing population who do not have English as a first language. An additional non-recurrent allocation for this year will provide the Advice providers with sufficient resources to maintain their current level of staff, meet increased overheads and provide additional resources to meet the growing demand for services on complex cases as well as for people who require additional support such as translation services.	reduce. Providing funding for 1 may lead to a higher dependency of the providers on Council funding and of people on the service. A demand that may be inflated with the provision of additional support this year. The providers may use some funding to increase its staff salaries and off set NIC. This increase may lead to an unmanageable cost next year
2	Redistribute the £112,302.81 providing an uplift for Generalist Advice and Appeals to the five area-based Advice Consortia using Council's allocation model. (Table 4 below) up to £85,302.81. and allocating the remaining £27,000 towards the procurement process ensuring that contingencies are in place to effectively transition from current funding to contracted service provision e.g. costs to transfer service user records and systems from the	As Above This is the final year of the current arrangement for the Tribunal Service. From April 2026 the service will be provided by a contracted organisation following a procurement process. It is envisaged that the provider will be secured by December 2026. The current provider has extensive case records and systems in place for maintaining the records. The provider is also dealing with an extensive caseload that	As Above It is £27,000 that can be used for direct service provision.

		current to the new provider. Grant permission to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to make further allocations to the generalist advice services should the budget provision of up to £27,000 not be used.	may take longer to complete beyond the 31March 2026. This allocation will provide Council with an opportunity to manage the transition from the current funding arrangements to the new contract. It may cover items such as transfer of Casefiles and systems, current caseloads, issues relating to GDPR.																															
3.13	In relation to the Advice Grant, DfC has provided an uplift of £60,108.77 for the provision of Generalist Advice Services. Members are asked to allocate the uplift based on Council's current advice grant funding model.																																	
3.14	Table 4 below presents the level of additional funding each Area Based Advice Consortia will receive this year for the uplift and budget reprofile options. The additional funding is non-recurrent.																																	
	Table 4 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Area Consortium</th><th>Council's Funding Allocation Model</th><th>Advice Grant Uplift</th><th>Additional Budget Reprofile Option 1</th><th>Additional Budget Reprofile Option 2</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Central</td><td>9%</td><td>£5,381.69</td><td>£9,953.06</td><td>£7,560.13</td></tr> <tr> <td>East</td><td>14%</td><td>£8,628.51</td><td>£16,229.47</td><td>£12,327.66</td></tr> <tr> <td>North</td><td>26%</td><td>£15,556.90</td><td>£29,063.05</td><td>£22,075.67</td></tr> <tr> <td>South</td><td>15%</td><td>£9,259.96</td><td>£17,299.22</td><td>£13,140.11</td></tr> <tr> <td>West</td><td>35%</td><td>£21,281.71</td><td>£39,752.01</td><td>£30,199.34</td></tr> </tbody> </table>				Area Consortium	Council's Funding Allocation Model	Advice Grant Uplift	Additional Budget Reprofile Option 1	Additional Budget Reprofile Option 2	Central	9%	£5,381.69	£9,953.06	£7,560.13	East	14%	£8,628.51	£16,229.47	£12,327.66	North	26%	£15,556.90	£29,063.05	£22,075.67	South	15%	£9,259.96	£17,299.22	£13,140.11	West	35%	£21,281.71	£39,752.01	£30,199.34
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3.15	Appendix 2 provides details of the revised allocation for each Consortium based on uplift plus Options 1 and 2.																																	
	<i>3. Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Tribunal Representation- Appeals</i>																																	
3.16	Members are asked to note the increase of £6,960.79 towards the provision of tribunal and appeals and agree the allocation be used for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service.																																	
3.17	<u>Financial Implications</u> All awards listed in the appendices can be made in line with existing budgets for 2025/26 . Members should note that the Capacity and Revenue awards are multi annual awards from 23/26.																																	
3.18	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment</u> This will be considered throughout, and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/good relations and rural needs considerations.																																	
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached																																	
	Appendix 1: Options for Capacity and Revenue Funded Groups Awards 2025/26 Appendix 2: Allocation Approach for Advice & Tribunal Service Awards.																																	

Appendix 1

Capacity and Revenue Funded Groups Awards 2025/26

Capacity Funded Organisations

Organisation	Grant Allocation	Option 1 Additional £1,907.15 per group	Option 2 Additional £630.83 Per Group
All Nations Ministries	£48,931.00	£ 50,838.16	£ 49,534.83
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises	£22,541.00	£ 24,448.16	£ 23,144.83
Ashton Community Trust	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Ballynafeigh Community Development Association	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Belfast Interface Project. (BIP)	£50,420.00	£ 52,327.16	£ 51,023.83
Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre	£47,275.00	£ 49,182.16	£ 47,878.83
Boys & Girls Clubs	£49,876.00	£ 51,783.16	£ 50,479.83
Cara-Friend	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Charter NI	£45,138.00	£ 47,045.16	£ 45,741.83
Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	£45,818.34	£ 47,725.50	£ 46,422.17
Colin Neighbourhood Partnership	£36,026.54	£ 37,933.70	£ 36,630.37
Conradh Na Gaeilge	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
East Belfast Community Development Agency	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Engage With Age	£31,143.00	£ 33,050.16	£ 31,746.83
Falls Community Council	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Falls Partnership Initiative	£40,629.00	£ 42,536.16	£ 41,232.83
Fóram na nÓg	£44,583.72	£ 46,490.88	£ 45,187.55
Greater Shankill Community Council	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Horn Of Africa People's Aid Northern Ireland (HAPANI)	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Lenadoon community forum	£34,077.00	£ 35,984.16	£ 34,680.83
Ligoniel Improvement Association	£42,375.64	£ 44,282.80	£ 42,979.47
Loughview Community Action Partnership (LCAP)	£10,329.00	£ 12,236.16	£ 10,932.83
Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG)	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Market Development Association	£31,729.00	£ 33,636.16	£ 32,332.83
Northern Ireland Youth Forum	£20,529.00	£ 22,436.16	£ 21,132.83
Poleglass Community Association @ Sally Gardens	£49,099.00	£ 51,006.16	£ 49,702.83
Roden Street Community Development Group	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Sailortown Regeneration Group	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Short Strand Community Forum	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Small Steps	£50,464.59	£ 52,371.75	£ 51,068.42
South Belfast Partnership Board	£32,088.42	£ 33,995.58	£ 32,692.25
Southcity Resource And Development Centre.	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
St James Forum	£46,629.00	£ 48,536.16	£ 47,232.83
Taughmonagh Community Forum Ltd	£50,029.00	£ 51,936.16	£ 50,632.83
TechDesk CIC	£48,129.00	£ 50,036.16	£ 48,732.83

The HUBB Community Development Resource Centre	£29,629.00	£ 31,536.16	£ 30,232.83
The West Belfast Partnership Board	£50,229.00	£ 52,136.16	£ 50,832.83
Training for Women Network	£46,444.00	£ 48,351.16	£ 47,047.83
University Of Atypical For Arts And Disability	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Upper Springfield Resource Centre	£38,561.76	£ 40,468.92	£ 39,165.59
Volunteer Now	£48,820.28	£ 50,727.44	£ 49,424.11
Whiterock Children's Centre/Whiterock Creche Association	£21,379.00	£ 23,286.16	£ 21,982.83
Women's Resource And Development Agency	£50,629.00	£ 52,536.16	£ 51,232.83
Total	£1,872,358.29	£1,954,366.17	£1,898,322.98

Revenue Funded Organisations

Organisation	Grant Allocation 2025/26	Option 2 Additional £630.83 Per Group
African And Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland (Acsoni)	£ 31,458.00	£ 32,088.83
An Droichead	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Annadale & Haywood Resident Association	£ 28,150.80	£ 28,781.63
Ardmonagh Family & Community Group	£ 27,258.00	£ 27,888.83
Ardoyne Association	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Arts For All	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Ballymac Friendship Trust	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Ballysillan Community Forum	£ 33,858.00	£ 34,488.83
Belfast Activity Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Belfast South Community Resources	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Belvoir Community Hub	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Belvoir Players Amateur Dramatic Society	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Benview community Centre	£ 41,246.00	£ 41,876.83
BLACKIE RIVER COMMUNITY GROUPS	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Bloomfield Community Association	£ 35,993.22	£ 36,624.05
Brassneck Youth	£ 32,686.00	£ 33,316.83
Cancer Lifeline	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Chinese Welfare Association NI	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
City Life Projects	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Concerned Residents Of Upper Ardoyne (CRUA)	£ 12,958.00	£ 13,588.83
Conway Youth Centre	£ 23,058.00	£ 23,688.83
Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Cumann Chluain Árd	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Divis Joint Development Committee	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Donegall Pass Community Forum	£ 41,074.86	£ 41,705.69

EastSide Partnership	£ 39,018.00	£ 39,648.83
Falls Residents Associations	£ 16,711.20	£ 17,342.03
Falls Women's Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Feile An Phobail	£ 37,258.00	£ 37,888.83
Footprints Womens Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
FORTHSPRING INTER COMMUNITY GROUP	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
GEMS Northern Ireland Limited	£ 38,258.00	£ 38,888.83
Glen Community Parent Youth Group	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Glenbank Community Association	£ 28,258.00	£ 28,888.83
GLENCAIRN RESIDENTS GROUP	£ 15,258.00	£ 15,888.83
Glencolin Residents Association	£ 13,496.00	£ 14,126.83
Glór na Móna	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Grace Women's Development Limited	£ 33,611.92	£ 34,242.75
Greater Turf Lodge Residents' Association	£ 13,785.68	£ 14,416.51
Greater Village Regeneration Trust - TREE Project	£ 37,218.00	£ 37,848.83
Greenway Women's Group	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Hannahstown Community Association	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Holy Trinity Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Indian Community Centre (Belfast) Ltd	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Ionad Uíbh Eachach	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Kids Together Belfast	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Lagan Village Youth And Community Group	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Lagmore Community Forum	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
LIGONIEL FAMILY CENTRE	£ 17,418.00	£ 18,048.83
Lower Oldpark Community Association	£ 30,548.42	£ 31,179.25
Lower Shankill Community Association	£ 7,258.00	£ 7,888.83
Manor Street Cliftonville Community Group	£ 27,258.00	£ 27,888.83
Marrowbone Community Association	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
MIDLAND SOCIAL & RECREATIONAL ASSOCIATION	£ 26,058.00	£ 26,688.83
Mornington Community Project	£ 30,128.00	£ 30,758.83
MOUNT EAGLES COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION	£ 32,358.00	£ 32,988.83
NBWISP (North Belfast Womens' Initiative & Support Project)	£ 31,682.00	£ 32,312.83
Newstart Education Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Oasis Caring In Action Ltd	£ 38,258.00	£ 38,888.83
PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Raidió Fáilte Teo	£ 40,990.00	£ 41,620.83
SCOIL NA FUISEOIGE	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Shankill Women's Centre	£ 27,258.00	£ 27,888.83
Small Wonders Childcare	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Solas	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Spectrum Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Springfield Charitable Association Ltd	£ 7,258.00	£ 7,888.83
St Comgalls	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83

Star Neighbourhood Centre	£ 33,658.00	£ 34,288.83
Suicide Awareness & Support Group	£ 40,470.00	£ 41,100.83
Sunningdale Community Centre	£ 7,258.00	£ 7,888.83
Tackling Awareness Of Mental Health Issues (TAMHI)	£ 7,258.00	£ 7,888.83
TAGIT T/A Tullycarnet Boxing Club	£ 7,258.00	£ 7,888.83
Tar Anall	£ 23,158.00	£ 23,788.83
TAR ISTEACH	£ 39,912.00	£ 40,542.83
The Parent Rooms	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
The Vine Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Upper Andersonstown Community Forum	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Upper Springfield Development Trust: Newhill Youth & Community Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Walkway Community Association	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Wandsworth Community Association	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Whiterock Westrock Residents Association	£ 7,258.00	£ 7,888.83
Willowfield Parish Community Association	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
Windsor Women's Centre	£ 41,258.00	£ 41,888.83
WOMEN'STEC	£ 19,258.00	£ 19,888.83
York Road Civil Defence Management Committee	£ 35,858.00	£ 36,488.83
Total	£ 2,975,042.10	£ 3,029,924.31

Appendix 2

Allocation Approach for Advice, Tribunal Service and Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension (Face to Face) and Awards.

Generalist Advice Funding

Advice Funding 2025/26 - Advice Consortia Allocation

Consortia and Members	Generalist Advice 2024/25 Allocation Including CSP Uplift	Option 1 Budget Reprofile £112,302.81	Option 2 Budget Reprofile £85,302.81
Central Consortium: (Total)	£101,009.34	£110,962.40	£108,569.47
- Advice Space (Lead) - Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre	£70,706.54 £30,302.80	£77,673.68 £33,288.72	£75,998.63 £32,570.84
East Consortium: (Total)	£164,705.95	£180,935.42	£177,033.30
- Advice Space (Lead) - East Belfast Independent Advice Centre	£82,352.98 £82,352.97	£90,467.71 £90,467.75	£88,516.65 £88,516.65
North Consortium: (Total)	£294,948.40	£324,001.45	£317,024.07
- The Vine Centre (Lead) - Ardoyne Association - Ballysillan Community Forum - Ligoniel Improvement Association - Tar Isteach - Advice Space	£114,727.91 £42,315.45 £21,041.67 £9,152.48 £26,998.72 £80,712.17	£126,028.85 £46,483.61 £23,114.32 £10,054.02 £29,658.16 £88,662.49	£123,314.82 £45,482.59 £22,616.55 £9,837.50 £20,019.47 £86,753.14
South Consortium: (Total)	£ 175,562.32	£192,861.54	£188,702.44
- Ballynafeigh Community Development Association (Lead) - South City Resource and Development Centre - Advice Space	£94,452.50 £70,751.63 £10,358.19	£103,759.48 £77,723.22 £11,378.84	£101,521.88 £76,047.10 £11,133.45
West Consortium: (Total)	£ 403,487.02	£443,245.04	£433,686.36
- Falls Community Council (Lead) - Advice Space (Suffolk & Andersonstown) - Advice Space (Shankill) - Advice Space (Falls) - Neighbourhood Development Association - Springfield Charitable Association - Upper Springfield Development Trust	£58,979.84 £62,920.64 £56,602.14 £39,872.73 £52,712.71 £72,293.89 £60,105.06	£64,791.48 £69,120.60 £62,179.50 £43,801.63 £57,906.81 £79,417.45 £66,027.58	£63,394.24 £67,630.00 £60,838.58 £42,857.03 £56,658.04 £77,704.79 £64,603.68

Total	£ 1,139,713.03	£1,252,015.84	£1,225,015.64

Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Tribunal Representation- Appeals

The total allocation received by Council from the CSP in relation to the WRME Tribunal Representation and Appeals goes directly to fund the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Services. It is proposed that this additional funding of £6,960.79 be used to support the Citywide Tribunal Service.



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	30U30 Northern Ireland Climate Change-Makers
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officers:	Debbie Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner

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

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
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1.1	To update members about an approach to Belfast City Council for support for the 30U30 (30 under 30) Northern Ireland Climate Change-Maker's programme. The programme is coordinated by the leading charity, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and their partner Podiem. The collaborative, cross sectoral initiative, featuring world-class speakers and experts, will be supported by organisations such as the Garfield Weston Foundation, Pinsent Masons, Coca Cola and Danske Bank (to name a few) with a request for local authority involvement being addressed through this approach to Belfast City Council.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	It is recommended that Committee agree the contribution of £8,750 plus VAT to the overall programme costs. • Whilst Belfast City Council's support represents a modest proportion of the overall budget (circa £100,000 in total) it will be crucial in making the initiative (the themes of which complement and supplement the Council's climate programme) a reality. • The Council's support will resource the launch along with 6 modules/events featuring world-class speakers/experts and 2 showcase events, all taking place from October 2025 – June 2026. • In supporting this initiative Council will be influencing reduction of the carbon footprint beyond Belfast.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Now entering its 4th cohort, the 30 under 30 initiative is a climate focused initiative where young leaders from Northern Ireland have the opportunity to take part in an international learning programme, led by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and Podiem. Following the culmination of an exceptionally successful programme in 2024-5 (supported by Belfast City Council) a new cohort of young leaders will be competitively selected for 2025-6 and there is a request to Belfast City Council to support the programme of activity they will undertake. Most of the 30U30 modules are being delivered in Belfast City Centre and the vast majority of the participants will either reside or work within the Belfast City Council footprint. The cohort will be diverse with a broad range of backgrounds, sectors and interest/expertise areas represented. Within the pilot programme over 55% of the group were female with a mix of those in education, employment and currently economically inactive.
3.2	Within the modular programme participants will learn from globally renowned thought leaders and exemplars across a range of relevant topics. These topics have been carefully crafted to create a cohort of leaders who will return to their fields of expertise with the tools to become planet positive change-makers in the short/long term. Speakers and facilitators from the previous cohorts included globally renowned individuals such as:

3.3	• Sir Jonathon Porritt CBE - Jonathon is an eminent writer, broadcaster and commentator on sustainable development. Co-Founder of Forum for the Future, he was formerly Director of Friends of the Earth; co-chair of the Green Party and a Trustee of WWF-UK. • Richard Shotton – a renowned thought-leader and the author of The Choice Factory, a best-selling book available in 15 languages, which explains how behavioural science can solve leadership challenges. • Professor Ian Robertson, Neuroscientist, Psychologist & Author. Currently co-director of the Global Brain Health Institute and Emeritus Professor at Trinity College Dublin, he is widely recognised as one of the world’s leading researchers in neuropsychology. • Alice Thompson, an international speaker and social business leader who co-founded Social Bite in Edinburgh and helped to establish ‘The Worlds Big Sleepout’ which took place in 52 cities around the world. • Gerry Hussey, Ireland’s leading health, wellbeing and performance coach, who has worked with many leading sports people and teams, and author of ‘Awaken Your Power Within’. • Philip Hesketh, an international authority on influence and persuasion, who has worked with clients such as the BBC, Nestle, Walt Disney, Nike, Microsoft and Bank of America among others. • René Carayol MBE who has worked with leaders such as Mikael Gorbachev, Nelson Mandela, Sir Richard Branson, Bill Clinton, and Kofi Annan, and authored the book ‘SPIKE’. He has been Chairman, CEO and MD of businesses and served on the boards of Marks and Spencer’s and Pepsi. He is an authority on inclusivity and leadership.
3.4	The programme includes an international element which will encourage and enable the NI climate change-makers to build relationships and collaborations with climate change-makers from other parts of the world through the 30 under 30 programme currently run by the North American Association for Environmental Education. Potential benefits to Belfast City Council The programme coordinators will ensure that Belfast City Council will be positioned as championing (along with the other partners) the creation and development of the next generation of local leaders who will lead work to address climate change in Northern Ireland. This will support the cities ambition, articulated in the Belfast Resilience Strategy, to “transition to a low-carbon economy in a generation”. It will also build on work undertaken by

3.5	the Council Climate Unit with young people through the Belfast Climate Commission and Council funded research on young people's perceptions of the climate crisis undertaken during COP26 in 2021. Should Council support the initiative the Climate Unit will explore opportunities to align with our existing climate programme and the work being undertaken with young leaders through Belfast Climate Commission. In supporting this programme, Belfast City Council will be going well beyond its own carbon footprint and direct activity, it is proactively inspiring and equipping those who have the ambition to transform industries (similar to Artemis and Responsible, both from Belfast) and create global solutions (for example Catagen, also from Belfast) to our most pressing climate and environmental challenges. In terms of profile, the Belfast City Council brand will be prominent on all of the initiative marketing material which will be launched to ensure mass awareness. The Council brand will also be highly visible at all of the modules (including the finale event) and a Council representative will be invited to participate in the press photos launching the event and at the finale event.
3.6	There is also an opportunity for a member of the Belfast City Council Climate team to present on how the city is playing its part in helping to avert a climate crisis. Previous cohorts have reported that hearing from BCC's Climate Commissioner was greatly beneficial. The cohort will feature some of NI's finest future leadership talent (including those from the local government sector), so this content will be very useful and relevant to the participants.
3.7	There is an opportunity for the Lord Mayor of Belfast to greet the group and hear how they are planning to create meaningful impact as a direct consequence of the programme. The Lord Mayor met with the 2024-5 cohort at City Hall as recently as 19th June 2025 and had the opportunity to address, both the cohort and a select audience of stakeholders for a lunchtime networking and pitching event. A short video of the Lord Mayor greeting the group as part of the pilot programme in 2021 is visible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3wl5qXyd48
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.8	£8,750 plus VAT which will be allocated from existing City and Organisational Strategy budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u>
3.9	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached

	None.
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Subject:	City Innovation programme update
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Mark McCann, City Innovation Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	
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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?
Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update Members on current City Innovation initiatives including the submission to the first phase of the Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayoral Challenge competition.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: 1. To note the Belfast Alleyways proposal has been submitted to Bloomberg Philanthropies and that a decision on whether we proceed to phase one is expected by the end of August. 2. To retrospectively approve Belfast City Council's inclusion in a joint bid to DSIT's Regulators Pioneer Fund to independently map mobile coverage in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. 3. To retrospectively approve letters of support to both Ulster University and Queen's Universities for two separate, independent, funding bids to the National Institute for Health and Care Research £50m funding call to tackle health inequalities. 4. To approve support for Ulster University and the Agile Ageing Alliance consortium bid to Horizon Europe's 'GenAI4EU' call to deliver a potential €5,000,000 project which would include a demonstrator in Belfast. 5. To note the date of the first event in the Belfast: Inclusive Futures series and that invitations have been issued to all Members. 6. To approve attendance by two officers to accompany the Belfast Innovation Commissioner to this year's Smart Cities World Congress to develop innovation funding and investment opportunities for the city. 7. To approve the participation of an officer from the City Innovation Office in the i30 Inclusive Innovation Medellin visit. Travel costs are included in the project funding
3.0	Main report
	Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge 2025
3.1	Following Member approval, Belfast City Council applied to Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayoral Challenge with a proposal <i>'to re-imagine Belfast's network of alleyways'</i> . This broad proposal was accepted and over the past few weeks officers have been involved in planning workshops with the Bloomberg team to prepare Belfast's submission for phase one funding by 15 August.
3.2	If this submission is approved by Bloomberg \$50,000 will then be made available to Council to work with local communities and stakeholder over September and October to develop the detailed \$1 million application to deliver a 24-month programme.
3.3	The work of this first phase will be engaging with communities and stakeholders on options delivery mechanisms for a future Belfast alleyway transformation programme. It will examine local demand, types of viable projects, and specifically at co-delivery models with communities and the community and voluntary sector that can be sustained over the long term. Members should note that this phase will not be identifying specific locations for projects. There will be a range of engagement mechanisms including at least five neighbourhood workshops across the city.

3.4	Members are asked to note the submission of the Belfast proposal and that a decision from Bloomberg on phase one is expected by the end of August. Details will follow at a future Committee.
3.5	DSIT's Regulators Pioneer Fund Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council invited Belfast City Council to be a supporting partner in a £1 million application by Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's (DSIT) Regulators' Pioneer Fund. The proposal is to map 4G/5G mobile coverage across all of Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland at a granular level to help identify coverage gaps within communities and explore opportunities to improve coverage and address digital exclusion.
3.6	The bid is being led by Caerphilly County Borough Council (on behalf of Welsh local authorities), with support from Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (on behalf of NI local authorities) and Glasgow City Council (on behalf of Scottish local authorities). If the bid is successful, the project will start in October 2025. No financial or resource commitment is required from Belfast City Council. Belfast City Council will have the opportunity to use the data to support its work and inform decision making.
3.7	Given the short deadline for submission over the summer months, Members are asked to retrospectively approve Belfast City Council's inclusion in the bid.
3.8	£50m call to tackle inequalities in cardiovascular disease The Council has been approached separately by both Ulster University's Centre for Digital healthcare Technologies (CDHT, and by Queen's University, seeking support for two funding bids to the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) £50m funding call¹ to tackle health inequalities.
3.9	Both proposals seek to develop and implement long-term change in cardiovascular disease outcomes, focusing on digital healthcare interventions, escalating community focused engagement and diet and wellbeing education. Early detection and intervention will be important and as well as encouraging lifestyle changes, support systems changes or adaptations to medicine and treatments.
3.10	To enable both applications to be submitted in time for a 13 August deadline, a letter of support has been given to Ulster and a separate letter of support, with a role as a co-applicant, to Queen's. Members are asked to retrospectively approve both supporting letters, and to note

¹ <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/new-50m-funding-to-tackle-inequalities-in-cardiovascular-disease>

	that in the event of either bid making through to an initial selection stage, a more detailed report will be brought back to Committee in advance of any further commitments being made.
3.11	Horizon Europe Call: Generative AI in Health Care The Agile Ageing Alliance is working with an EU wide consortium to submit a bid to the Horizon Europe GenAI4EU call which is making €15,000,000 available for three projects.
3.12	The Alliance have invited Belfast City Council and Ulster University's CDHT to partner in a bid which will focus on '<i>end user-driven application of Generative Artificial Intelligence models in healthcare</i>'. The consortium wishes to have 5 to 6 demonstrator sites over the four-year period of the project to test/further develop the infrastructure in real world settings. Belfast has been proposed as one of the health care demonstrator sites (locations might include social housing estates, retirement villages, care homes, or hospitals. The consortium will engage with local partners on potential local options.
3.13	Members are asked to approve support from Belfast City Council ahead of the 15 September deadline. This will involve brokering opportunities and building relationships to support the local demonstrator.
3.14	Belfast Inclusive Futures In May Committee approved a 'dialogue series' to inform new thinking on inclusive growth opportunities from the Belfast Region City Deal and other investments. Specifically, the series called '<i>Belfast: Inclusive Futures</i>' will bring together city leaders (private, public and community) and senior policymakers to build understanding and consensus about the challenges and opportunities that digital technologies represent for our city existing shared commitment to inclusive growth.
3.15	Invitations have been issued, including to all Members, for the first in the series which will take place on Tuesday, 16 September at City Hall from 4:30pm. The first speaker is Professor Kate Devlin, Chair-Director of the Digital Futures Institute, King's College, whose research focuses on AI and its benefit to people, communities and society. The sessions will be introduced by the Chair of SP&R and co-hosted by our Chief Executive and the Belfast Innovation Commissioner. This first session will explore the implications of AI and automation across a broad range of social and economic policies associated with 'inclusive growth'. The event aims to encourage a common, pro-active, positive response to the challenges and opportunities.

3.16	Smart Cities World Congress 2025 Innovation City Belfast's (ICB) is participating at the Smart Cities World Congress from 4th to 6th November 2025. SCWC is the world's biggest and most influential event for urban innovation. Each year it attracts around 900 cities and 1,000 digital companies, bringing together a powerful ecosystem of leaders from global companies, city governments and funders.
3.17	The Belfast Innovation Commissioner, Adrian Johnston, is attending this year on behalf of ICB, which is hosting a Belfast presence as part of the UK Pavilion. The ICB stand at the United Kingdom Pavilion will provide rich opportunities for Belfast partners for networking, the promotion of Belfast's ambition, City Deal Digital innovation investments, the work of our universities, and the success of our innovative companies. (Members should note that Belfast's participation in a Bloomberg city network event last year that directly led to our successful bid to their Mayors Challenge outlined above.)
3.18	This year Belfast City Council has been invited by the SCWC organisations to present on inclusive innovation. ICB has also encouraged its members to attend and is making a small number of Congress passes available free of charge. (These normally cost up to €950 each).
3.19	Members are asked to approve attendance by two officers from the City Innovation Office to accompany the Innovation Commissioner to this year's Congress.
3.20	ESRC Inclusive Innovation city workshop Members previously approved Belfast City Council's participation in an £85,000 project led by Newcastle University and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Working with the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Oslo and EAFIT University, the project is exploring how City Deal and other place-based innovation investments can better contribute to local inclusive growth outcomes. The project will deliver a policy toolkit, guidance, and inform a future large scale funding bid.
3.21	Subsequently, Queen's University's QCAP team and Innovation City Belfast have become part of this work. QCAP received an additional £15,000 from ESRC to become involved.
3.22	The first city visit is planned for early December to Medellin. A delegation from Belfast, including community representatives working with QCAP, and the Innovation Commissioner, are planning to attend. This will be an opportunity to share inclusive innovation practice with Medellin city government officials, local community organisations, and business leaders. Return visits to Belfast and to Newcastle Upon Tyne are planned for the new year when representatives from

	Medellin and Pittsburgh will visit both cities. This will include work with local communities here in Belfast.
3.23	Members are asked to approve the participation of an officer from the City Innovation Office in the Medellin visit. Travel costs are included in the project funding. Details of the return visit will be shared with Members in the coming months.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.24	Resources for these initiatives have been identified within the existing departmental budgets.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.25	None at present. A successful Bloomberg proposal will be subject to an Equality screening.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.



Subject:	Draft response to Department for Communities Anti-Poverty Strategy Consultation
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager

Restricted Reports									
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒								
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If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 70%;">After Committee Decision</td> <td style="width: 30%;">☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>After Council Decision</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sometime in the future</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Never</td> <td>☐</td> </tr> </table>		After Committee Decision	☐	After Council Decision	☐	Sometime in the future	☐	Never	☐
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Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this paper is to submit for the consideration of Members a draft corporate response to the Department for Communities (DfC) draft Anti-Poverty Strategy consultation.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: i. note the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy being consulted upon – CLICK LINK; ii. consider and provide feedback on the draft Council response attached at Appendix 1; and iii. agree that the draft Council response, subject to any amendments made by Members, be submitted to DfC.
3.0	Main report
3.1	The Department for Communities (DfC) recently launched a consultation on a draft Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland, which sets out a proposed framework for addressing poverty in a practical and sustainable manner.
3.2	DfC defines poverty as the inability of individuals and households to afford the essentials of life, including food, housing, heating, and other basic needs. It is influenced by factors such as low income, high living costs, employment insecurity, health inequalities, and access to services. When people experience poverty, it can lead to poor mental and physical health, reduced educational outcomes, social isolation, and intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.
3.3	This strategy proposes a vision of eradicating poverty sustainably, supported by principles of collaboration, dignity, inclusion, and respect. It is structured around three pillars, each with associated outcomes: 1. Minimising risks; 2. Minimising impacts; and 3. Exiting poverty
3.4	Key outcomes include improving education and skills, addressing health and disability barriers, supporting vulnerable groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, carers, and children in care), enhancing employment quality, tackling place-based deprivation (e.g., transport poverty and access to green spaces), and promoting civic engagement. The strategy also commits to involving those with lived experience, developing indicators aligned with the Programme for Government, and establishing an Anti-Poverty Strategy Board for oversight.
3.5	As part of the recent refresh of the Belfast Agenda, a key and immediate area of concern emerging from key stakeholder groups, community and voluntary sector representatives, citizens, communities of interest, and elected Members was the growing poverty crisis facing the city and communities. There was a strong call to action for community planning partners to work with NICS Departments to move quickly to bring forward immediate and integrated measures to support vulnerable people, alongside helping inform the development of long-term and sustainable approaches and underpinning strategies, policies, and programmes.
3.6	There is little doubt that the scale and complexity of challenges, with a dangerous combination of rising living costs, stagnant wages, insecure employment, inadequate access to essential services, and systemic barriers for groups like disabled people, single mothers, and ethnic minorities, could create the perfect storm and push many households further into poverty. These pressures come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin, exacerbated by issues such as the two-child benefit limit, long health service waiting times, and in-work poverty. Living in poverty can severely affect a person's life in a wide range of ways, on physical and mental health, household finances, the economy, and ultimately on people's quality of life.

3.7	Members will be aware of the significant investment made by the Council over recent years in helping to alleviate the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, including initiatives aligned with our Inclusive Growth agenda to create a more compassionate city. Officers would highlight the collaboration which has taken place with DfC, and the role of Council working closely with community partners to get significant funding and support to those impacted by poverty across the city. There is no doubt of the effectiveness and impact of central and local government working together with communities in responding together in times of emergency.
3.8	While we understand and embrace the fact that its causes are complex and its consequences are multiple, there is an opportunity through community planning to create the environment and bring the key stakeholders together to develop achievable actions. Whilst immediate and practical interventions and support can be brought forward to help mitigate the effects of poverty, we would commend that a broader and integrated programme and longer-term strategy and associated resources are required to seek to eradicate poverty within Belfast and the wider region.
3.9	Attached at appendix 1 is a proposed draft response which has been informed by feedback received from across Council departments. Overall, the Council supports the strategy's vision, broad areas of focus and outcomes which mirror good practice in terms of prevention approach, supporting those experiencing poverty, and creating pathways out of poverty. However, there are concerns raised in the draft response in relation to the about the absence of any detail on specific actions, timelines, SMART targets, and a robust performance management framework. Some of the key points included in the draft response include e.g. ▪ Consider adding a fourth pillar on prevention/eradication of poverty; ▪ The need to develop and embed measurable targets (e.g., reducing child poverty by a specific percentage by 2030) ▪ The need to ensure clear accountability for delivery through assigning departmental leads. ▪ Need for multi-year funding to be put in place. ▪ Adopting a poverty mainstreaming approach with an intersectional lens ▪ Seek to maximise the opportunities presented through new technologies and inclusive innovation to help understand the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and bring forward new technology and digital solutions to address poverty and reduce inequalities. ▪ Involvement of lived experience through models like Scotland's Experience Panels ▪ Establishing an independent Poverty and Inequality Commission ▪ Enhancing monitoring by disaggregating indicators by Section 75 groups and geography. ▪ Additional outcomes suggested cover the working poor, dual diagnosis services, transport poverty, green spaces, and civic voice. ▪ Feedback also emphasises integration with other strategies, co-design with vulnerable groups, and alignment with local initiatives like the Belfast Business Promise for greater synergies and effectiveness.
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.10	There are no financial or human resource implications arising directly from this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.11	There are no equality/ good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Draft Council response to DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

1.0 Introduction

Belfast City Council (“the Council”), welcomes the opportunity to respond to the DfC consultation on the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. The emerging draft strategy presents an opportunity to reset this critical agenda and to introduce a new urgent focus to continue to bear down on a problem which too many low-income households and vulnerable groups continue to suffer from. Poverty is a significant factor contributing to the cost-of-living crisis in Belfast, which impacts on health, wellbeing, education, social mobility, and community cohesion.

The response is set out in two parts; the first is an overview of the key strategic and cross-cutting issues which the Council would recommend be considered when finalising the Strategy. The second part sets out detailed comments in respect of the specific questions posed.

(i) A time of challenge but also opportunity

The Council believes that the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy is presented at a time of both significant challenges faced by many households but also opportunity for all partners to come together to develop new integrated and sustainable approaches to supporting most vulnerable in our society.

There is little doubt that the scale and complexity of challenges, with a dangerous combination of rising living costs, stagnant wages, insecure employment, and inadequate access to essential services, could create the perfect storm and push many households further into poverty. These pressures come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin, exacerbated by factors such as the two-child limit on benefits, long health service waiting times, and barriers for groups like ethnic minorities, asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds, disabled people, informal carers, and single mothers.

As part of the recent refresh of the Belfast Agenda (City’s Community Plan), a key and immediate area of concern emerging from key stakeholder groups, community and voluntary sector representatives, citizens, communities of interest and elected Members, was the growing poverty crisis facing the city and communities. There was a strong call to action for community planning partners to work with NICS Departments to move quickly to bring forward immediate and integrated measures to support vulnerable people alongside helping inform the development of long-term and sustainable approaches and underpinning strategies, policies and programmes.

Living in poverty can severely affect a person’s life in a wide range of ways, on physical and mental health, household finances, the economy and ultimately on people’s quality of life. While we understand and embrace the fact that its causes are complex and its consequences are multiple, there is an opportunity through community planning to create the environment and bring the key stakeholders together to develop achievable actions. Whilst immediate and practical interventions and support can be brought forward to help mitigate the effects of poverty, we would commend that a broader and integrated programme and longer-term policy levers are required to seek to eradicate poverty within Belfast and the wider region.

The Council supports the overall vision of eradicating poverty sustainably and commends the recognition that this can only be achieved through collaboration with agencies, partners, and communities most affected. This aligns broadly with our Inclusive Growth agenda and actions over the last five years to foster a more compassionate city.

However, the strategy lacks specificity on how the vision will be achieved, reiterating existing policy commitments without clear time-bound poverty reduction targets or bespoke interventions. The absence of an associated action plan with deliverables, timelines, and a robust performance

Belfast City Council response

DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

management framework undermines its potential effectiveness, as it prevents assessing the impact of actions or making evidence-informed decisions to best support those in poverty.

As you will appreciate, a number of city partners including elected members and community sector representatives have raised significant concerns in relation to the adverse impact that poverty is having on communities and vulnerable people and families across the city. Despite the hard work of many agencies and organisations, the impact of poverty is intensifying within Belfast and wider region. Households and vulnerable individuals are experiencing the perfect storm. Growing pressures on household incomes and unprecedented increases in the price of essential goods including food, gas and electricity is adversely impacting upon those most in need and widening existing inequalities. Many families are having to make difficult choices as it becomes impossible to meet basic needs of their families, in particular, children.

The Council recommends embedding specific measurable targets, assigning departmental responsibilities, and ensuring multi-year budget commitments. For example, other regions like Scotland have seen success by prioritising child poverty with specific measures, such as the Scottish Child Payment and mitigating the two-child limit, backed by measurable targets (e.g., reduce child poverty by x% by 2030). Consideration should also be given to a dynamic analysis of poverty types (e.g., persistent poverty, destitution) and key risk factors, informed by research such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's UK Poverty 2025 report, focusing on higher-risk groups like families with children, minority ethnic groups, disabled people, and those facing in-work poverty. Adopting a "poverty mainstreaming" approach with an intersectional equality lens would help identify targeted actions, assess cost-effectiveness, and align local and regional efforts for better outcomes.

(ii) Enhancing collaboration and accountability

By challenging traditional silos, the draft strategy provides a platform for a 'whole system approach', strengthening ties between regional and local government to facilitate joint sustainable support. The Council is fully committed to working with the NI Executive, the voluntary and community sector, and those with lived experience to co-design and deliver programmes achieving the strategy's ambitions.

To ensure delivery, both tiers of government must partner on policy and frameworks addressing entrenched issues. We highlight past collaborations with the Department and community partners to secure funding for poverty-impacted groups, demonstrating the impact of joint efforts.

However, we recommend structured formal delivery partnerships between Executive Departments and the Council, given Belfast's high deprivation levels, alongside ring-fenced, multi-year funding for agreed interventions.

The Council believe that strengthening the relationship between central and local government and adopting a cross-government and multi-agency approach to supporting those in poverty is what is needed. We would encourage that consideration is given to how we can work together to co-design a transformative, placed-based, prevented and integrated approach to supporting people who are impacted by poverty. The intent would be to test, adopt and scale which would be aligned with NICS transformation and service reform ambitions as set out in the programme for government.

Belfast City Council response

DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

Whilst acknowledging the intention to convene an Anti-Poverty Strategy Board and sub-committees, we suggest establishing an independent Poverty and Inequality Commission for long-term scrutiny, similar to models in other UK regions and as recommended by the Anti-Poverty Expert Advisory Panel. Strengthening commitments to involve those with lived experience—through approaches like Scotland's Experience Panels—would ensure dignity, inclusion, and respect underpin development, informing policy, branding, and language.

(iii) Utilising new technologies and promoting inclusive innovation

The Council would encourage that consideration be given to how emerging technologies can be used to better understand and seek to address the challenges impacting those in poverty or marginalised groups in society. It can help understand the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, bringing together sectors and partners to develop and bring forward new technology and digital solutions to address poverty and reduce inequalities.

The Council would refer to the work being taken forward through Smart Belfast, a key initiative for Belfast's urban innovation, which aims to address poverty and reduce inequalities through technology and digital solutions. The initiative focuses on inclusive growth, ensuring that the benefits of technological advancements and economic development are shared across all communities, including those most vulnerable to poverty

Our focus on creating and supporting the conditions for inclusive innovation within the city has shown the importance of involving communities, marginalised groups and those with lived experiences in the innovation process and tailoring solutions to their specific needs. We believe inclusive innovation provides an opportunity to understand and address the root causes of poverty and create more equitable opportunities. At a local level, this strong bottom-up approach focuses on increasing the beneficiaries' own agency and capability rather than passively relying on others to act on their behalf.

The Council would highlight the following key aspects of inclusive innovation and its role in poverty reduction:

- **Participation and co-creation:** emphasises the active involvement of those experiencing poverty in the design and development of solutions. This ensures that innovations are relevant, accessible, and address the specific challenges faced by marginalized communities.
- **Addressing structural barriers:** acknowledges and actively works to dismantle the systemic barriers that prevent certain groups from participating in and benefiting from innovation. This includes addressing issues like lack of access to education, healthcare, financial services, and technology.
- **Focus on local needs and contexts:** recognises that solutions must be adapted to the specific needs and contexts of the communities they are intended to serve. This may involve adapting existing technologies or developing entirely new approaches that are relevant to local conditions.
- **Sustainable and scalable solutions:** creating solutions that are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable and scalable over the long term. This requires careful consideration of financial viability, social impact, and environmental sustainability.

Belfast City Council response

DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

Smart Belfast emphasizes collaboration with citizens, stakeholders, and different council departments to identify challenges, develop solutions, and ensure that the initiative effectively addresses the needs of those experiencing poverty.

By focusing on inclusive growth, addressing digital exclusion, and fostering collaboration, Smart Belfast is working to leverage technology and innovation to improve the lives of all residents, including those most vulnerable to poverty.

(iv) Adopting a whole-system approach

In responding, the Council would highlight the need for a whole-system approach to be brought forward to support people in poverty across the region with a focus on new innovative technologies and financial models to support this. It is important that the NI Executive ensures that related policies, strategies and schemes recently consulted upon (e.g. draft Fuel Poverty Strategy) and are brought forward and aligned within any finalised Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Strategy.

The Council would highlight the collaboration which has taken place with DfC, and the role of Council working closely with community partners to get significant funding (in excess of £3million over last three years) to support those impacted by poverty across the city.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with DfC colleagues to identify opportunities to bring forward prototype delivery models and test and learn demonstrator initiatives which can be scaled up across the region. This would include bringing forward immediate and practical support initiatives, alongside co-designing an integrated and longer-term strategy to help alleviate all aspects of poverty being experienced across the city and wider region.

(v) Refining pillars, outcomes, and protections

The three-pillar structure (Minimising Risks, Minimising Impacts, Exiting Poverty) provides a logical framework mirroring good practice in prevention, support, and exit strategies. We agree the pillars and outcomes are broadly appropriate, with strong recognition of disabilities, health inequalities, and community-specific challenges, applicable to Section 75 groups. However, Pillars 2 and 3 appear similar at a high level; re-wording could clarify distinctions.

Many listed programmes are existing, not new, and without resourcing details, targets, or evaluation frameworks, assessing impact is challenging. We recommend detailed action plans with SMART targets and clear responsibilities to avoid duplication.

Suggestions include:

- Adding a fourth pillar on prevention/eradication for long-term cost-effectiveness.
- Including outcomes for the working poor, carers, children in care, dual diagnosis services (mental health/substance use), transport poverty, access to green space/air quality, and civic engagement/voice.
- Move health outcomes to Pillar 1 as a preventative factor.
- For ethnicity, clarify steps to reduce risks beyond language barriers.
- Re-word family structure benefits to specify disadvantage definitions.
- Given our inclusive growth commitment, we urge strong engagement with vulnerable groups, robust protections, and empowerment via local networks.

Belfast City Council response

DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

- Support approaches involving people in decision-making for better cohesion and resource allocation.
- Align initiatives like the Good Jobs Charter with our Belfast Business Promise for synergies, and include priority groups in social value procurement.
- Actions must integrate with other strategies (e.g., Disability Strategy, People & Place Strategy) for aligned delivery and monitoring.
- Research on the two-child limit should include sub-regional analysis.
- Co-design actions with lived experience to address barriers, especially for women, carers, ethnic minorities, disabled people, and those with no recourse to public funds.

(iv) Strengthening monitoring, indicators, and impact assessment

Council agrees in principle with proposed indicators aligning to the Programme for Government, but further detail on priorities and commitments is needed for appropriate measures. We welcome future indicator development and urge engagement with councils, JRF, and others to include destitution, deep poverty, and qualitative insights for real-life impact tracking.

We would suggest that you disaggregate indicators by Section 75 groups and geography (as low-level as possible) to understand variations and target interventions, aligning with local community/development plans. Emphasise household incomes, affordability (childcare, transport, housing), and access rates (e.g., rehabilitation for substance issues, long-term health outcomes).

More detail is required in the impact statement to identify mitigations, especially for minority ethnic groups. Regular monitoring/review is essential, with socio-economic duty considerations like those in Scotland/England, or poverty proofing via commissions.

The introduction of any new duties impacting on local government would need to be consulted on and budget defined so as to have no financial impact to ratepayers.

Detailed response to questions set out in consultation.

Vision

The overall vision of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy is "Working together, poverty and its impacts will be effectively and sustainably eradicated across our communities".

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the vision included in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy? (Please highlight your answer)

AGREE

Please tell us why.

- The Council welcomes the publication of the NI Executive's Anti-Poverty Strategy and the commitment to a consultation period. Belfast City Council supports the vision of eradicating poverty sustainably and commends the recognition that poverty can only be tackled effectively by working in collaboration with many agencies, partners and importantly the communities who are affected the most. This vision broadly aligns with our Inclusive Growth agenda in Council and a number of the actions we have implemented over the last 5 years have been with the aim of creating more inclusive growth and a more compassionate city.
- However, we have some concerns that the Strategy lacks specificity regarding how this vision will be achieved. The Strategy largely reiterates existing policy commitments without establishing clear time-bound poverty reduction targets, requiring bespoke interventions. The absence of measurable poverty reduction targets in key areas (eg. For child poverty; in work-poverty) and the lack of specific detailed action plans and associated timelines could be seen to undermine the effectiveness of the Strategy. It is important that the strategy is also clearly underpinned by strong principles of dignity, inclusion and respect and that this message is reinforced throughout further development and engagement.
- Other jurisdictions (such as Scotland), where The First Minister has said that the eradication of child poverty is the single most important policy objective for the Scottish Government, have had some success by focusing on Child Poverty and the implementation of specific measures to alleviate this. For example the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment and the commitment to mitigate the impact of the two child limit by 2026 - Child Poverty Delivery Plan progress 2024-2025: Scrutiny by the Poverty and Inequality Commission).

Need to focus on action

- The production of an associated action plan with deliverables and timelines would also allow for full involvement and engagement of partners and intended beneficiaries, which is in line with the Executive's commitment to collaboration and learning from those with lived experience and would clarify around where responsibility lies.

Belfast City Council response DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

- The Council would recommend embedding specific measurable targets (e.g. Reduce child poverty by x% by 2030), assign departmental responsibilities and ensure multi-year budget commitments to key programmes/actions.
- All communities have different challenges in terms of poverty, and we would agree that different communities may require different and appropriate intervention strategies to prevent and overcome challenges with poverty. There may be specific intervention strategies that can address poverty issues that can support more than one community. We would agree that this would apply to all or some Section 75 groups.

Poverty mainstreaming/ intersectional equality lens

- It may be prudent to give consideration to looking in detail at different types of poverty from a more dynamic rather than static point in time – examples – persistent poverty/destitution and an analysis of the key risk factors assessed and this evidence used to inform focused actions, rather than a “catch-all” approach. In addition analyzing poverty by groups who face higher risk and/or incidence may lead to more focused programmes and improved outcomes. As outlined by recent research ([UK Poverty 2025: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)) this includes families with children, minority ethnic groups, disabled people, informal carers and the increasing risk of in-work poverty, particularly for single mothers.
- The NI Executive could consider adopting a “poverty mainstreaming” approach, using an intersectional equalities lens, identifying targeted action that is needed to address specific barriers faced by different groups/ household types and ensuring that estimations are made about the potential impact each could contribute towards achieving the overall objectives and associated targets. This would allow for the assessment of the cost effectiveness of policies and actions in delivering intended outcomes. If national targets were set then this could better ensure alignment with local activity, at a council and VCSE level and improve outcomes and efficiency/effectiveness.

Governance structures and resources

- Whilst BCC acknowledges the intention to convene the Anti-Poverty Strategy Board and associated sub-committees, consideration could be given to also setting up an independent Poverty and Inequality Commission to scrutinize plans and progress, to ensure long-term structural accountability across all actors. This is similar to other bodies set up in other parts of the UK and reflects recommendations made by the Anti-Poverty Expert Advisory Panel ([Recommendations for an Anti-Poverty Strategy](#)).
- The Council would also recommend structured formal delivery partner structures between the Executive Departments and BCC, given the level of poverty and deprivation in Belfast. Linked to this Belfast City Council would also support the creation of ring-fenced, multi-year funding for the agreed poverty action plan/ interventions.

4.0 Lived Experience

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- Whilst the Strategy acknowledges the importance of co-design and states “consideration will also be given to how best to involve those with lived experience of Poverty and supporting organisations” the Council would recommend that this commitment is strengthened and that best practice from elsewhere is taken into account. The approach of developing “ Experience Panels” ,as happened on Scotland in 2017, could be given attention. They resulted in 2400 members of the public registered who had lived experience of being in receipt of various welfare payments. The Legacy Report ([Social Security Experience Panels: legacy report - gov.scot](#)) found these panels had made a significant contribution to service design and informed policy decisions. They also shaped the design of client facing processes, branding and the language used in Social Security Scotland.

Pillars - The vision is underpinned by three key pillars

- **Pillar One - Minimising Risks**
We will minimise the risks and root causes of people and their families falling into poverty.
We will work with people to maximise their chances of avoiding these risks and lower their chances of falling into poverty.
- **Pillar Two - Minimising Impacts**
Where people find themselves in poverty, we will support them and ensure that inequalities are minimised and life opportunities are maximised.
- **Pillar Three - Exiting Poverty**
We will support people experiencing poverty and through working together we will provide routes out of poverty.

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with the importance of the three pillars included in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy? **(Please highlight your answers)***

- Pillar 1 - Minimising Risks - **AGREE**
- Pillar 2 - Minimising Impacts - **AGREE**
- Pillar 3 - Exiting Poverty- **AGREE**

COMMENTS

- The Council would support the three pillars set out and believe that focuses on addressing different stages in an individual journey in poverty including focusing on prevention, support and longer-term exit strategies
- In considering the current definition of Pillar 2 and 3 (as set out below), there is a risk of people being confused as they appear somewhat similar. Important that there the definitions reflect the distinct outcomes set out later in the strategy. Consideration to be given to Pillar 3 referring to providing wrap-around support as a pathway out of poverty.

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- The Council would commend that consideration be given to adding a fourth pillar focused on prevention/eradication of poverty, highlighting the long-term cost-effectiveness of preventative measures.
- The Council would be concerned of the lack of detail in relation to specific actions, resources and measures of success. This will prevent any meaningful assessment of how the vision our ambitions underpinning the draft Strategy is delivered.
- The Council would recommend that consideration be given to developing detailed action plans, with SMART targets and clear areas of responsibility for lead departments and partners. This should be underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework .

Pillar 1 Outcomes - Minimising Risks

There are a wide range of risk factors for falling into poverty and every individual story is unique. However, following widespread consultation with stakeholders and analysing the existing research, we have identified a number of key factors which must be addressed in order to effectively tackle poverty. Each of these factors has an associated outcome.

1. **Childhood Education** - All children will have maximised opportunities in relation to education, addressing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment.
2. **Family / Childhood Factors** - The benefits of a good family structure will be promoted. Families and young people experiencing disadvantage will be supported, helping them to have fulfilling and complete home and family lives.
3. **Debt** - People will be supported to maximise their financial wellbeing.
4. **Disability** - People with disabilities will be supported to be economically independent, maximising their potential in relation to education and employment.
5. **Substance Use** - Government and key partners will work to support people - and reduce the harms associated with alcohol and drugs.
6. **Ethnicity** - We will take steps to ensure that ethnicity will not increase a person's risk of poverty.

*To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the six outcomes supporting Pillar One of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy? **(Please highlight your answers)***

- Childhood education - **AGREE**
- Family / Childhood factors - **AGREE**
- Debt- **AGREE**
- Disability - **AGREE**
- Substance use - **AGREE**
- Ethnicity- **AGREE**

*Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the outcomes listed? **(Please reference the outcome)***

- As highlighted above it is difficult to disagree with any of the factors outlined above in relation to potentially being able to have a positive impact on minimising the risks of falling into poverty. However, it is also difficult to make a clear statement as to their relevance or scale of impact over other factors as the level of detail required is not yet presented.
- The Council would highlight the following points for consideration in finalising the Strategy:-
- Need for dual diagnosis services (mental health + substance use).
- Recognition of barriers faced by people with disabilities including access to support services and advice.
- Support for ethnic minorities, especially asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds.
- Further clarity needed around the statement – we will take steps to ensure ethnicity will not increase a person’s risk of poverty

Q. Are there any other outcomes you feel should be included under this pillar?

- The Council would recommend that consideration be given to the possible inclusion of an outcome relating to reducing the numbers of **‘children in care’** as a key vulnerable group, given the extent of inequalities they face. The benefits of a good family structure will be promoted should be re-worded to be more specific and the definition of disadvantage in this context provided.
- Explore possible inclusion of an outcome linked to the **‘working poor’** and those with caring responsibilities.
- Explore possible transfer of the outcome ‘physical and mental health’ from pillar 1 into pillar 2 as good health and well-being is a key preventative factor of reducing the risk of poverty and can have a huge impact on people’s future opportunities.

Pillar 2 Outcomes - Minimising Impacts

The impacts of poverty are felt across our society and can have devastating impacts on people's health, education and economic outcomes. While this Strategy focuses on how we improve long term outcomes for individuals and society more broadly, it is also essential that we take steps to address the immediate issues and impacts felt by people experiencing poverty. Each of these immediate issues and impacts has an associated outcome.

1. **Access to Resources** - Appropriate and effective financial support will be provided to those in our society who are socio-economically disadvantaged. Older people, children and adults with disabilities will be helped to access appropriate support.
2. **Access to Education** - The costs of accessing and participating in education will be minimised, with particular consideration given to children from socio-economic disadvantaged families.
3. **Physical and Mental Health** - Everyone will be supported in improving their mental and physical well-being, with a focus on driving down health inequalities related to socio-economic disadvantage.
4. **Exposure to Crime / Safety** - We will have safe environments, including in the most deprived areas.

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5. **The Impact of Place** - We will have strong communities with improved physical infrastructure, particularly in areas suffering the highest levels of deprivation.
6. **Housing (including Fuel Poverty)** - Everyone has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable housing.
7. **The Lived Experience of those in Poverty** - Policies that are brought forward as part of this Strategy are focused on addressing the real life impacts of poverty and based on a range of evidence including lived experience.
8. **Advice Services** - People experiencing or at risk of poverty have access to free, quality-assured advice services.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the eight outcomes supporting Pillar Two of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

1. Access to resources - **AGREE**
2. Access to education - **AGREE**
3. Physical and mental health - **AGREE**
4. Exposure to crime / safety - **AGREE**
5. Impact of place- **AGREE**
6. Housing- **AGREE**
7. Lived experience - **AGREE**
8. Advice services - **AGREE**

Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the outcomes listed? (Please reference the outcome)

The Council would highlight the following comments for consideration in finalising any draft strategy.

- It is difficult to disagree with any of the factors outlined above in relation to potentially being able to have a positive impact on minimising the risks of falling into poverty. However, it is also difficult to make a clear statement as to their relevance or scale of impact over other factors as the level of detail required is not yet presented.
- Outcome 1 (Access to resources)
 - would refer to the Council's **Cost-of-Living Guide** as a useful signposting to available services and support available.
 - important seek to address the significant challenges facing the health service including waiting times.
 - important to recognise the significant role of the advice service network, including crisis prevention, and the need for adequate and sustainable funding.
- Outcome 5 (Impact of Place)
 - Consideration should be given to how we address the challenges and opportunities presented by the peace walls and interfaces and the need to build good relations and shared spaces.

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Q. Are there any other outcomes you feel should be included under this pillar?

The Council would recommend that consideration be given to the possible inclusion of an outcome and associated actions in relation to

- **Transport Poverty** – this came out strongly when Belfast City Council recently consulted on their draft Inclusive Growth Index. In particular it was seen as a barrier for children attending school, those facing economic hardship and those with a disability. Also has an impact on accessing work and better jobs and was raised as a key issue in helping create safe environments, which is another outcome listed in Pillar 2.
- **Access to green and open space** – impacts upon an individual's health and wellbeing and access to employment
- **Access to good air quality** – impacts upon an individual's health and wellbeing and access to employment
- **Enabling civic engagement/voice** – encourages effective civic engagement and confidence in decision making processes and bodies is often highlighted as key to inclusive places for all.

Pillar 3 Outcomes - Exiting Poverty

In order to tackle poverty in a long term and sustainable way, it is essential that we work with people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage in order to help them 'exit poverty'. This can be achieved by government working together with support services and families in a truly collaborative and complementary way. Through this approach we can tackle the long term consequences of poverty. Each of these long term consequences has an associated outcome.

1. **Employment / Economic Conditions** - A strong and growing economy with a wide range of good jobs across both the public and private sector providing opportunities that are accessible to those in poverty.
2. **Gaining employment** - People will be able to access clear pathways to work and be supported in developing the skills and behaviours they need to access and prosper in the workplace.
3. **Training and further Education** - Young people and adults will be able to develop their skills and careers through a range of supported educational initiatives beyond school.
4. **Childcare** - We will identify ways to assist socio-economically disadvantaged families in addressing gaps in childcare provision to ensure they can maximise their potential in the workplace.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the four outcomes supporting Pillar Three of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy? **(Please highlight your answer)**

1. Employment / Economic Conditions - **AGREE**
2. Gaining employment- **AGREE**
3. Training and further education - **AGREE**
4. Childcare- **AGREE**

Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the outcomes listed?

- It is difficult to disagree with any of the factors outlined above in relation to potentially being able to have a positive impact on minimising the risks of falling into poverty. However, it is also difficult to make a clear statement as to their relevance or scale of impact over other factors as the level of detail required is not yet presented.
- It is important that Section 75 groups in particular to those with a disability receive required accessibility support when pursuing employment, in employment and during training. This would include an Access to Work package in the workplace and financially supporting employers including those in the private sector and voluntary sector to meet accessibility requirements for job interviews, during employment and training.
- **Outcome 2** (Gaining employment) – the Council would highlight the work which has been undertaken through the Belfast Business Promise in helping to create better employment opportunities including the promotion of the real living wage.

Q. Are there any other outcomes you feel should be included under this pillar?

- The Council would recommend that consideration be given to the possible inclusion of an outcome and associated actions in relation to creating '**inclusive and accessible pathways**'.

Pillar 1 Actions - Minimising Risks

Outcomes under each of the pillars will be supported by strategic commitments which are to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy.

Minimising the Risk of Falling into Poverty

- We will continue to deliver the Extended Schools Programme which provides a range of support in the form of breakfast clubs, after school activities, parental engagement, literacy and numeracy support, healthy eating etc.
- We will undertake research to understand the impact of Westminster's two child limit on poverty indicators, and call on the government to remove Westminster's Two Child Limit.
- We will deliver the RAISE Programme, a new initiative which aims to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage. Funding of £20 million is being provided through the Shared Island Fund for a period of 2 years and a Memorandum of Understanding between Departments of Education north and south has been agreed.
- We will work with delivery partners to scope an NI Debt Respite Scheme.
- We will work with the Money and Pension Service to implement a local delivery plan for the UK Financial Wellbeing Strategy.
- We will develop and implement an Executive Disability Strategy.
- We will develop and implement the Disability Employment Strategy.
- We will deliver a refreshed Healthy Child Healthy Future (HCHF) Programme - the universal child health promotion programme for NI 0-19 years. This will have a strong focus on ensuring every child is given the best start in life with increased support for those families who are most in need because of factors relating to disadvantage. HCHF assesses the child and family holistically and within the wider community and tailors support or signposts accordingly to help address need.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these actions will deliver the outcomes of Pillar One as laid out in the draft Strategy document?

- **AGREE** – The Council would agree that the areas set out are important in minimising the risks of falling into poverty, but further detail is needed on the of delivery of strategic commitments and actions, including clearer timeframes, to understand the level of resource and priority attached.

Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the actions listed under this pillar? (**Please reference the action**)

- The draft Strategy refers to a number of related strategies which are still to be brought forward. It will be important that any such strategies are clear measurable actions and targets with resources attached to ensure delivery (e.g. the Executive Disability Strategy, the Disability Employment Strategy). It is essential that any commitments to action contained within these strategies are co-ordinated and integrated with the draft anti-poverty strategy and outcomes to ensure appropriate alignment of strategic intent, delivery and monitoring of progress and impact on anti-poverty.

Q. Are there any other actions you feel should be included under this pillar?

- The draft strategy highlights an outcome to “take steps to ensure that ethnicity will not increase a person’s risk of poverty” and refers to language barriers, negotiating support services etc. However, there are no specific strategic actions or commitments identified to address this. We would recommend that actions are co-designed and developed with those with lived experience to ensure relevant and impactful commitments are included. This can also have the added impact of empowering and building capacity amongst those involved and to better inform programme design and delivery to help minimise the risk of people falling into poverty.

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Pillar 2 Actions - Minimising Impacts

Outcomes under each of the pillars will be supported by strategic commitments which are to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy.

Minimising the Impacts of Poverty

- We will continue to deliver a package of welfare mitigations, keeping the level of support under review as resources and evidence become available, whilst lobbying Westminster on reform as appropriate.
- We will lobby Westminster to maintain the triple lock guarantee in relation to pension payments.
- We will develop and deliver a Fuel Poverty Strategy. We will also design and deliver a new Fuel Poverty Energy Efficiency Scheme – Warm, Healthy Homes.
- We will implement agreed changes that are designed to improve access to and delivery of Discretionary Support.
- We will continue to provide assistance with the payment of upfront childcare costs through the Adviser Discretion Fund.
- We will provide advice, increase awareness and provide focused support to ensure that older people, and children and adults with disabilities can access their full benefit entitlement. This will include a programme of work to promote Pension Credit uptake and delivery of the Make the Call wraparound service.

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- The Executive will continue its commitment to ensure the Civil Service is a Living Wage employer. We will ensure that payment of the Living Wage must be included as a condition of contract for all tenders.
- Through a range of actions we will minimise the cost of school attendance, this will include continued provision of free school meals (FSM) and Uniform Grants (UG).
- We will introduce legislation to ensure that school uniforms are affordable for all families.
- We will develop and deliver a new Safer Communities Strategic Approach, based on Trauma Informed and Public Health approaches, with the aim of increasing community safety and confidence.
- We will develop and deliver a new People and Place Strategic Framework to deliver an effective and more integrated place-based approach to target deprivation, based on objective need.
- We will continue to deliver the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Framework, which invests in a range of collaborative initiatives to tackle rural poverty, isolation, loneliness and health and wellbeing issues.
- We will deliver the NI Food Strategy Framework to help focus collective efforts addressing significant societal challenges directly and indirectly linked to food. This will have impacts in relation to both people's health and food poverty.
- We will ensure that everyone, including those in or at risk of poverty, has access to good quality, affordable and sustainable homes. This will include work to tackle a range of issues including revitalisation of the Housing Executive and transformation of the Private Rented Sector. We will oversee the development of action plans as part of the implementation of the Executive Housing Supply Strategy.
- We will work with the Transforming Medication Safely NI (TMSNI) programme to support implementation of the Community Development Health Network "Our Lives, Our Meds, Our Health" report to improve safe practices with medicines through addressing health inequalities.
- We will continue the Healthy Start Scheme in Northern Ireland, which provides pre-paid cards for pregnant women and families with young children to access nutritious healthy food. This improves long term health for mothers and children and frees up household income for other needs and addresses health inequalities.
- We will continue to work with the Community Development and Health Network (CDHN) through the Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership (BCPP) programme to strengthen links between community groups and their local pharmacies, with actions targeted at the most deprived and impoverished communities in order to address health inequalities and the social determinants of health.
- We will continue to support the advice sector to ensure that good quality, free, independent, advice is available to those living in or at risk of poverty. We will refresh the policy framework for delivery of advice to enhance collaboration and provide more integrated independent advice and debt services.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these actions will deliver against the outcomes of Pillar Two as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

- **AGREE** – The Council agree that it is essential that steps are taken to address the immediate issues and impacts felt by people experiencing poverty and recognise the broad areas as being important in minimising the impact of poverty. However, further detail is needed on the of delivery of strategic commitments and actions, including clearer timeframes to understand the level of resource and priority attached.

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Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the actions listed under this pillar? **(Please reference the action)**

- The Council welcomes the NI Executive's ongoing commitment to ensure the Civil Service is a Living Wage employer and that this will be included as a condition of contract for all tenders. We would suggest that this action should go further and must be seen in conjunction with the commitment under Pillar 3 in relation to 'improve the quality of employment', with the NI Civil Service leading by example. Belfast City Council has been working with the Labour Relations Agency, in the development and implementation of the Belfast Business promise, an inclusive growth charter, which the Department for Economy has committed to. We would encourage all government departments to refer to and adopt the Belfast Business promise standards, which acts as a forerunner to the proposed good employment Charter proposed in the Programme for Government and Good Employment. We would be happy to discuss this further.
- As per Pillar 1 comments, this Pillar also refers to the development and delivery of a number of other strategies, (e.g. People & Place Strategy). As these strategies may be at different stages of development, we would stress the importance of ensuring that the commitments to action are co-ordinated and integrated with the draft anti-poverty strategy and outcomes to ensure appropriate alignment of strategic intent, delivery and monitoring of progress and impact.

Page 146. Are there any other actions you feel should be included under this pillar?

The draft anti-poverty strategy highlights the importance of understanding the lived experience of those in poverty and the commitment to take steps to involve those experiencing or at risk of poverty by taking forward policies and programmes within the strategy. However, it is not clear how this will be factored into the strategic commitments/actions outlined.

- We would propose the inclusion of a commitment and actions to embed poverty considerations into policy and programme development. To support this, we would refer to practices and developments elsewhere such as the socio-economic duty in England and Scotland, poverty proofing, the work that has been done in some of the UK's core cities to establish poverty and inequalities commissions such as Edinburgh, as well as the work of the Poverty Truth Network. We would also be willing to share our emerging work on the development and testing of a framework to support a practical approach to embedding inclusive growth in policies, programmes and projects.

Pillar 3 Actions - Exiting Poverty

Outcomes under each of the Pillars will be supported by strategic commitments which are to be delivered in the first years of the Strategy.

Supporting People to Exit Poverty

- We will prepare and deliver a programme which will offer inclusive pathways to work.
- We will address regional imbalance in our economy through the Sub-Regional Economic Plan to ensure that people have access to quality employment regardless of where they live.
- We will improve the quality of employment across the economy through a new Employment Rights Bill, a Good Jobs Charter and by increasing uptake of the Real Living Wage through funding the NI franchise of the Living Wage Foundation.
- We will implement the all age Careers Action Plan.

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- We will deliver high quality, industry relevant skills and training programmes. We will implement the Skills, Careers and Apprenticeship Action Plans.
- A budget of £23m has been allocated in 2025/26 to provide a 15% childcare subsidy for working parents eligible to Tax Free Childcare.
- We will bring forward a draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy for public consultation to Executive colleagues in autumn 2025.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these actions will deliver against the outcomes of Pillar Three as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

- **AGREE** – The Council agree that it is essential that proactive steps are taken to create sustainable pathways out of poverty. However, further detail is needed on the delivery of strategic commitments and actions, including clearer timeframes to understand the level of resource and priority attached.

Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the actions listed under this pillar?

- The Council would commend that consideration is given to specific actions which seek to support vulnerable individuals who may be experiencing complex challenges including mental health and substance misuse.

The Council welcomes the proposed development of a Childcare Strategy and commends that this is brought forward as a matter of urgency. We believe that this is a vital part of the social and economic infrastructure to support people into good jobs, education and training.

The Council welcomes the focus on improving the quality of employment and the provision of the Real Living Wage as a means of helping to reduce in-work poverty. We would also encourage the NI Executive to take account of the Belfast Business Promise, our inclusive growth city charter, and the standards it sets to inform the approach to improving the quality of employment and the development and delivery of a good jobs charter.

Q. Are there any other actions you feel should be included under this pillar?

- The Council would highlight the adverse impact of spiralling inflation rates on many individuals and families across the city and wider region. The impact is normally intensified disproportionately on lower income households. Statistics would highlight the growing trend in relation to in-work poverty levels. It is important that we seek to maximise household incomes, through the creation of key part of good jobs alongside enabling people to access these opportunities through appropriate inclusive pathways, training and education. We would also note the research by ESRI (2024) that highlights access to training and education as being vital to avoiding low paid employment, particularly a risk for lone parents and those with a disability.

Headline Indicators

To track the overall progress of the Strategy, a number of headline indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

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- The percentage of individuals living in relative poverty after housing costs (AHC)
- The percentage of children living in relative poverty (AHC)
- The percentage of working age adults living in relative poverty (AHC)
- The percentage of pensioners living in relative poverty (AHC)
- To complement these chosen indicators we will continue to publish or monitor a range of poverty measures including relative poverty before housing costs (BHC), absolute poverty before and after housing costs, children in low income and material deprivation, persistent poverty and food poverty. This will allow the overall story behind the trends to be identified.
- Indicators will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate, to identify and address any potential gaps, and to improve or replace existing measures as necessary.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these headline indicators as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

- **AGREE** – The Council would agree in principle with the headline indicators as set out, however, would suggest that when further detail is brought forward around specific actions and programmes of work that such indicators need to be reassessed for fitness.
- The Council welcomes the commitment within the draft Strategy to bring forward 'Future Development' of indicators and would encourage the Department to engage with local councils and key stakeholders such as JRF in this process. We would also suggest that consideration be given to understanding good practice benchmarks and research including, for example, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the headline indicators? (Please reference the indicator)

- The Council recognise the need for any indicators and measures being aligned with the Programme for Government and Wellbeing Framework. We would encourage that consideration is given to how data can be captured and made available at as low a geographical level as possible. This would enable a deeper understanding of places and the possible concentration of poverty at a local level. This will help inform how future policy and interventions should be targeted.
- Given the multi-faceted nature of poverty and its impact, it would also be beneficial for the indicators to be disaggregated based on Section 75 characteristics, where possible, to enable a fuller understanding of changes /progress by population groups.
- Tackling the persistent levels of poverty requires a sustained, dedicated resource and, based on previous trend data, it is expected that the headline indicators will not change substantially in the short term. The Council would therefore encourage the adoption of regular reporting of qualitative insights and data to substantiate these measures to support analysis of the real-life impacts of poverty as well as demonstrate progress over time.

Q. Are there any other headline indicators you feel should be included here?

- We welcome the commitment to the future development of data and the ongoing work with DWP and colleagues to develop broader measures of poverty. We would emphasise the importance of reflecting the cost-of-living pressures on households and consider issues such as household

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disposable income and affordability of key services such as childcare, transport, housing which are critical in terms of managing the risks, impacts of poverty and being able to secure a sustainable route out of poverty.

- The Council has been developing an inclusive Growth Index containing a basket of proposed measures which includes a number of contextual, or system indicators, to provide the overall frame of reference within which the progress indicators can be tracked. This is an emerging tool providing a means to track our progress and inform future decision-making in order to deliver on the city's ambitions for inclusive growth. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further to explore how these measures and approaches could interact with the anti-poverty ambitions.

Pillar 1 Indicators - Minimising Risks

To track the Strategy's progress against Pillar One - Minimising the Risk of Falling into Poverty, a number of indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- Educational Attainment Gap - difference between the percentage of non-free school meal entitled (non-FSME) school leavers and the percentage of free school meal entitled (FSME) school leavers achieving at level 2 or above including GCSE English and Maths.
- Disability Employment Gap - percentage in employment by disability status.
- Standardised Admission Rate - Alcohol related / drug related causes.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these pillar level indicators appropriately monitor progress towards the Pillar One outcomes as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

- **AGREE** - As per our previous comments, the Council believe that the current set of indicators are relevant, however would highlight that further detail is needed on the outworkings of the strategic commitments/actions in order to fully consider whether they would serve to appropriately monitor the progress. We would be keen to explore the process to support the outcome monitoring and to understand how the strategic commitments will be aligned to the proposed outcomes. We would also suggest that qualitative insights and data should be considered to help tell the story of progress.

Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the pillar one indicators? **(Please reference the indicator)**

- The Council would commend that consideration be given to capturing data at the lowest level to enable greater focus on place-based approaches.
- The Council would commend that the data is disaggregated by Section 75 groupings and made available at as low a geographical levels as possible in order to understand the issues and barriers that people may face and support appropriate targeting of programmes and resources.

Q. Are there any other indicators you feel should be included here?

- The Council would have no further comments at this stage.

Pillar 2 Indicators - Minimising Impacts

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To track the Strategy's progress against Pillar Two - Minimising the Impacts of Poverty, a number of indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- Healthy Life Expectancy - gap between the most and least deprived.
- Percentage of people who were victims of any NI safe community survey crime.
- Number of households in housing stress.

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these pillar level indicators appropriately monitor progress towards the Pillar Two outcomes as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

- **AGREE** - As per our previous comments, the Council believe that the current set of indicators are relevant, however would highlight that further detail is needed on the outworkings of the strategic commitments/actions in order to fully consider whether they would serve to appropriately monitor the progress. We would be keen to explore the process to support the outcome monitoring and to understand how the strategic commitments will be aligned to the proposed outcomes. We would also suggest that qualitative insights and data should be considered to help tell the story of progress.

Do you have any further comments to make on any of the pillar two indicators?

- The Council would commend that consideration be given to capturing data at the lowest level to enable greater focus on place-based approaches.
- The Council would commend that the data is disaggregated by Section 75 groupings and made available at as low a geographical levels as possible in order to understand the issues and barriers that people may face and support appropriate targeting of programme

Q. Are there any other indicators you feel should be included here?

- The Council would have no further comments at this stage.

Pillar 3 Indicators - Exiting Poverty

To track the Strategy's progress against Pillar Three - Supporting People to Exit Poverty, a number of indicators will be used to monitor progress over time.

- Percentage of employees earning on or above the Real Living Wage (aged 18 and over).
- Percentage who are economically inactive for any reason other than being a student (aged 16 to 64).
- Proportion of 16 to 24 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Belfast City Council response DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these pillar level indicators appropriately monitor progress towards the Pillar Two outcomes as laid out in the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy document?

- **AGREE** - As per our previous comments, the Council believe that the current set of indicators are relevant, however would highlight that further detail is needed on the outworkings of the strategic commitments/actions in order to fully consider whether they would serve to appropriately monitor the progress. We would be keen to explore the process to support the outcome monitoring and to understand how the strategic commitments will be aligned to the proposed outcomes. We would also suggest that qualitative insights and data should be considered to help tell the story of progress.

Q. Do you have any further comments to make on any of the pillar two indicators?

- The Council would commend that consideration be given to capturing data at the lowest level to enable greater focus on place-based approaches.
- The Council would commend that the data is disaggregated by Section 75 groupings and made available at as low a geographical levels as possible in order to understand the issues and barriers that people may face and support appropriate targeting of programme

Q. Are there any other indicators you feel should be included here?

The Council would commend that consideration be given to possible indicators in relation to working poor, childcare access, and long-term health outcomes.

Equality Impact Assessment

The Department has also included an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) alongside the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy. The full EQIA is available on the consultation website.

The Equality Impact Assessment is carried out to ensure that the two statutory duties on public authorities carrying out functions relating to Northern Ireland, as contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 are met.

The first duty requires public bodies, in carrying out their functions in relation to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between –

- people with different religious beliefs
- people from different racial groups
- people of different ages
- people with different marital status
- people with different sexual orientations
- men and women generally
- people with or without a disability

Belfast City Council response DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

- people with or without dependants
- people with different political opinions

The second statutory duty requires that in addition and without prejudice to the above duty, the Department should also have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between people with different religious beliefs, different political opinions or from different racial groups. The EQIA on the Executive's draft Anti-Poverty Strategy has been completed to identify if adverse differential impacts may occur as a result of its implementation.

Q. Are there any data, needs or issues in relation to any of the Section 75 equality categories that have not been identified in the EQIA consultation document? If so, what are they and can you provide details?

- The Council would commend that further consideration is given to understanding the data and possible impacts in relation to women (especially carers), ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and newcomer communities who may not have recourse to public funds.

Are there any adverse impacts in relation to any of the Section 75 equality groups that have not been identified in the EQIA Consultation document? If so, what are they?

Q. Please state what action you think could be taken to reduce or eliminate any adverse impacts emerging from implementation of the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy.

- The Council would highlight that the *Assessment of Impacts* as undertaken does not fully *detail the likely impacts and associated mitigating actions*. Whilst we would note the commitment set out in *relation to the People & Place Strategy* in terms of "*further work to ensure inequalities are addressed in this work will be taken forward as appropriate*" it is not clear *what steps or mitigating actions will be put in place to enable those from minority ethnic groups to access more of the interventions/programmes proposed*.
- More broadly, we accept that there are also limitations in the depth and breadth of poverty-related data that would enable a more in-depth understanding and analysis of the issues and nature of poverty experienced geographically and by certain groups, for example, in relation to those with caring responsibilities/dependants, minority ethnic groups. This reinforces the need for a strong data development agenda that supports better targeting of resources and delivery of policies/programmes.

Belfast City Council response DfC Anti-Poverty Strategy

- Research, and experience in Scotland, has highlighted the importance of taking an intersectional approach to understanding complex issues such as poverty and structural inequalities¹. This approach would provide a deeper understanding of the nature of the issues and experiences of poverty as well as the specific barriers faced by certain groups more likely to be at risk or in poverty.
- The Council would commend that a robust monitoring and reporting framework and process is put in place to enable regular monitoring of progress and assessment of the impacts.

Final comments

Is there anything further you'd like to add or comment on in relation to the draft Anti-Poverty Strategy?

- The Council looks forward to continuing to work with the Department for Communities and other NICS Departments to bring forward impact programmes and activities which help eradicate poverty within Belfast and wider region.

¹IPPR (2021) [Intersectionality-Revealing-the-Reality-of-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-Scotland-May-2021.pdf](#)

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Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	David Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager Shauna Murtagh, Portfolio Manager

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

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report 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, update on proposed new crematorium at Roselawn, along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to – • Capital Programme Movements - ○ Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. ○ Belfast Stories - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and update regarding the funding position on the submitted Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD). ○ Communication Boards in Playgrounds – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £170,000. ○ Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> with a maximum allocation of up to £60,000 to allow contractor to be appointed and enabling works to commence. ○ City Hall External Christmas Tree - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 3 – Committed</i> and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. ○ Basketball Courts – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. ○ Woodvale Park Sensory Garden – Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

	○ Musgrave Park Sensory Garden - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. ○ Under the Bridges - Agree that the project is moved to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. ○ Greening and Growing Project - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> to allow a business case to be developed. ● New Crematorium – note the scheduled date regarding the dedicated workshop session facilitated by the consultants on the new crematorium project on Thursday, 18th September 2025. ● Capital Letters of Offer - to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer. ● Contracts awarded in Q1 2025/26 - to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.																		
3.0	Main report <u>Key Issues</u>																		
3.1	Physical Programme 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.																		
3.2	<u>Capital Programme - Proposed Movements</u> 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: <table><tr><th>Project</th><th>Overview</th><th>Stage movement</th></tr><tr><td>IT Programme - Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System</td><td>Procurement and implementation of a new Asset Management Integrated Work Management System (IWMS).</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr><tr><td>Belfast Stories</td><td>The development of a new world class visitor attraction within the city centre.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr><tr><td>Communication Boards</td><td>Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £170,000</td></tr><tr><td>Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works</td><td>Enabling works for active travel container and gate improvements.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £60,000</td></tr><tr><td>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision</td><td>Consideration of options for replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution.</td><td>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</td></tr></table>	Project	Overview	Stage movement	IT Programme - Asset Management System – Integrated Work Management System	Procurement and implementation of a new Asset Management Integrated Work Management System (IWMS).	Move to Stage 3 – Committed	Belfast Stories	The development of a new world class visitor attraction within the city centre.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed	Communication Boards	Inclusive communication boards in playgrounds.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £170,000	Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works	Enabling works for active travel container and gate improvements.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £60,000	City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision	Consideration of options for replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Project	Overview	Stage movement																	
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City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision	Consideration of options for replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed																	

Basketball Courts	Creation and upgrade of basketball courts at five BCC park sites	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Woodvale Park Sensory Garden	New sensory garden facility	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Musgrave Park Sensory Garden	Upgrade to sensory garden	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Under the Bridges	Connectivity, active travel and public realm enhancements under M3 bridges	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Greening and Growing Project	Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme.	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging

3.3

IT Programme - 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. 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 tender received and full commitment to deliver.**

3.4

Belfast Stories

Members will recall that Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC) update was considered by the SP&R Committee in April 2025. 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. The Committee noted the detailed overview of the OBC following the 5-case model, with the total estimated capital cost of the preferred option at approximately £100m with £35m funded by BCC and £65m by BRCD. Furthermore, it was agreed to submit the Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD). **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 update regarding the funding position referred above.**

3.5

Communication Boards

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in May 2025 and was part of the agreed additional local schemes as a consequence of UKSPF. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery

	stage. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £170,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
3.6	Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in April 2025 as part of the additional schemes on the recoup capital monies from UKSPF. The project involves the transfer of two containers (council assets) to Strangford Playing Fields, and the associated enabling works in preparation for the delivery of the containers. It is envisaged that one container will be fitted for bike storage and the other will include a small kitchenette. The project will act as an outdoor classroom/park outreach hub which will improve accessibility and enable further community programming in the park. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £60,000 to allow contractor to be appointed and enabling works to commence. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
3.7	City Hall Christmas Tree Provision In June 2024, the City Hall Christmas Tree Provision project was moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted under the Capital Programme. The City Hall Christmas tree is a major focal point within the City Centre and can set the tone for the city's Christmas celebrations, both for visitors and the local economy. Given issues with the quality and supply of real trees it is proposed to purchase an artificial tree which will be installed from 2026 onwards. A real tree will be installed this year. The Installation - City Hall/ City Hall Grounds Working Group at its meeting on 13th August agreed to recommend this approach to SP&R Committee. 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 a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
3.8	Basketball Courts This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in April 2025 as part of the additional schemes from UKSPF. The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five BCC park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. Members are asked to agree that the ‘Basketball Courts’ project 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.
3.9	Woodvale Park Sensory Garden

	This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in April 2025, as above, this is part of the agreed additional schemes as a consequence of UKSPF. The work involves creation of a new sensory garden at Woodvale Park. Members are asked to agree that the project 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.
3.10	Musgrave Park Sensory Garden This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in April 2025, and it is part of the agreed additional schemes from UKSPF. The work includes refurbishment of the existing Musgrave Park Sensory Garden to provide a greater range of equipment that will improve the play value and accessibility of the facility. As per the three-stage approval process, a strategic outline case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the project 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.
3.11	Under the Bridges In April 2025, the Under the Bridges project was added at Stage 1 – Emerging under the Capital Programme. This project seeks to improve connectivity through high quality active and sustainable travel corridors, enhanced public realm and amenity space under the M3 bridges. Members will note that this project is in partnership with BHC, DfI, DfC and BCC. Officers are currently working with consultants to develop project concepts and designs. Members are asked to agree that the project 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.
3.12	Greening & Growing Project This project focuses on biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island programme at the Waterworks. It will be developed and delivered on site managed by GROW NI community group, in partnership with Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.
3.13	New Crematorium Members will recall that on 20th June 2025, the Committee has received an update on proposed new crematorium at Roselawn and agreed to hold a dedicated workshop to inform a Strategic Analysis and Options Appraisal on the proposed project. The date of the workshop is now set on Thursday 18th September 2025. All Members of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development (SC&CD) Working Group and SP&R Committee are invited and encouraged to attend. Members are asked to note on the scheduled date regarding the workshop session which will be facilitated by the consultants on the new crematorium project.

3.14	Capital Letters of Offer Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q1 2025/26 at Appendix 1.
3.15	Contracts Awarded Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q1 2025/26 at Appendix 2.
3.16	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> <i>Financial Implications –</i> Belfast Stories – up to £35m. Communication Boards - capital allocation of up to £170,000. Strangford Playing Fields Enabling Works - capital allocation of up to £60,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council. <i>Resource Implications –</i> Officer time to deliver.
3.17	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u> All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Capital Letters of Offer in Q1 2025/26 – April to June 2025 Appendix 2 – Contracts Awarded in Q1 2025/26 – April to June 2025

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Appendix 1

Capital Letters of Offer 01 April – 30 June 2025

Project	Funder	Amount
<i>Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub (Amendment)</i>	<i>TEO</i>	<i>£871,988</i>
IT Prog – 5GIR - Public Services Hub in CWB	DSIT	£1,300,000
<i>Ulster Hall: Production of Lighting Design (Amendment)</i>	<i>LQBID</i>	<i>£15,000</i>
<i>ABC Trust Health & Leisure Hub (Amendment)</i>	<i>TEO</i>	<i>£150,000</i>

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Appendix 2

Schedule of Contracts Awarded (Works and Works Related) for Notation (April – June 2025)

Contract Awarded	Supplier	Date of Award
Integrated Consultancy Team for Under the Bridge Public Realm	AtkinsRéalis UK Limited	10/04/2025
NRF_Integrated Consultant Team for the design of a new build hotel and an extension to the EastSide Visitor Centre	Hall Black Douglas	28/04/2025
BIF_Upper Crumlin Road Cultural Hub Main Contractor	CivCo Ltd	15/05/2025
MTC of callout, repairs & maintenance to Air Condition systems at various Council Properties	BL Refrigeration	15/05/2025
L1BCC05 - Roselawn Crematorium - Section Z Feasibility	Doran Consulting	16/05/2025
L3BCC01 Cost Estimation Services for 35-39 Royal Avenue	Skope Projects LLP	30/05/2025
L1BCC06 - Condition Survey & PRA report for on 3 properties on Cromac Street	Knox & Clayton	02/06/2025
MTC for Fire & Intruder Alarms at various Council Properties	Radiocontact Ltd	03/06/2025
North Foreshore LFG Gas Ring Main Installation	CivCo Ltd	09/06/2025
Clifton Street Graveyard Refurbishment Works	William Rogers Construction	16/06/2025

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Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Contracts Update
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Sharon McNicholl Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Noleen Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement Services

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to:

	- Seek approval from members for tenders, contract modifications to contract term and Single Tender Actions (STA) over £30,000 And to ask members to - Note retrospective Single Tender Actions (STAs) and non-procurement expenditure
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: - Approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1) - Approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3) - Note the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2)
3.0	Competitive Tenders
3.1	Section 2.5 of the Scheme of Delegation states Chief Officers have delegated authority to authorise a contract for the procurement of goods, services or works over the statutory limit of £30,000 following a tender exercise where the council has approved the invitation to tender.
3.2	Standing Order 60(a) states any contract that exceeds the statutory amount (currently £30,000) shall be made under the Corporate Seal. Under Standing Order 51(b) the Corporate Seal can only be affixed when there is a resolution of the Council.
3.3	Standing Order 54 states that every contract shall comply with the relevant requirements of national and European legislation.
3.4	The Committee is asked to approve the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1).
	Single Tender Actions (STAs)
3.5	The Council's current Single Tender Action (STA) process, which has been in place since 2020, provides assurance that the Council continues to comply with its obligations under the Procurement Act 2023 'the Act' and internal governance arrangements including required controls and approvals. It mirrors the Act setting out the exceptional and specific circumstances when a STA can be used (see STA/ Direct Award Reasons Table in Appendix 1).
3.6	To support Officers understanding and to build capability, CPS offer support training and guidance on the STA process.
3.7	In line with Standing Order 55 the Committee is asked to note the award of the retrospective STAs Appendix 1 (Table 2).

	Modification to Contract				
3.8	The Committee is asked to approve the following modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a as set out in Appendix 1 (Table 3) .				
	STA and Contracts <£30k Reporting				
3.9	At SP&R in October 23 the Committee agreed that 'the quarterly finance report should, in future, include information on expenditure on Single Tender Actions and on the number and value of contracts under £30,000'.				
3.10	Information on expenditure broken down by individual STA contract records is not readily available from the Council's current financial system.				
3.11	However, CPS centrally record the number and maximum total value of STA contract records. Quarter 1 2025/26 is provided below: STAs awarded FY 25/26 Qtr 1				
	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Number of STA contracts</th><th>Total value of STA contracts</th></tr> <tr> <td>41</td><td>£2.67m</td></tr> </table>	Number of STA contracts	Total value of STA contracts	41	£2.67m
Number of STA contracts	Total value of STA contracts				
41	£2.67m				
3.12	Records for contracts (including title; supplier name; value; duration etc) valued below £30,000 are not centrally held by CPS and are maintained on departmental registers. Below is a quarterly return by all departments on contracts awarded valued below £30,000 during FY 25/26 Qtr 1. Contracts <£30k awarded FY 25/26 Qtr 1				
	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>Number of <£30k contracts</th><th>Total value of <£30k contracts</th></tr> <tr> <td>42</td><td>£674,110</td></tr> </table>	Number of <£30k contracts	Total value of <£30k contracts	42	£674,110
Number of <£30k contracts	Total value of <£30k contracts				
42	£674,110				
	Financial & Resource Implications				
3.13	The financial resources for these contracts are within approved corporate or departmental budgets.				
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment				
3.14	None				
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached				
	Appendix 1 - Table 1 - Competitive Tenders - Table 2 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions - Table 3 - Modification to Contract				

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Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Booking system for cemeteries and crematorium including user licences, Funeral Director portal, Sculptor portal, finance integration, daily csv file extraction	Up to 4 years	£156,000	S McNicholl	License support and maintenance for Plotbox Bereavement Services Management System
Electric upgrade projects	Up to 5 years	£1,500,000	S Grimes	New MTC contract to provide emergency call outs, reactive & response maintenance works & provide call off facility for electrical contractor to carry out planned projects
Electric Gates, Barriers & Bollards maintenance and small works	Up to 5 years	£300,000	S Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and small works to electric gates, barriers & bollards systems to all Council properties
Lease of 2x 18T- RCV 4x2 x 18T narrow track OL10N Electric Bin Lift	Up to 4 months	£35,000	S Leonard	The current lease for the hire of 2 x 18T RCVs contract (T2614) expires on 31/03/26 with no option to renew. A new 4- month interim hire contract required from April 2026 to July 2026 to allow for the continuation of services until the arrival of 2 x 18T RCV vehicles which have been purchased are not due to be delivered until August 2026.
Collection of environmental water and sediment samples at North Foreshore Site	Up to 3 years	£160,000	S Grimes	The samples are required to be taken, analysed and reported to DAERA / NIEA in accordance with the relevant provisions of The Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997.

Appendix 1

Belfast WiFi Service	Up to 5 years	£165,000	S McNicholl	The Belfast WiFi service is required to deliver public WiFi services across over 100 council sites as well as external city centre locations.
Management and delivery of a Belfast Citywide Appeals Service	Up to 4.5 years	£1,215,000	D Sales	Provision of a shared and centralised appeals service, creating a dedicated and specialised service which could efficiently meet the wide range of need for appeals, across the communities of Belfast.
Implementation of a new Service Desk Management solution with Asset Management	Up to 4 years	£380,000	S McNicholl	Replacement of the current inhouse legacy CRM Service Desk system and Asset Management system that is approaching end of life.
Public services hub project delivery	Up to 15 months	£650,000	M McCann	Belfast 5G Innovation Region is a DSIT-funded programme that requires Belfast City Council, on behalf of Belfast Region, to deliver economic benefits in key industries. A public services hub will be delivered on behalf of Belfast City Council as part of this programme. Approved April 2025 for 11 months. Duration has now been updated.

Table 2: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Fleadh Cheoil Belfast 2026 Volunteer Services	Up to 8 months	£55,610	D Martin	Volunteer Now is the only organisation in NI with experience and capacity of co-ordinating and managing a complex, high profile, volunteering programme of the scale of the Fleadh.	Volunteer Now	3

Table 3: Contract Modifications

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T1974 – Security Guarding Services Lot 1 – Manned security guarding Lot 2 – Event stewarding Lot 4 – Keyholding Lot 5 – Mobile Patrol	Up to 4 years	Additional 1 months and £110k	N Largey	An additional 1-month extension of contract to help facilitate the evaluation and award of the new tender and ensure continuity of services including a smooth transition of any new service provider i.e. time for TUPE consultations and transfer. Large number of tender bids received as part of the re-tender exercise which is resulting in the evaluation taking longer to complete. Evaluation and award scheduled to be complete by end of August 25 but a 2-month handover period needs to be allowed for to allow for a potential transfer to a new service provider.	Cobra Security Services (Lots 1, 4 & 5) Eventsec (Lot 2)
Review and development of additional H&S processes at Belfast Zoo	Up to 6 months	Additional 6 months and £15,000	D Martin	An extension to the current contract is required due to additional H&S requirements being generated following a HSENI investigation at the Zoo. Being reported as STA as value now exceeds £30k.	Health and Safety Risk Management Consultancy Service

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

STA Number	Full description
1. Switching to a Direct Award	Switching to a Direct Award: No response or no suitable response following advertised procurement exercise.
2. Single Supplier for Art or Artistic Performance	Single Supplier for Art or Artistic Performance: the creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance
3. Single Supplier Absence of Competition for Technical Reasons	Single Supplier Absence of Competition for Technical Reasons: only a particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required and there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works

Appendix 1

4. Single Supplier Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	Single Supplier Intellectual Property Rights (IPR): only particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required due to that particular supplier having IPR or other exclusive rights and there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works.
5. Urgency	Urgency: Where the goods, services or works to be supplied under the public contract are strictly necessary for reasons of extreme and unavoidable urgency which is not attributable to any act or omission of and could not have been foreseen by the council, and as a result the public contract cannot be awarded on the basis of a competitive tendering procedure using the reduced 10 day period for 'urgent procurements'
6. Prototypes and Development	Prototypes and Development: the production of a prototype, or supply of other novel goods or services (i.e. goods or services designed or developed at the request of BCC), for the purpose of testing the suitability of the goods or services, researching the viability of producing or supplying the goods or services at scale and developing them for that purpose, or other research, experiment, study or development.
7. Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works	Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works: Extension or Partial Replacement concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier (includes supplier that the council no longer has a contract with) which are intended as an extension to, or partial replacement of, existing goods, services or works in circumstances where a change in supplier would result in the council receiving goods, services or works that are different from, or incompatible with, the existing goods, services or works, and the difference or incompatibility would result in disproportionate technical difficulties in operation or maintenance.
8. Commodity	Commodity: Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market
9. Advantageous time-limited	Advantageous time-limited: Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities
10. Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works	Additional or Repeat Goods Services or Works: Similar to Existing Goods Services or Works, concerns the supply of goods, services or works by the existing supplier (includes supplier that the council no longer has a contract with) that are similar to existing goods, services or works where the existing goods, services or works were supplied under a public contract that was awarded following a competitive procedure within the period of five years ending with the day on which the transparency notice is published, and the tender notice or any tender document in respect of the earlier contract set out the Council's intention to carry out a subsequent procurement of similar goods, services or works in reliance on this direct award justification, and any other information specified in Section 95.
11. Other	Other: Reason not in line with Procurement Act 2023
12. To Protect Life	To Protect Life: where a Minister of the Crown has by Regulations provided that specified contracts may be awarded to protect human animal or plant life or health or protect public order or safety

Appendix 1

13. Schedule 2– Exempted Contract	Schedule 2– Exempted Contract: Requirement not considered procurement spend but use of STA process to document and approve spend. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/schedule/2
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Subject:	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 4 th August 2025
Date:	22 nd August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on the 4 th August 2025.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 4 th August, including:
2.2	<u>Presentation on ASPIRE, PeacePlus Programme delivered by the Education Authority</u> The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.
2.3	<u>Good Relations - Quarter 1 Update</u> That Shared City Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report, including the allocation of £170,945.41 in grants through the Good Relations Small Grant Scheme.
2.4	<u>Forth Meadow Community Greenway Signage update</u> The Shared City Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that they also note the contents of the report
2.5	<u>Peace Plus Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update</u> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.
2.6	<u>Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update</u> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report
2.7	<u>Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update</u> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.
2.8	<u>Peace Plus Processes Update</u> The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.
2.9	<u>Update from Partnership Members</u> A Member advised the Partnership of an upcoming event entitled “Re-imagining Peace” which would take place in the City Hall on Monday, 29th September.

2.10	- A further Member reported that an event marking the International Day of Peace and promoting shared space would be taking place at Alexandra Park on Sunday, 21st September 2025. <u>Any Other Business</u> - The Chair welcomed the new Faith representative, Rev. Graeme Kennedy, who was taking over from Fr. Martin Magill and thanked Fr. Magill for all of his input over the last year.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> The Shared City Partnership is a Working Group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which consists of Elected members and representatives from various sectors across the city. The minutes from the Partnership are brought before the Committee for approval on a monthly basis.
3.2	The key issues on the agenda at the 4th August 2025 meeting were: - Partnership Papers of the 9th June 2025 - Presentation on The ASPIRE Programme by the Education Authority - Good Relations Quarter 1 report - Forth Meadow Community Greenway Signage update - Peace Plus BCC Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update - Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update - Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update - Peace Plus Processes Update - Members Update - AOB
3.3	More details regarding the above issues and recommendations are included in the following minutes of the meeting attached in Appendix 1: Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 4th August 2025, Appendix 2: Presentation on the ASPIRE Programme, Appendix 3: List of groups funded under the Good Relations Small Grants Programme and Appendix 4: An update summary of Quarter 1 of the Good Relations Action Plan.
3.4	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process.

3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> The recommendations of the Partnership are to promote the work of the Council in promoting good relations and will enhance equality and good relations impacts for the City of Belfast.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 4th August 2025 Appendix 2 – ASPIRE Presentation Appendix 3 – List of groups funded under the Good Relations Small Grants scheme Appendix 4 – Good Relations Action Plan Quarter 1 update summary

SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 4th August, 2025

MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson);
and Councillors Abernethy and I. McLaughlin.

External Members: Mr. J. Donnelly, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Ms. C. Guinness, Belfast Chamber;
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;
Rev. G. Kennedy, Faith Representative;
Fr. M. Magill, outgoing Faith Representative;
Ms. T. Mimna, Executive Office;
Mr. G. Walker, Community and Voluntary Sector;
Mr. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;
Ms. M. Watson-Holmes, Good Relations Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillor Smyth, Mr. P. Anderson, Mr. W. Naeem and Ms. B. Arthurs.

A Member reiterated that another reminder should be sent to the PSNI regarding the importance of its attendance at the Partnership meetings.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the new Faith representative, Rev. Graeme Kennedy, who was taking over from Fr. Martin Magill. The Chair thanked Fr. Magill for all of his input over the last year.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th June 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20th June 2025.

Declarations of Interest

Mr. J. Donnelly, declared an interest in item 5b, PEACEPLUS - Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update, in that he worked for the Active Communities Network which was the Lead Delivery Partner for "Youth Empowerment, Inspiring Future Belfast, Lot 2" and "Sport for Peace".

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in the same item, in that he was a Member of the West Belfast Partnership Board, which was a project partner under “Community Empowerment”.

As Item 5b did not relate to any financial decision, nor enter debate, the aforementioned Members did not leave the meeting.

Presentation - Education Authority PEACEPLUS Project ASPIRE

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. J. Simms, Education Authority (EA), who outlined the PEACEPLUS project “Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education” (ASPIRE).

The Partnership was reminded that the EA was bound by the Shared Education Act (2016), the purpose of which was to:

- a) deliver educational benefits to children and young persons;
- b) to promote the efficient and effective use of resources;
- c) to promote equality of opportunity;
- d) to promote good relations; and
- e) to promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.

Ms. Simms explained that the ASPIRE project fitted in under the thematic area of “Empowering and Investing in Our Young People”. The four key themes within the programme were:

- a laser sharp focus on Peace Building and Reconciliation;
- a focus on achieving more together;
- exploring personal and shared experiences; and
- embedding system wide networks and connections.

The aims of the programme were to secure high-quality outcomes for pupils North and South and building educator capacity; to establish processes to enable the effective sharing at system and partnership level and building cohesive communities which respected all cultures and identities.

ASPIRE was open to primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland and six border counties (Louth, Monaghan, Leitrim, Donegal, Cavan and Sligo). Schools had to identify between one and three other schools to work in partnership with for the school year, delivering 30 hours of shared education to funded pupils.

She outlined that, to date, over 24,000 pupils had participated, around 80% of which were of primary school age. She highlighted that the primary age group were ideal candidates as their timetables were more flexible than older students who had exams to prepare for. For the upcoming 2025/26 academic year, over 28,600 pupils had been approved to participate from over 574 schools and settings. Within the Belfast area, 44 schools/settings were involved, including 14 Controlled schools, 14 Maintained schools, 6 Voluntary, 5 Other Maintained, 3 Grant Maintained Integrated, 1 Controlled Integrated and 1 Private.

She highlighted that, during Good Relations Week, the EA would be hosting a Shared Education Day, on 16th October 2025, and would welcome working in partnership with the Council regarding a venue for the event.

In response to a Member's question, she emphasised that the programme was not just about creating contact between young people. She explained that the aim was to spark real engagement between the schools and pupils to deliver a broader curriculum covering history and politics together. She reiterated that the third phase of the programme would be to work with the parents of the students.

In response to a further Member's question, the Senior Good Relations Officer added that, at a recent Good Relations event, 93% of the young people indicated that they had not participated in a similar event before. He emphasised that the teacher-learning aspect had been highlighted and that it was important to facilitate the teachers to have the difficult conversations with the students, about identity, for example.

A further Member stated that plenty of challenges remained decades after the Peace Agreement and that parental involvement and facilitating teachers with the appropriate tools to have those conversations was crucial.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Simms for her presentation and she retired from the meeting.

Good Relations - Quarter 1 Update

The Senior Good Relations Officer provided the Partnership with an update on the delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan for the first quarter, covering April to June 2025. He reminded the Members that the Council received 75% of the funding from The Executive Office (TEO) for the delivery of its Action Plan.

The current Action Plan had been agreed by the Partnership in December 2024 and was subsequently submitted to TEO. The total value of the Action Plan was £600,000, with £450,000 being provided by The Executive Office. That was a reduction of £50,000 from what had been requested.

At its May meeting, the Partnership had agreed to proceed with the Action Plan and in particular, to not reduce the costs allocated for programme. As such the total available for programmes in the Action Plan was £448,862.20.

He provided a summary progress update on activity and allocations during Q1:

Code	Project Summary	Budget	Progress in Quarter 1	Total allocated
BCC1	Good Relations Small Grants Programme.	£160,000	48 projects awarded funding for Good Relations projects. See appendix 1.	£170,945.41
BCC2	St Patrick's Day Civic Events programme	£20,000	No activity in Quarter 1.	£0
BCC3	Positive Cultural Expression Programme	£40,000	Beacon Programme ongoing. 18 sites identified and being prepared.	£0
BCC4	Civic Engagement and Learning Programme	£20,000	June Migrant Forum meeting. Day of Reflection delivered	£6,303.26

			Refugee Week events delivered	
BCC5	Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme	£70,000	5 projects allocated funding	£66,472.00
BCC7	Interface Engagement programme	£70,000	5 projects allocated funding	£28,270.00
BCC7	Shared Education Schools Programme	£20,000	Programme planning for delivery in Q3.	£0
BCC 8	Strategic Connections and Support Programme	£48,862.20	No activity in Q1	£0
	TOTAL	£448,862.20		£271,990.67

Further to the above, the Council received a further £20,000 from TEO, subject to an application, following the recent upsurge in racist attacks. There had been a very short turnaround time for the application, which had been issued on 3rd July and had to be returned by 8th July. The Good Relations Manager had therefore agreed with the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Partnership to submit a citywide proposal which was the next ranked in the open call for the Community Recovery Fund.

The Partnership was advised that Diverse Youth would therefore be funded through the additional funding to progress the “No Room for Hate” project which offered a unique and urgent solution. By working in North, South, East, and West Belfast, it brought together young people across racial and cultural lines to engage in shared learning, storytelling, public art, and community leadership. The programme built both individual resilience and collective solidarity. Through Respect Circles, Hate Crime Literacy Labs, and peer-led campaigns, participants would gain the confidence and tools to become “Respect Ambassadors”—active upstanders who could safely confront hate, support peers, and spark change.

The Partnership recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it would note the contents of the report including the allocation of £170,945.41 in grants through the Good Relations Small Grant Scheme.

Forth Meadow Community Greenway Signage

The Programme Manager provided the Partnership with an update on the PEACE IV Local Action Plan – Shared Spaces & Service Project, the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

She reminded the Partnership that the installation of signage for the Forth Meadow Community Greenway had been subject to agreement by the Council on the dual language approach. Following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee’s agreement on the language approach for the Greenway, in November 2024, a workplan and signage programme for the installation had been compiled.

The programme comprised of 7 Beacons, 20 Interpretative panels, 35 Wayfinding and directional signs and Thermoplastic markers. The Members were advised that discussion on the installation of thermoplastic markers was ongoing, due to vandalism, complaints and issues.

A review of the Forth Meadow “Proud of our Past, Confident for the Future” publication was underway to verify the wording for the interpretative panels. Costs would be met by the Council’s PEACE IV contingency fund and officers were liaising with contractors to confirm the

installation of bases, electrical connections and signage installation costs. It was noted that the interpretative panels might be subject to available budget.

The partnership was advised that the development of the three properties at Fernhill House, situated at the Glencairn section of the Greenway, were at Stage 1 on the Capital Programme, with approval for feasibility works. A structural survey of all the buildings had been completed in June 2025 and the consultant's report was due in the next few weeks. It would provide clarification on the safety works required to allow safe access for a detailed building condition survey of the three properties.

The next steps were to identify costs for the safety works and to seek approval to proceed, our consultants would liaise with the Historical Environment Division of the Department of Communities prior to any works being undertaken. Once the costs were established, the Council would be approaching the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Architectural Heritage Fund for funding of the capital works.

She stated that, as reported in June 2025, all claims had been reimbursed by SEUPB. However, formal programme closure had been paused, pending clarity from SEUPB regarding the financial correction applied to the Artworks contract.

All PEACE IV related costs had been reimbursed through the programme, with expenditure across the Programme totaling £12.9m, with claims of approximately £12.9m reimbursed to date.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would note the contents of the report.

Peace Plus BCC Local Action Plan Update

Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update

The Peace Programmes Manager provided the Partnership with an update on the mobilisation of PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP).

She outlined that the Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) between the Council and SEUPB had been agreed and returned to SEUPB and that formal contracting was progressing. The modification for an extension request, to June 2028, was currently being compiled and would be submitted to SEUPB for approval.

The Members were advised that contracts had been awarded for the delivery of projects, as follows:

- TPC3 Lot 4 Youth Empowerment had been awarded to GEMS NI and
- CCD5 Lot 2 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism to Maywe.

She highlighted that the assessment of "CCD 4 Ex politically motivated prisoners" was being finalised, and the tender for CCD5 Lot 1 "Multiculturalism to Interculturalism" had both been extended and would remain open until 15th August, 2025.

The Partnership was reminded that Invitations to Tender (ITT) for Integrated Consultancy Services (Design Teams) for all Community Regeneration and Transformation (CRT) capital projects had closed, with responses received for all projects. An evaluation of

each of the submissions was progressing, and Design Team appointments were estimated for August 2025.

Stakeholder engagement for each project was continuing with Steering Group meetings planned for August and September 2025 to coincide with the appointment of the design team.

The Programmes Manager explained that KPMG's proposal for the delivery of management verification services for the PEACEPLUS Action Plan had been received. The proposal outlined 548 days up to December 2027 at a cost of approx £235K. The cost was considerably more than SEUPB's initial guidance of £39K. To confirm reasonableness of input days and value for money, the Programme Board conducted a detailed due diligence review which had been submitted to both SEUPB and KPMG for response and discussions were ongoing.

The Partnership was advised that the July Programme Board had requested that the Council would submit an alternative proposal to KPMG for consideration. In the event that an agreement of input days and costs was not reached with KPMG, and in line with the SEUPB framework and procedure, an approach to the next supplier on the framework would be made.

The Partnership was requested to note that an event to mark the International Day of Peace, on Monday 22nd September, 2025, was being planned at City Hall. The event would focus on the United Nations 2025 theme of End Racism, Build Peace. The proposed content of the event would feature the lived experience of the migrant journey, a video from delivery partners on how the theme was reflected in PEACEPLUS projects, digital myth busting element, a consultation aspect and a call to action on how attendees pledged to continue a legacy of peace. The consultation element would fulfil the Letter of Offer requirement for the Council to undertake an annual public consultation on PEACEPLUS. The event would also provide the opportunity to promote PEACEPLUS projects.

Members were advised that the call to action/pledge would create a live peace tree, from the Council's one million trees initiative, which would subsequently be planted along the Access to the Hills project. A formal invitation would be issued to Members once all details were confirmed.

The Partnership was advised that 2 PEACEPLUS staff, the Project Officer and a Project Support Officer, had been appointed to other roles within the Council. The appointment of a new Project Support Officer was progressing, and a recruitment timeframe for the Project Officer was being confirmed.

It was reported that the expenditure incurred for the Action Plan to 30th June, 2025, (Claim Periods 1-6) totaled £968,485, which included staff costs and contract initiation payments to several delivery partners. Preparation for the submission of claims 1-6 was progressing. The Members were requested to note that the Programme Board had agreed that a phased approach to claims submission should be progressed given the new Financial Controller arrangement and to minimise the risk to the Council.

During discussion, a Member requested that the Council's Communications Team promote the International Day of Peace.

After discussion, the Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would note the contents of the report.

Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

(The Chairperson and Mr. J. Donnelly declared an interest in this item but as the discussion did not enter into any financial matters/decisions, they did not leave the meeting).

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Thriving and Peaceful Communities (TPC) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Projects and Delivery partners are at various stages of implementation, and confirmation of delivery approaches have been submitted. An overview of project progress within the TPC theme is outlined below:

3.2 TPC 1 Community Empowerment – Lead Delivery Partner NICVA

Project Partners: Forward South Partnership (FSP), East Belfast Community Development Agency (EBCDA), West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB), Falls Community Council (FCC), Greater Shankill Partnership (GSP) and Marrowbone Community Association (MCA).

The project launched with a city-wide networking event on 24 June 2025 attended by 96 representatives from diverse organisations including: VCSE sector, local government and the Civil Service. Planning for delivery of activity is progressing.

The Partnership is requested to note that the Programme Board agreed an operational change request to amend the participant category for 120 participants participating in the OCN Level 2 Award in Community Development from the Wider to the Core participant category.

This change will increase the number of Core participants who are engaged for 30 hours from 200 to 320 and reduce the number of Wider participants engaged for 6 hours from 800 to 680.

The participant category change will enable those completing the OCN to be signposted to other wider activities once the accredited training is completed, thereby enabling progression and the application of skills and learning.

Members should note there is no change to the overall participant target of 1,000, contract budget or timeframe. Approval of the change by SEUPB is being progressing.

3.3 TPC 2 Health & Wellbeing - Lead Delivery Partner Ashton

Project Partners: Shankill Partnership Board, East Belfast Community Development Agency, West Belfast Partnership Board, & North Belfast Community Partnership.

The project is at the early stages of mobilisation. The Programme Oversight Group is being developed with two preliminary meetings having taken place to establish key stakeholders and help the ongoing development of this group. Local Working Groups are being established with the Terms of Reference (TOR) currently in review.

The initial draft of the mapping of service provision is underway and recruitment for the first participants for Take 5 and Good Relations activity will take place by September 2025.

A project launch event is being scheduled for September/October 2025, and contract initiation process is progressing

TPC 3 Youth Empowerment, Inspiring Future Belfast

3.4 Lot 1: 9–12 year olds (Juniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Giga Training

Project Partner BEAM Creative Network.

Three Digital Arts Academy programmes in schools are now complete and have included delivery in:

- Loughview Primary School – 59 young people complete.
- Cranmore Primary School – 29 young people complete.
- Forge Integrated Primary School – 58 young people complete.

Project activity included: celebrating difference, cultural diversity, embracing diversity, animation, personal identity, comic designs, photography, drama and online safety.

146 participants have achieved the required 24 contact hours, 108 of these have been uploaded to the Council's M&E system, and registrations for the remaining 38 are to be provided.

Planned activity over the summer months includes:

- 7 Digital Arts Academies to be delivered in Girdwood Community Hub.
- 4 Art & Drama Academies to be delivered in Avoniel Leisure Centre.

Phase 1 contract initiation payment is complete, and the Phase 2a target of 100 participants has been achieved.

3.5 Lot 2: 12–15 year olds (Intermediate) - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network (ACN)

Project Partners: Ledley Hall Boys & Girls Club, Lagmore Youth Project and Rosario Youth.

The Contract initiation phase is complete, and project activity has commenced, including individual group sessions and visits to each of the project partners' venues been progressing.

Members are advised that ACN had advised that R City Youth is no longer able to be a sub-partner within the project. ACN proposes to increase the KPIs across other partners to ensure the geographic and community background requirements are achieved. However, it should be noted that the withdrawal of sub-partner has impacted the initial participant target. To date, 70 participants are registered and actively participating, with 9 sessions and 27 contact hours, As such, it should be noted that a minor realignment of phased targets and payments is being made to reflect the level of achievement.

3.6 Lot 3: 16–18 year olds (Seniors) - Lead Delivery Partner Streetbeat Youth Project

Project Partner YEHA (Youth Educational Health Advice).

Project activity has been progressing with five groups engaging 61 participants registered and actively participating in sessions including: team building, building positive relationships, social and personal development.

Monitoring data shows the geographic spread of participation as Streetbeat and YEHA North (10 participants), Streetbeat and YEHA West (31 participants), East (10 participants), Rosario South (2 participants), and 8 participants from the existing groups are located outside the Belfast boundary. It should be noted that participants outside the Council's boundary will be kept to a minimum, and are by exception and agreement with Council

The Street Beat and YEHA groups have engaged in day/group trips, including hill walking in Newry, bowling, mini golf, Lisburn

half marathon. Streetbeat East group activity commenced on 7 July 2025.

The Project launch event is planned for August 2025, and members will be advised of the date once confirmed. The Phase 1 contract initiation is complete.

3.7 Lot 4: 19-25 years olds (Young adults) – Lead Partner GEMS NI

Project Partners: Diverse Youth NI, Training Network for Women.

The contract initiation meeting took place on 8 July 2025, and GEMS NI and project partners are progressing the actions highlighted during the meeting in preparation for project implementation.

3.8 TPC 4 Sport for Peace - Lead Delivery Partner Active Communities Network

Project Partners: Sport Changes Life Foundation, PeacePlayers NI and Community Sports Network.

The Phase 1 contract initiation is complete, and activity has progressed.

Pillar 1 (16-18 year olds), project activity is nearing completion for with 40 participants from Bryson and Malone College. Participants completed: First Aid, Safeguarding, Sports Practice, inclusive games, Dodgeball level 1, team building activity at Belfast Activity Centre and a cross border celebration event. Participant data is being finalising

Participants are recruited and actively participating in Pillar 2. John Paul youth club (12 participants), Rossa GAC (16 participants), Norman Whiteside Boy's Group (19 participants), Belfast Knights (14 participants), Ledley Hall (15 participants), St Malachy's youth club (19 participants).

Pillar 2 engages 11-16 year olds participants, the project will enable young people to engage better with their community by building their confidence, personal abilities, and core skills, initially engaging in single identity sessions before twinning with groups across Belfast. Two sessions including Introductions & registrations and Team building have been completed.

Pillar 4 research in partnership with UUJ has commenced and the research framework complete. Baselines surveys are being provided to participants in Pillar 1 for completion.

3.9 TPC 5 Employability Language Up – Lead Delivery Partner People1st

Project Partners: Belfast City Mission, Conway Education, Donegall Pass, Fane Street Primary, Food Stock, Footprints, Holy Rosary Primary, Mears, Refuge Language, Russian Speaking Community, Street Soccer NI, The Suitcase Project, Wee Chicks, Windsor Women's Centre.

The Project has completed the contract initiation phase and is in the first stages of delivery.

Six cohorts have been established in partnership with local community groups, and activity is being delivered as follows:

- Cohorts 1-3 – Donegall Pass Community Forum, Donegall Pass
- Cohort 4 – Street Soccer NI, Botanic Avenue
- Cohort 5 – People 1st, Ormeau Road
- Cohort 6 – Suitcase Project, Roslyn Street

65 participants have been registered and are actively engaging in activity. Approx. 23 sessions have been delivered across all cohorts, comprising of both strand 1 (flexible language classes) and co-design elements of strand 2 (community programme of activities). By September 2025, it is scheduled that the project will have several cohorts completing project engagement.

A further 60 participants will be registered and commence activity by August 2025, in partnership with Conway Education and Anaka Women's Collective, with participant recruitment ongoing for future cohorts.

Members should note that further sub project partners may be added as the project delivery progresses, and will be reported to the Partnership, as required.

3.10 TPC 6 Arts Across the Genres – Delivery Partner Maywe

Project Partners: Giga Training, BEAM Creative Network

The contract initiation phase is complete, and project delivery has commenced.

Outreach to participant groups across the city is progressing for Project 1, led by BEAM which focuses on Performance Art/ Music & Creative Writing, and Project 5, led by GIGA which will focus on digital media and filmmaking.

An Artistic Director has been appointed to lead Project 1 with Good Relations capacity building sessions planned for September and October 2025. Project 1 and 5's first taster session/ recruitment open days are planned for late July 2025.

Marketing assets, including a press release, a dedicated website and branding are being finalised.

Financial & Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.”

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would note the contents of the report.

Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with a progress update on projects within the Celebrating Culture and Diversity (CCD) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Project Delivery

Delivery partners and projects are at various stages of implementation, and confirmation of delivery approaches have been submitted. An overview of project progress within the CCD theme is outlined below:

3.2 CCD1 – Interfaith and Belief Lead Delivery Partner: Corrymeela Community

Consortium Partners: Redeeming Our Communities, Belfast Islamic Centre, NI Inter-Faith Forum

The Project launch took place in June 2025 and feedback has been positive. Recruitment of a dedicated Programme Manager is underway. The contract initiation phase is nearing completion. Recruitment for steering group participants has commenced

3.3 CCD2 – Community Connections Lead Delivery Partner: GEMS NI

Consortium Partners: Business in the Community, Belfast City of Sanctuary, Diverse Youth NI, Migrant Centre NI, Ballynafeigh Community Development Association

The Project is at the early stages of mobilisation, with a scoping exercise underway to identify potential sites for the Welcome Hubs. Recommendations on locations will be reported to the Programme Board for approval and presented to Council. It is envisaged the Project Advisory Group will be established by September 2025.

The contract initiation phase is progressing and the recruitment of participants across all strands of activity is scheduled to commence in August/September 2025.

3.4 CCD 3 – LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement Project Lead Delivery Partner: The Rainbow Project Project Partners: Cara Friend, HERe NI

The contract initiation phase is progressing. The project is at the early stages of mobilisation and is currently recruiting for 3 new project specific roles.

Project activity including the establishment of the Steering Group and Strategic Planning Group, and the Research Strand is scheduled to commence in August 2025.

3.5 CCD4 – Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners

Assessment clarifications identified continue to be addressed with Procurement and the bidder. Subject to satisfactory responses, it is anticipated that contract award will progress in August 2025.

CCD5 From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism

3.6 Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access The public procurement exercise for the project remains open until 1 August 2025, with tender evaluation scheduled for August 2025, and the contract award anticipated for September 2025.

**3.7 Lot 2 – Cultural Spaces Lead Delivery Partner: MayWe
The contract for Lot 2 Cultural Spaces has been awarded to MayWe, and contract initiation took place on 24 July 2025.**

3.8 Lot 3 – Festivals and Flagship Events Lead Delivery Partner: Féile an Phobail

Project Partners*: Belfast International Arts Festival, Arts Ekta, Eastside Arts Festival, Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF),

Beyond Skin, Community Arts Partnership, Reclaim the Night, May Day Festival, Belfast Exposed, Féile na hAbhann, Féile na gCloigíní Gorma, Glor na Mona, Look North Festival, Ashton Community Trust (*Partners as per the tender submission and final partners are subject to confirmation by the delivery partner)

Project planning is continuing, and the first Flagship Events Steering Group meeting took place during June 2025. The first Musical Fusions Steering Group meeting is planned for August 2025.

Members are requested to note that the Delivery Partner had advised of initial mobilisation challenges given that some partners included in the bid are no longer able to be involved and significant changes in senior staff within the festivals sector is impacting the Festivals Cultural Connector (mentoring) element,

The Delivery Partner is continuing to engage with the sector, including Council's Festival Forum, to address these issues, and appropriate resolutions appear positive.

Members are advised that any proposed project changes will be submitted for consideration by the Programme Board and Shared City Partnership in line with the PEACEPLUS Change Control process.

3.9 Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage Lead Delivery Partner: Arts Ekta

Project Partners: Cairde na Cille, Kabosh Theatre

Project delivery is progressing, with 90 participants registered, of which 84 are actively participating.

The Project Steering Group has been established and delivery of activity commenced in June 2025 with the Discovering Our Roots Heritage Tours programme.

Four Heritage Tour Days: Finding Foundries, Sailortown Secrets, Victorian Maritime Tour and The Poor House Tour were delivered during June 2025 based around Riddel's Warehouse, St. Josephs, Titanic Quarter and Clifton House.

The Rituals of Remembrance Burial Traditions programme also began with three workshops focused on Friar's Bush Graveyard.

Heritage Events in the Old Museum Building, including The Herschel Print Lab, Points Puffs and Petticoats and The History of High Tea were delivered during July 2025.

Planned activity for August 2025, taking place in the Falls Library, includes the Little Palaces Exhibition, Mosaic Memories in Clonard

Gardens, Tales of Victorian Living (Little Palaces Session) and Angels in Stone.

Four further Heritage Tour Days will be delivered in August 2025, and activity planned for September 2025 includes the delivery of Tour Guide training in partnership with Belfast Met, the Civic Voices theatre strand, and the faith-based AR trail programme.

Financial & Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.”

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would note the contents of the report.

Processes Update

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Shared City Partnership with an update on processes to aid the implementation of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community Peace Action Plan (LCAP).

2.0 Recommendations

Members are requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

3.1 As project delivery progresses discussions are ongoing with SEUPB to finalise formal contracting and ensure appropriate processes are in place to aid effective implementation and ensure compliance with SEUPB requirements.

3.2 Target Groups

The Partnership is requested to note that during the contracting phase, SEUPB reviewed the Target Groups and requested that Council combine some of the target groups to allow for more effective and streamlined reporting.

Members are referred to Appendix 1; shows the Target Groups as originally presented (Table 1) and the proposed updated structure (Table 2).

This minor operational amendment was considered and agreed by the Programme Board in July 2025. The Partnership is requested to note the updated target group structure, which reduces duplication by combining some of the original target group but does not exclude any groups previously included.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation System

The PEACEPLUS M&E System continues to be rolled out to delivery partners. Feedback on the system has been positive, although some delivery partners have required significant support from the PEACEPLUS Monitoring and Data Analyst.

A summary of progress to date shows that:

7 projects have commenced adding participant data
475 participants have been registered on the system
157 participants have been marked as having completed their activities / contact hours

All data and supporting evidence is currently being verified by officers.

3.4 Cohorts

The Partnership is reminded that a condition of the PEACEPLUS Letter of Offer is;

‘The community background of each of the Cohorts of participants should be confirmed and not vary from that set out in the application and detailed on Jems. If a variation is necessary, it will be subject to the agreement of SEUPB.’

Cross community splits for each project, based on the project activity and reflective of the Census 2021, were included in the tender specification, and the above condition conveyed to delivery partners at the Contract Initiation process

Clarity has been sought from SEUPB regarding this condition. As single identity activities, which do not incorporate any cross-community and / or cross-border dimension are ineligible, unless previously agreed by Council and the SEUPB, it is vital that project activity at a cohort level includes those from a different community background to ensure eligibility of activity.

As such the Programme Board has recommended that operational guidance is issued to delivery partners advising that:

All approved PEACEPLUS project activity must involve cross community participation.

Delivery partners should aim to achieve the cross community split as reflected in the tender specification within each cohort. Any divergence from the cross community split of the project should be agreed by the Council.

Members are requested to note this guidance, and the process for managing any variations, as follows: Minor variations to the cross community split by individual cohort will be considered and agreed by the PEACEPLUS Project Managers and Programme Manager and reported to the Programme Board and Shared City Partnership. Any significant variations may require a change request to be agreed through the governance structure.

3.5 Programme Risk Register

To aid effective risk management, the PEACEPLUS Programme risk register is reviewed quarterly, and members are referred to Appendix II. Some minor changes have been highlighted, however it should be noted that no additional significant risks have been identified and no individual project risks require escalation at this stage.

Financial & Resource Implications

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is eligible from 1 January 2024.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan has been screened for equality, good relations and rural needs assessment, and has been screened out.

Appendix I – Target Groups

Table 1: Target Groups as submitted

#	Target Group (organisations and / or individuals)
1	General Public (inc. participants and wider beneficiaries)
2	Disadvantaged Communities (inc. communities with educational underachievement, poor housing, community interfaces, high economic inactivity, youth unemployment, health blackspots)
3	Youth (youth organisations or individuals that have suffered disproportionately from the conflict)
4	LGBTQIA+ community

5	Ethnic Minority Groups (inc. economic migrants, refugees & asylum seekers, newcomer communities)
6	Faith and Belief communities
7	Ex-politically motivated prisoners
8	High levels of prescription drugs, anti-depressants, inter-generational stagnation, communities with high numbers of suicides
9	Those who suffer with long-term mental health and wellbeing
10	Disadvantaged communities, in particular women, men, young people, older people, LGBTQIA+ comms, those with a disability & those without, those with dependents & those without, those of different religions, those with different political opinions & ethnic minorities.

Table 2: Proposed Target groups

#	Target Group (organisations and / or individuals)
1	General Public (inc. participants and wider beneficiaries and those from faith and belief groups)
2	Disadvantaged Communities (including women, men, young people, older people that experience educational underachievement, poor housing, community interfaces, high economic inactivity, youth unemployment.
3	Groups with health inequalities including those with high levels of prescription drugs, anti-depressants, inter-generational stagnation, communities with high numbers of suicides, those who suffer with long-term mental health and wellbeing
4	Minority Communities including women, men, young people, older people from Minority Ethnic Groups (inc. economic migrants, refugees & asylum seekers, newcomer communities); LGBTQIA+ community, and those from an ex-politically motivated prisoners background”

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would note the contents of the report.

Members' Updates

A Member advised the Partnership of an upcoming event entitled “Re-imagining Peace” which would take place in the City Hall on Monday, 29th September.

A further Member reported that an event marking the International Day of Peace and promoting shared space would be taking place at Alexandra Park on Sunday, 21st September 2025.

Information on both events would be circulated to the Members.

Date of Next Meeting

The Partnership was reminded that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday, 8th September.

Chairperson

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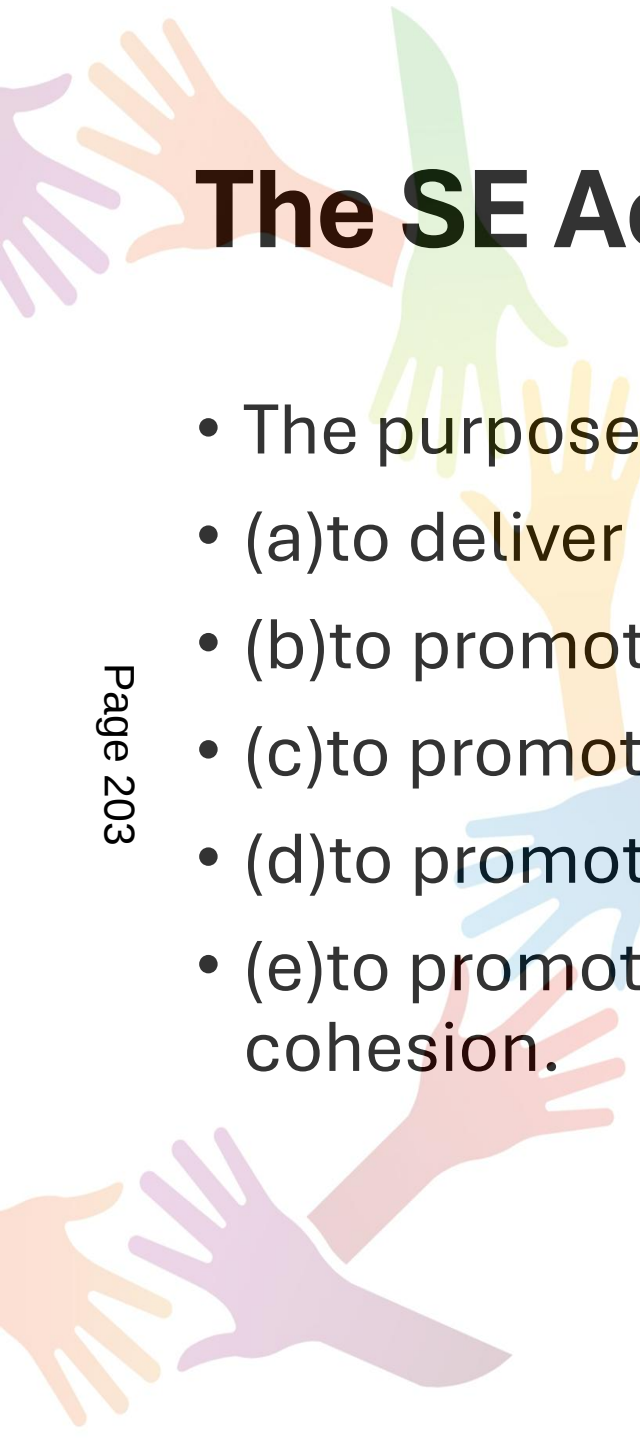


EA Update ASPIRE



PEACEPLUS - Advancing Shared
Partnerships through Inclusive
Relationships in Education

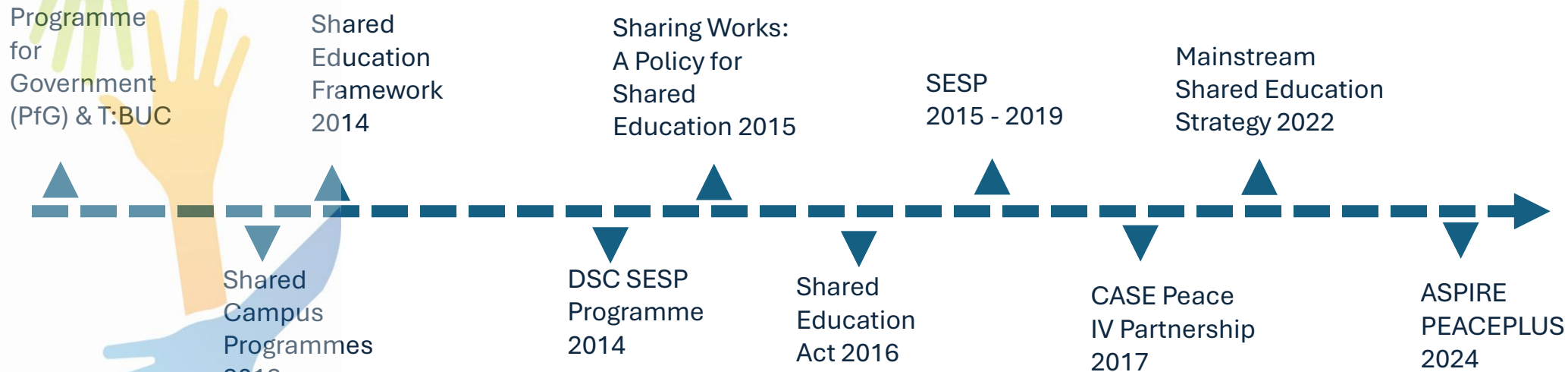




The SE Act (2016)

- The purpose of shared education is—
- (a) to deliver educational benefits to children and young persons;
- (b) to promote the efficient and effective use of resources;
- (c) to promote equality of opportunity;
- (d) to promote good relations; and
- (e) to promote respect for identity, diversity and community cohesion.

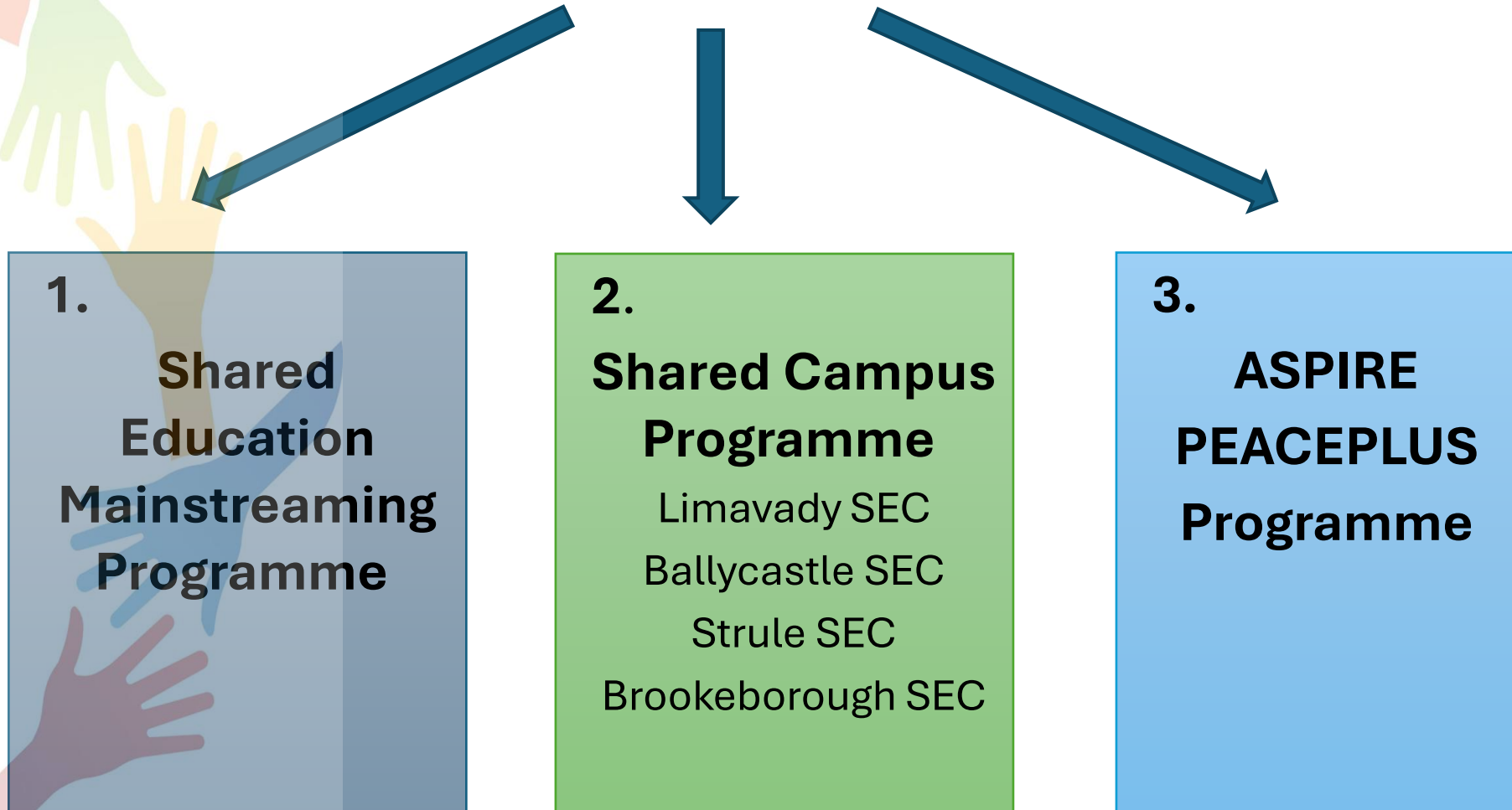
The Journey so far – Working Together

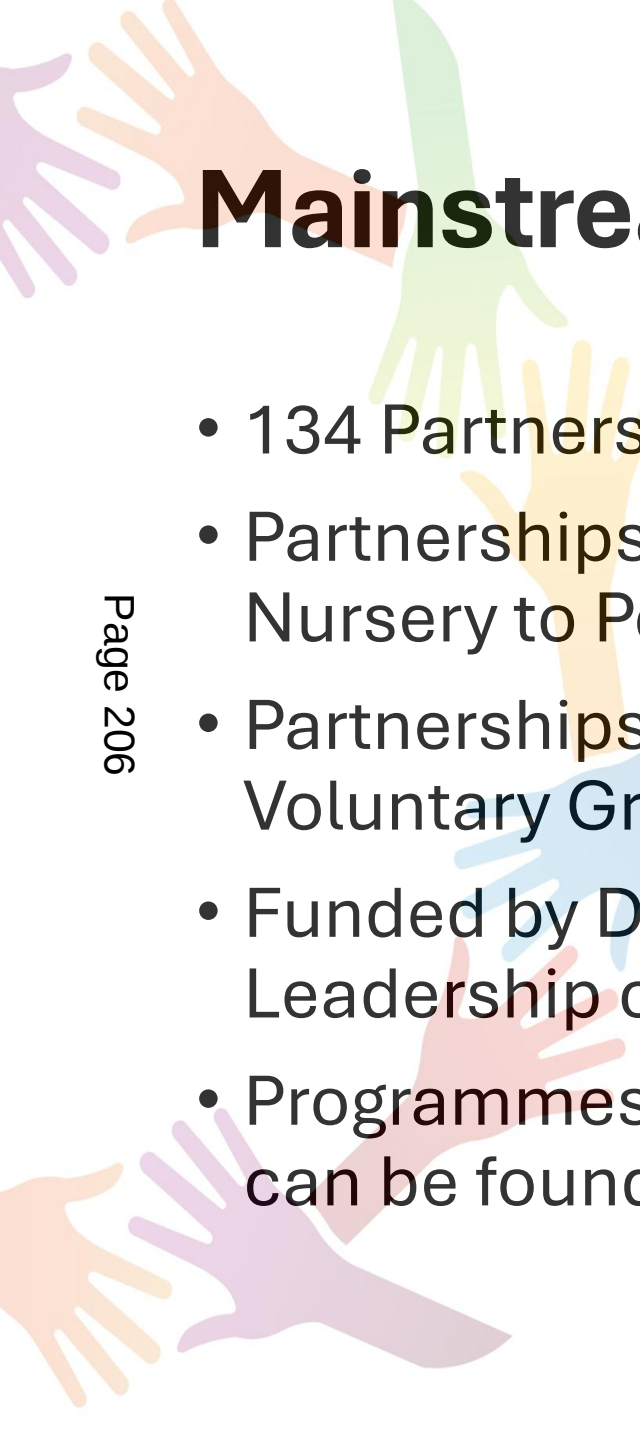


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Shared Education Programmes (EA)



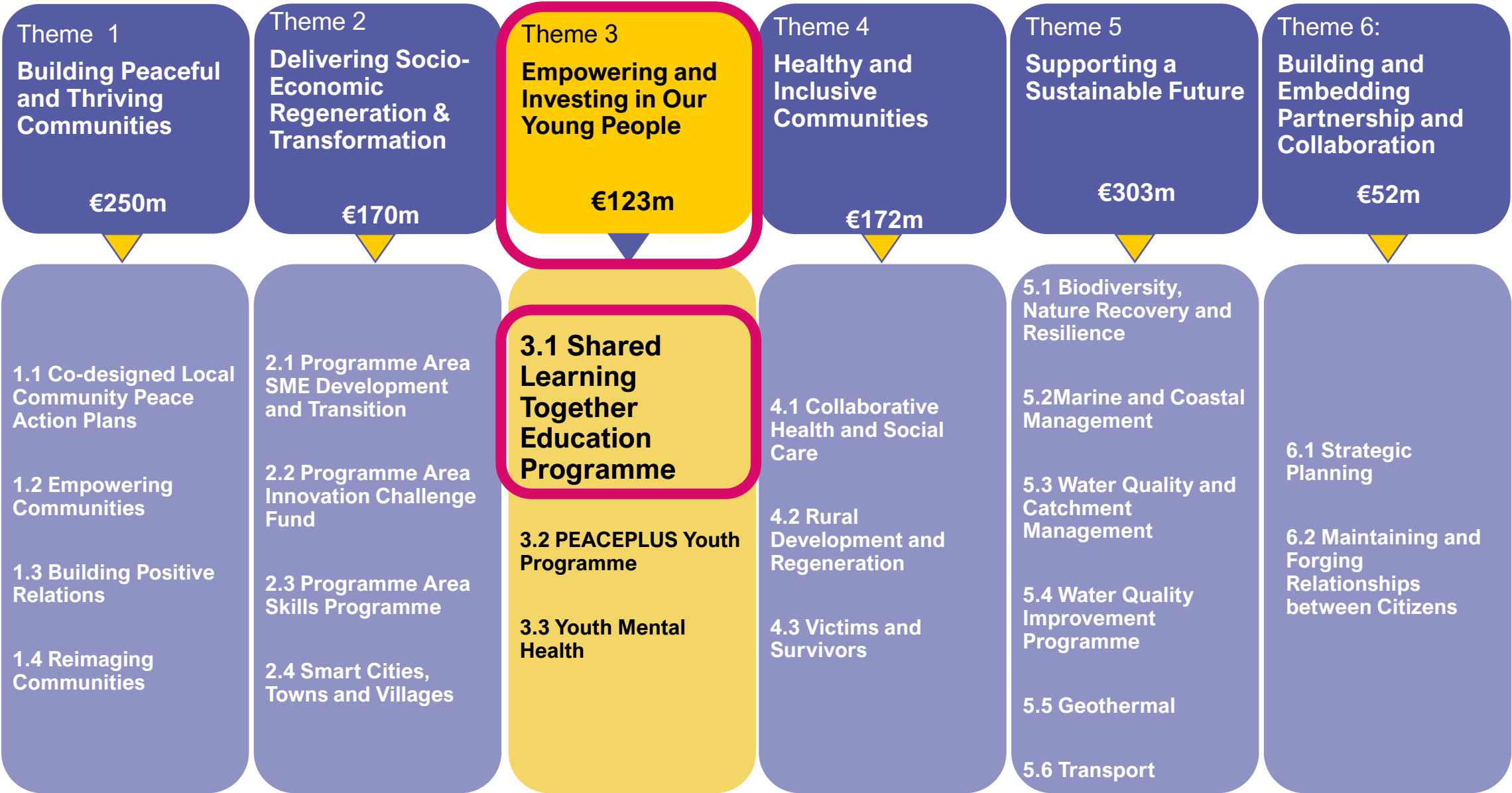


Mainstreaming Shared Education

- 134 Partnerships comprising 315 schools across NI
- Partnerships range from 2 school to 9 school in size and from Nursery to Post-primary
- Partnerships include schools of all types – Maintained, Controlled, Voluntary Grammar, Integrated and Irish-medium
- Funded by DE – spend allowed for Transport, Sub cover and Leadership only, delivering 20 hours of shared education.
- Programmes include educational and reconciliation outcomes that can be found in the Shared Education Pupil Pathway document.

PEACEPLUS – Where does the ASPIRE Project fit in?

Investment Areas
Thematic Areas
Page 207



Key Themes within ASPIRE PEACEPLUS Programme

Laser sharp focus on Peace Building and Reconciliation

Focus on achieving more together

Exploring personal and shared experiences

Embedding system wide networks and connections.

Aims:

Advancing **Shared Partnerships** through
Inclusive **Relationships** in **Education**

Enable Educational Benefits

Securing high quality **outcomes** for pupils North & South and building educator capacity

Ensuring Economic Benefits

Establishing **processes** to enable effective sharing
at system and partnership level

Energise Societal Benefits

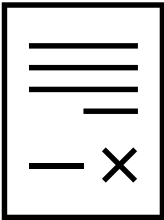
Building cohesive communities which respect all
cultures and identities



ASPIRE - Progress to Date

€34.5m Sept 2024 – Dec 2028

Page 210



464

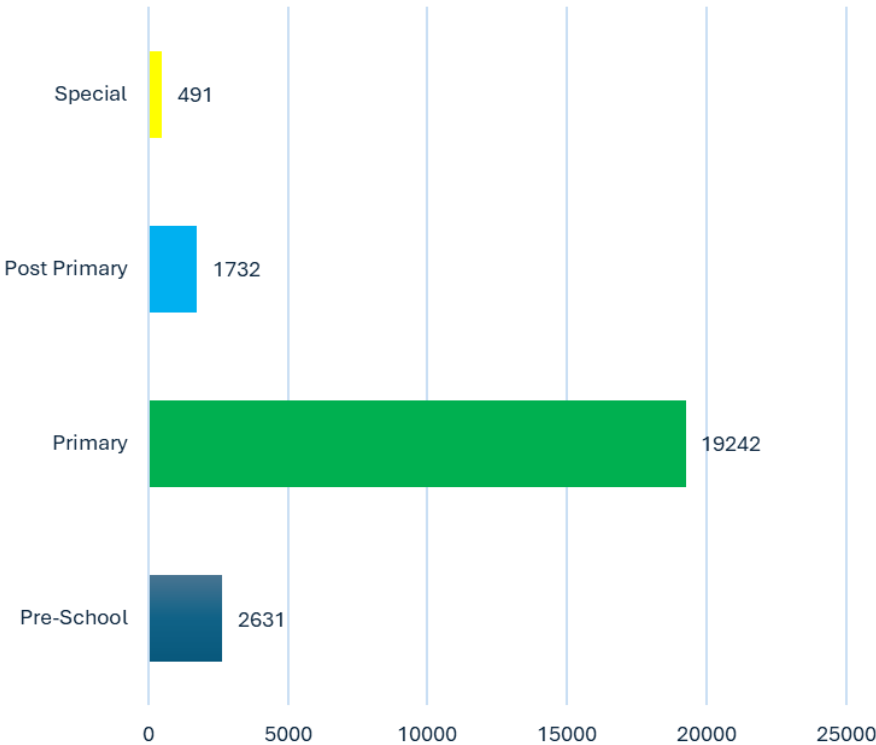
Total applications accepted



24,096

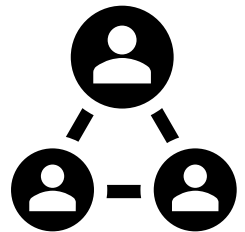
Total number of pupils engaged in shared activity

Pupils - School Type



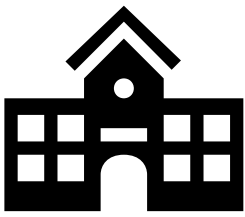
PEACEPLUS ASPIRE

25/26



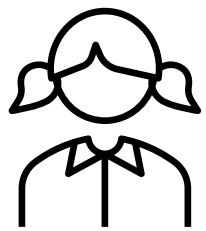
254

Partnerships



574

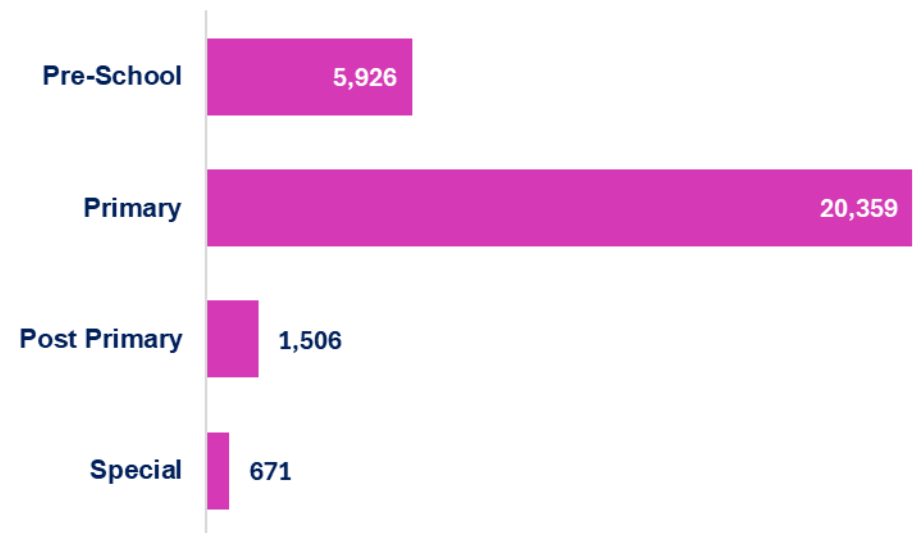
Schools and
settings



28,642

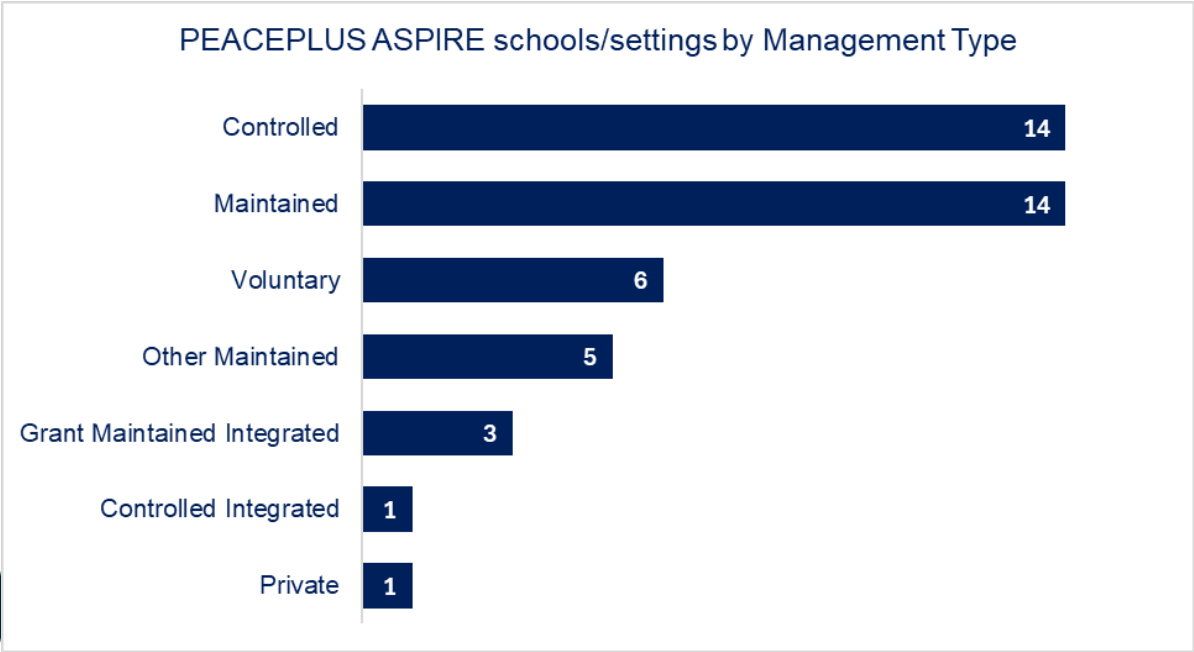
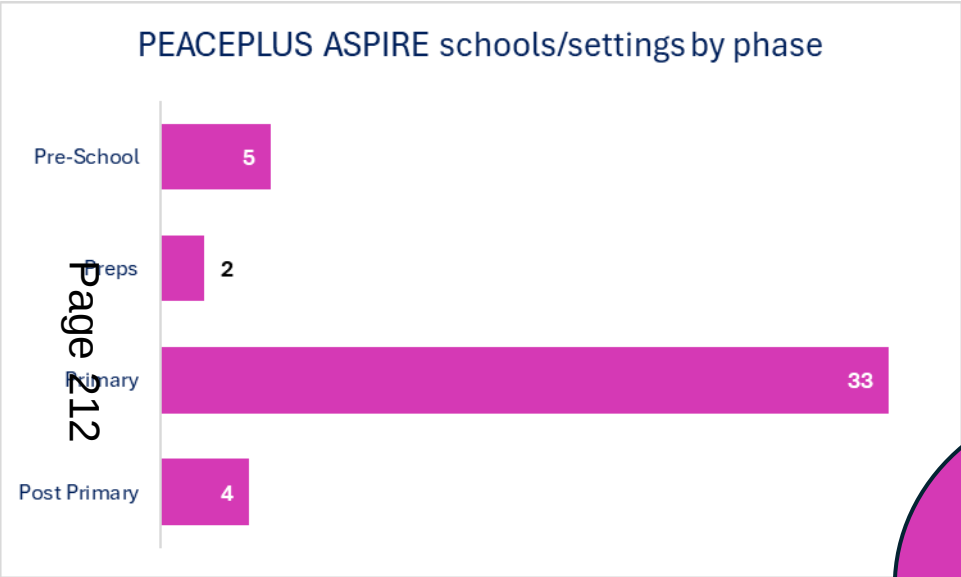
Pupils
approved

Pupils approved for 25/26 by School Phase



Belfast City Council

Schools involved in PEACEPLUS ASPIRE



44
Schools/
settings

Criteria for participating

ASPIRE is open to primary and secondary schools in Northern Ireland and the border counties (Louth, Monaghan, Leitrim, Donegal, Cavan and Sligo).

Schools must identify between one and three other schools to work in partnership with for the school year, delivering 30 hours of shared education to funded pupils.

These partnerships must be schools that are geographically close together and which represent a diverse student population. **The diversity of the school population must be reflected in the pupils who participate in ASPIRE.**

Schools who were part of ASPIRE PEACEPLUS 2024/25 and/or CASE are eligible to apply – will need to demonstrate progression in action plan

Schools must demonstrate a **commitment to peace and reconciliation** and **community engagement**.

Schools must demonstrate the capacity **to monitor and report** on project progress, including financial reporting.



Council Collaborations – BCC

Pupil Democracy Event

Through a series of workshops from Fact Check NI, WRDA/Reclaim the Agenda, the Secondary School's Student Union NI and the Social Change Initiative, pupils in their shared education pairs examined the threats which face our democracy, such as disinformation, the rise of the far right, racism and violence against women and girls. Pupils also explored opportunities for change, such as votes at 16 and improved civic and political education.

The event hosted numerous Politicians from across Belfast, with a welcome from Lord Mayor Micky Murray.

This project is supported through funding from Belfast City Council's Good Relations Action Plan, which is part funded by The Executive Office through the District Council's Good Relations Programme.



Shared Education ASPIRE Team



Jayne Simms– EA Lead ASPIRE PEACEPLUS



Eimhear McGarry

Eimhear.mcgarry@eani.org.uk



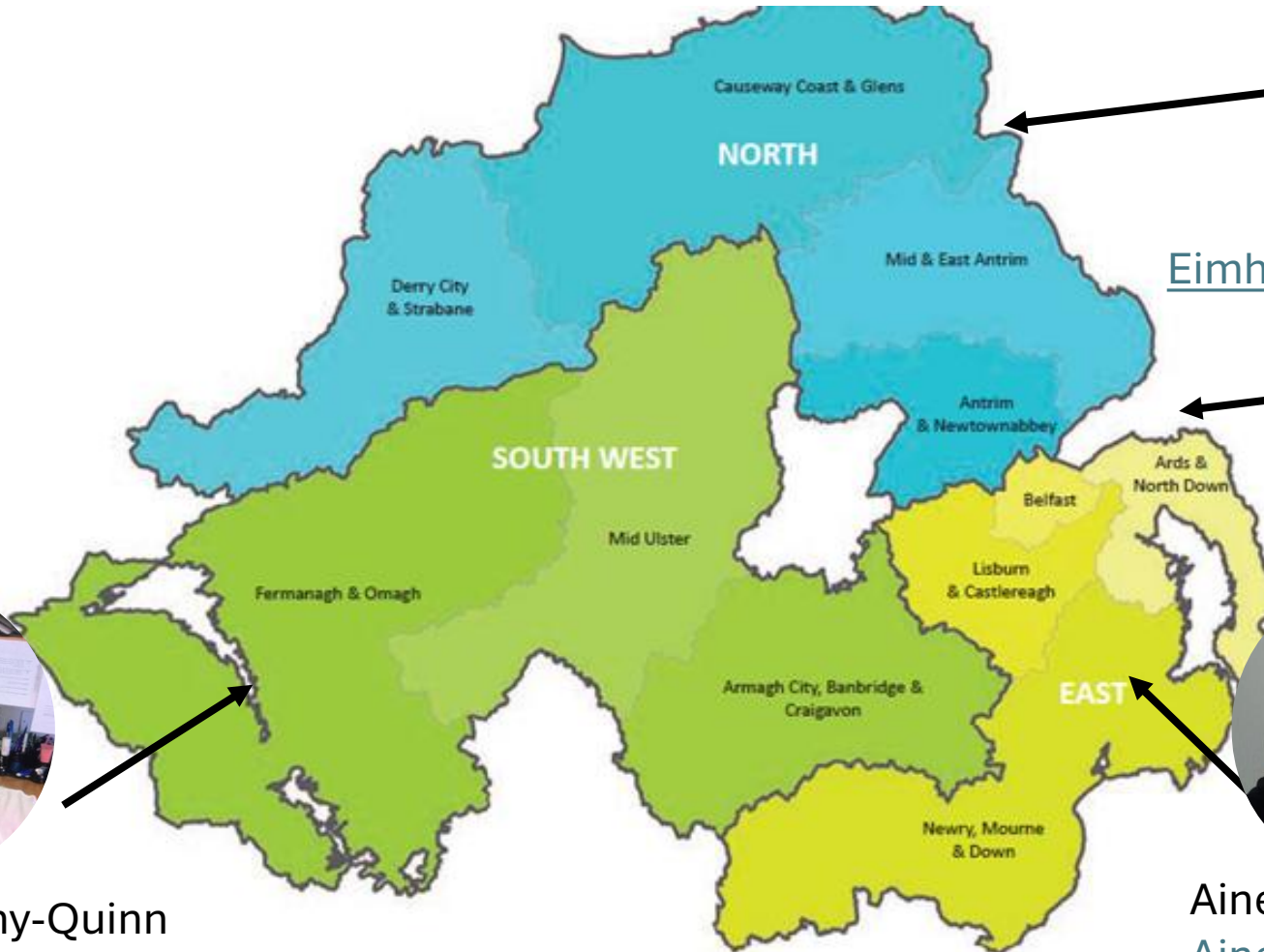
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Stephanie Kenny-Quinn

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Shared Education Hub



**Shared
Education**

[The Shared Education Hub](#) has been developed, by the Education Authority to:

- Promote cross-sectoral partnership working
- Develop an understanding of Shared Education
- Build the capacity of the school system to deliver highly effective Shared Education
- Share best practice from teachers, school leaders and academics
- Explore new approaches which can improve outcomes for children and young people
- Establish the link between Shared Education partnership working with School Improvement
- Facilitate teachers with a range of resources and materials can be used to deliver Shared Education



Scan this QR Code
to access the
Shared Education
Hub

Building Capacity to Support Shared Education

Shared Education TPL Menu

A menu of TPL Modules has been developed for practitioners to building the capacity of the workforce, across the school system, to deliver high quality Shared Education. This site provides a range of online learning modules that can be accessed by practitioners, schools, partnerships and wider clusters at any time. Each module consists of videos, animations, presentations and tasks to enhance the learning experience. Participants should navigate their way through each module completing set tasks and recording information in the relevant learning journal. There are also a selection of recordings from our Bitesize TPL Programme which will help develop your individual and partnership Shared Education Practice.



Scan to access
the entire TPL
Menu

Questions



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Reference	Organisation name	Amount Awarded	
GR2526/300109	Manor Street Cliftonville Community Group	5,000.00	
GR2526/300105	Groundwork NI	3,900.00	
GR2526/300081	Our Club Our Community	3,040.00	
GR2526/300056	Donegall Pass Community Enterprises	4,550.00	
GR2526/300031	Saints Youth Centre	2,096.00	
GR2526/300047	Belfast south Community Resource	4,200.00	
GR2526/300044	Corpus Christi Youth Centre	4,150.00	
GR2526/300048	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum	4,992.00	
GR2526/300128	EMSONI - Ethnic Minority Sports Organisation NI	4,200.00	
GR2526/300022	Marrowbone Community Association	4,500.00	
GR2526/300103	East Belfast Mission	4,150.00	
GR2526/300131	Ardoyne Youth Club	3,900.00	
GR2526/300098	Black Mountain Shared Space	4,996.00	
GR2526/300021	Forthspring Inter Community Group	4,000.00	
GR2526/300104	Green Shoot Productions	4,500.00	
GR2526/300032	Newhill Football Club	3,660.00	
GR2526/300052	R City Youth CIC	3,050.00	
GR2526/300102	Raidió Fáilte	2,980.00	
GR2526/300007	McDonald Centre	3,495.00	
GR2526/300060	Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues	3,624.00	
GR2526/300019	Wee Chicks	5,000.00	
GR2526/300080	Arellian Nursery School	2,670.00	
GR2526/300077	Doyle Football Club	1,440.00	
GR2526/300038	Dreamscheme NI	4,200.00	
GR2526/300124	Shankill Junior Football Club	4,095.00	
GR2526/300025	4 Corners Festival	3,000.00	
GR2526/300039	Bloomfield Community Association	3,842.00	
GR2526/300079	Conway Education Centre	4,000.00	
GR2526/300009	KPC Youth	3,000.00	
GR2526/300123	Market Developmeant Association	3,600.00	
GR2526/300122	Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum	3,400.00	
GR2526/300040	Old Comrades Group	3,820.00	
GR2526/300046	ArdBone Festival	2,100.00	
GR2526/300013	Hannahstown Heritage and Cultural Society	3,300.00	
GR2526/300084	Lower Oldpark Community Association	3,140.00	
GR2526/300014	Ardoyne Youth Enterprise	1,720.00	
GR2526/300051	Belfast YMCA	2,192.50	
GR2526/300043	Family Comfort NI	3,950.00	
GR2526/300076	Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association	2,400.00	
GR2526/300099	St Anne Trust	4,200.00	
GR2526/300095	Lagmore Community Forum	3,590	
GR2526/300062	SUDARSHANAM NI	4,220.00	
GR2526/300083	WAVE Trauma Centre	3,150.00	
GR2526/300053	Blackmountain Action Group	1,900.00	
GR2526/300107	Shorts Football Club Academy	3,300.00	
GR2526/300130	Spórtlann na hÉireann	3,298.00	
GR2526/300065	Civil Service NI CC	3,790.00	
GR2526/300101	Annadale and haywood residents association	3,644.91	
		170,945.41	

2025/26 Quarter 1 Action Plan Summary Report

Code	Key Priority	Project Summary	Budget	Progress in Quarter 1	Total Q1 allocation
BCC1	All 4 themes – projects will be aligned to relevant theme	Good Relations Small Grants Prog Criteria focusing on the 4 T:BUC themes and providing opportunities for organisations across Belfast to engage in activities which promote Good Relations.	Total: £160,000	48 projects were awarded letters of offer following an open application process in Q1. Projects ongoing.	£170,945.41 allocated to 48 projects
BCC2	Cultural expression	St Patrick's Day Civic Events programme to embed Good Relations Outcomes into events marking the celebration of Saint Patrick's Day.	Total: £20,000	No activity in Q1	£0
BCC3	Cultural expression	Positive Cultural Expression Programme – to facilitate the positive expression of cultural heritage through the provision of bonfire beacons on the 11 th July.	Total: £40,000	18 Beacon sites assessed. Engagement with Beacon groups. Additional support for events. Agreements with groups progressed.	£0
BCC4	Shared Community	Civic Engagement and Learning Programme To develop and deliver a range of programmes of events and training on good relations/diversity issues.	Total: £20,000	June Migrant Forum meeting. Day of Reflection delivered Refugee Week events delivered	£304 £3,825.35 £2,173.91 Total: £6,303.26
BCC5	Shared Community	Minority Ethnic Equality and Inclusion Programme To facilitate partnership working on the inclusion and participation of new communities. This programme will build on this engagement and continue to support initiatives that seek to support the integration and inclusion of all Communities, through good relations related projects as well as supporting advice giving organisations.	Total: £70,000	5 projects allocated support: - Ashton Community Trust - Belfast City of Sanctuary - ArtsEkta - Donegal Pass Enterprise - Forward South	£17,250.00 £13,266.00 £14,900.00 £16,600.00 £4,456.00 Total: £66,472
BCC6	Safe Community	Interface Engagement Programme Work with a range of internal and external stakeholders to identify strategic projects that will: 1. develop and deliver a city-wide initiative on anti-sectarianism and anti-racism to include other agencies and government 2. support progress towards the softening, transformation and/or removal of interface barriers.	Total £70,000	5 projects allocated support: - Short Strand Community Forum - Upper Springfield Development Trust - Newlife City Church - Duncairn Community Partnership - Imagine Peace Barriers	£5,770.00 £5,050.00 £5,450.00 £6,000.00 £6,000.00 Total: £28,270

BCC7	Children & Young people	Shared Education Schools Programme This initiative will be delivered in partnership with Education Authority and will focus on developing the Pupil Voice in Shared Education Partnerships. 4 Post-Primary Shared Education Partnerships (220 pupils) will be recruited onto the programme. The purpose of the programme is to engage pupils from different communities in a range of Pupil Voice Programmes that seek to explore sensitive and controversial issues through a variety of engagement sessions.	Total £20,000	Programme planning for delivery in Q3.	£0
BCC 8	All 4 themes – projects will be aligned to relevant theme	Strategic Connections and Support Programme The aim of the Programme is to target resources through a Strategic Connections and Support Programme distributed on a themed basis for localised programmes, events and activities – across the City.	Total £48,862.20		£0
			£448,862.20	Quarter 1 allocation	£271,990.67
			£448,862.20	Quarter 2 allocation	
			£448,862.20	Quarter 3 allocation	
			£448,862.20	Quarter 4 allocation	
			£448,862.20	Total allocation	



Belfast
City Council

Subject:	Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality
Date:	22 August 2025
Reporting Officer:	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Christopher Burns, Acting Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. Insert number 1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? After Committee Decision After Council Decision Sometime in the future Never	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	This paper, together with the attached appendix, contains the recommended approach in respect of each of the requests by external organisations for access to the City Hall function

	rooms received up to 8 August 2025.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.
3.0	Main report
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	The current criteria for use of the function rooms used to review external applications is set out below.
3.2	Functions permitted • functions which support other events in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not. • functions which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination. • functions designed to celebrate or commemorate a notable achievement or significant anniversary (25, 50, 100 years) by an organisation or body with close links to the city or province. • functions organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes.
3.3	Functions not permitted • conferences, meetings, seminars, performances, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms. • functions, which have as their principal purpose the generation of commercial gain for the organisers. Charity-fundraising functions are managed by the Lord Mayor's Office. • functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead use local private sector facilities. • functions which have as their primary purpose the advancement of any political or religious cause or campaign or are otherwise potentially contentious or involve significant reputation risks for the council. • functions which involve exceptionally large or disruptive set-ups or pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building or grounds.
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.4	Committee will recall that at its meeting on 24 th May 2024, it considered an update on the City Hall Income Generation Project. Committee was advised that charging for the use of the Council's function rooms will be considered as part of a later stage of this project. This will include looking at a review of the current pricing structure and the provision of hospitality.

	Pending this work being brought to Committee, delegated authority was given to the City Solicitor and Director of Legal & Civic Services to depart from the existing charging structure and negotiate room hire charges for commercial type events.
3.5	The standard charging structure will apply to the events listed in the Schedule at Appendix 1.
	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>
3.6	None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.7	None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 8 August 2025.

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AUGUST 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Active Communities Network	29 September 2025	ACN Way Project Celebration A celebration event alongside facilitated discussion of the ACN Way Project. The UK wide project helps grassroots organisations to become more sustainable and for leaders to develop their skills and confidence Numbers attending – 150	D	Current rate free as Charity	
Arts Ekta	6 October 2025	Garba Night 2025 is an annual celebration which brings the spirit of the Indian festival of Navratri to life through traditional music, dance, and cultural exchange. Numbers attending – 370	D	Current rate free as Charity	
Ashton Community Trust	14 October 2025	PEACEPLUS Health & Wellbeing Project Launch Celebration with speeches, showcase of project and light catering Numbers attending - 50	D	Current rate free as Charity	
Ulster Scots Agency	29 November 2025	Belfast Tartan Tay Reception is the culmination of a series of events to celebrate and mark Ulster-Scots Language Week. Reception of refreshments and musical performances will follow a parade in city centre. Numbers attending – 450	C	Room hire £450	
Department for Communities	2 December 2025	International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPWD) and celebration of Sean Fitzsimmons, internationally known disability rights advocate and developer of 'Embrace the Inclusive Spirit'. Lunch, Presentations and speeches. Numbers attending – 70/100	C	Room hire £450	
South Belfast Youth Football League	12 December 2025	10th Anniversary Celebratory Christmas Dinner. SBYL have supported young people with learning difficulties, disabilities and additional needs pensioners and the most vulnerable in society for 10 years. Numbers attending - 200	C & D	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	

AUGUST 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

British Council	16 December 2025	Schools COP30 British Council schools debate event engages students (aged 16-18) from approx. 30 schools in Northern Ireland to debate live and topical COP30 issues through a climate negotiation simulation. Numbers attending – 150	D	Current rate free as Charity	
Cruse Bereavement Support	21 Dec 2025	Light Up the Night – An Occasion to Remember commemoration event to support recently bereaved within community with reflective music, poetry and speeches. Numbers attending – 400	D	Current rate free as Charity	

City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Wednesday, 13th August, 2025

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members present: Aldermen Lawlor and Rodgers; and
Councillors Beattie, de Faoite, Flynn and Murray.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. K. Mullen, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. J. Murray, Civic Services Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie and

Resolved – that Councillor Flynn be elected to serve as Chairperson
of the Working Group until the Annual Meeting in June 2026.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th April, 2025 were taken as read and signed as
correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Item - City Hall Christmas Tree

The Civic Services Manager updated the Working Group in relation to the possible
procurement of an artificial Christmas Tree for the City Hall Grounds. She provided an
overview of the benchmarking process, the costs of renting in comparison to buying, and
an estimated timeline.

The Working Group was advised that, due to long lead in times, a real tree had
been secured for Christmas 2025.

It was noted that the additional time would allow colleagues to collaborate more closely with the Culture and Tourism Unit to ensure that the new tree would align with the City Centre lighting scheme.

In response to a Member's query as to why an artificial tree was being purchased instead of a real tree, she explained that, over that past few years, the structure of the real Christmas trees had been weaker due to changes in the climate and that an artificial tree would be more sustainable.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee:

- to agree to purchase a "Real Branch" artificial Christmas Tree, rather than renting, given the limitations of suppliers within the local market via the Council's Capital Programme;
- that an artificial Christmas Tree be erected, commencing Christmas 2026;
- to agree to the tree being stored alongside the Council's other Christmas decorations at Duncrue and to be included in the PMU Christmas works, with future costs to be agreed.

Stained Glass Windows - LGBTQ+ and Health Service

The Programme Delivery Manager presented the following report to the Working Group:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide and update feedback on the installation of the LGBTQ+ stained glass window in City Hall and to agree to progress the design, manufacture and installation of the health service window.

2.0 Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to

- Note the feedback received on the commissioning, installation and unveiling of the LGBTQ+ stained glass window on 22 May 2025
- Note that the Health Service window will be located in the North West corridor of City Hall in one of the free spaces
- Note the feedback received from Bereaved Families to Covid NI
- Note that it is proposed that the installation of the health service stained glass windows is Stage 2 - Uncommitted on the Capital Programme to allow procurement to commence with final approval on designs and costs being taken by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee based on recommendations from Installations: City Hall/City Grounds Working Group. This will be subject to planning and listed

building consent being obtained and a satisfactory tender being returned. It is recommended that an indicative budget be set to allow for the process to commence in terms of design, fabrication and installation. In line with the three stage approval process Members are asked to note that the final budget will only be agreed upon the receipt of a satisfactory tender

- To give consideration to key stakeholder groups who should be consulted with in relation to the final design for the Health Service window
- Agree that procurement be by way of a two stage open submission process

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Members will be aware that the new LGBTQ+ stained glass window was unveiled by Lord Mayor, Councillor Micky Murray, during his term of office on 22 May 2025. A commemorative bookmark was produced and distributed free of charge to those in attendance. Families of individuals depicted in the window were invited to a private unveiling in advance of the official ceremony.

The event on the morning of 22 May 2025 was extremely well attended by invited guests and members of the public. Members will be aware that there was significant press coverage and social media interaction, a summary of which is attached as Appendix One. Corporate Comms have indicated that press coverage for the installation of the new window was strong and in the main positive. List of media articles contained within Appendix One.

Members will be aware that it was agreed at Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 22 September 2022 that the health service stained glass window be moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the capital programme. In line with previous arrangements for LGBTQ+ window it is recommended that design, manufacture and installation take the form of a two stage procurement process with selection by way of a two-stage open submission process as set out below.

STAGE 1

Contractors are required to submit:

- a current CV including name, address, telephone number and email address

- up to 10 original images of recent work e.g. on a CD, slides, memory stick, photographs etc. featuring at least 3 different pieces of work
- details of similar/relevant commissions over the past 4 years
- an expression of interest to describe how they will approach this brief and a description of what their concept will depict
- a clear indication of the proposed design
- details of the competent contractor who will be responsible for technical details regarding the removal of the existing window, installation of new frame if required, and proposed manufacture and method of installation of the new window. Details relating to this aspect should reflect the City Hall's listed status

STAGE 2

At Stage 2 of the process, up to 3 selected contractors will each be awarded a fee of up to £100 to develop their proposal. This fee will be inclusive of travel and all other expenses.

Stage 2 proposals will be expected to include:

- a visual representation of the proposed work – with maquette
- an explanation of the concept for the artwork and how it relates to the theme
- plans for how the contractor would approach and project manage the design, fabrication and installation of the work
- method statement regarding working in a listed building, proposed fixing details and health and safety issues around working in an active public building
- a budget breakdown
- a timescale for production and delivery
- details of any particular maintenance requirements for the artwork

The wording contained in the Notice of Motion is set out hereunder:

[Recognition of the Health Service in Belfast \(Notice of Motion 03/05/2016\)](#) which noted – *‘Over the years this Council has regularly highlighted the dedication and service of all those working in the Health Service in Belfast. To recognise this caring and dedicated group of people across a broad range of different specialties and services, the Council agrees to the installation of a stained glass window in the City Hall to commemorate and celebrate the contribution that those*

working in the Health Service have made to the lives of the citizens of our City’.

Members will also be aware that Strategic Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 19 January 2024 agreed: *that a report on potential options and associated cost for the facilitation of memorial wall which allows people to remember their loved ones, recognising the pain, suffering and loss caused during the Covid-19 pandemic and the trauma of those bereaved and those still suffering with long covid.*

Officers have engaged with Families Bereaved through Covid in light of the notion of motion for a pandemic wall to seek their views on whether they felt this could be incorporated into the design of the Health Service window. Feedback from the group would suggest that whilst they would welcome being included in the new window and would be happy to participate as a key stakeholder in the development of the final design there is the desire to have a space for reflection where loved ones can come to reflect. They have indicated that a conference is being organised by Cruise Bereavement Services which will take place in December 2025. This will focus on provision of bereavement services and explore options for a permanent memorial. The preference being a space within an existing park or new park in the form of a garden or walk. The group are working closely with Department for Sports, Media and Culture based in London and have made approaches to NI Assembly. They have agreed to extend an invitation to Council to the conference.

The new window will be located in one of the free spaces to the right of the ‘Belfast Women’s Window’ North West corridor. Officers are currently engaging with Corporate Fire Health and Safety Advisor in relation to the fire doors shown in the image below. Changes in legislation have resulted in fire certificate requirements being superseded by the requirement for a building owner to undertake a fire risk assessment. This could allow these doors to be located open (automated closure solution activated should a fire alarm be raised) to facilitate public access to window in this corridor with the no access barrier being located further along this corridor.

Financial and Resource Implications

Budget – to be worked up

Resources – Office time as required to work up proposals

Equality or Good Relations Implications

As required.”

A number of Members thanked the officers for the work which had been undertaken in respect of the LGBTQ+ window and that they hoped that the Health Service window would draw even more people into the City Hall to view it when it was installed.

The Working Group agreed to recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would adopt the recommendations within the report.

International Overdose Awareness Day

The Programme Delivery Manager advised the Working Group that officers had been advised of a request which was received to mark the International Overdose Awareness Day, on 31st August, 2025. The Members were advised that an event was being held to mark the occasion in the City Hall on 29th August, 2025, with the building being illuminated on 31st August, 2025.

The Members were advised that an additional request in the form of planting purple flowers and a commemorative tree in the City Hall grounds had also been made.

The Civic Services Manager had suggested that, given the current capacity within the City Hall grounds, one of the Council's parks might be a better location for the planting. The Members were advised that the planting of trees within the City Hall required HED consent and planning approval. With regards to the planting of flowers, the only space available would be located in the East wing, which would not be a suitable location.

The Programme Delivery Manager suggested that officers could liaise with colleagues in respect of the Million Trees project.

A Member stated that they felt that it was important to try and facilitate the request, given that many citizens had lost loved ones due to an overdose within the City. He stated that he felt that the tree and flowers should, ideally, be within the City Hall grounds, or located within the City centre. He added that a new tree did not necessarily have to be planted.

The Director of Property and Projects suggested that officers could look at other options, perhaps within the Cathedral Gardens area of the City.

Other Members stated that, while they recognised the request, the Council could not accede to every request for commemoration and that they did not want to set a precedent.

As there was no agreement, the Working Group agreed to note the request.

City Hall Exhibition - verbal update

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services advised the Members that the Council had been approached about featuring Dame Mary Peters within the City Hall Exhibition.

A Member stated that they felt it was important, given her significant contribution to the City. Other Members stated that they were not opposed to the idea but that there were other figures who should also be recognised within it.

The Director of Property and Projects advised the Working Group that Dame Peters was already featured within the Freedom of the City area of the exhibition and that any changes to the current exhibition would have cost implications and would need to be considered from an operational perspective. She added that it was best practice that exhibitions, such as the one in City Hall, were reviewed and refreshed after a number of years and any changes would be best considered in the context of a wider review.

During discussion, a number of Members agreed that a review of the exhibition was due. It was agreed that officers would submit a report to a future meeting on the potential for a review of the exhibition space.

Chairperson

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