

# Public Document Pack

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



**Belfast  
City Council**

## **MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet both online and in-person, in the Lavery Room, City Hall on Friday, 19th December, 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) Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning (Pages 1 - 6)
- (b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Report to follow)
- (c) Boxing Strategy (Report to follow)
- (d) Belfast City Innovation Programme Update (Report to follow)

**3. Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

- (a) Draft Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 (Pages 7 - 14)
- (b) Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from DfC Minister (Pages 15 - 20)
- (c) Planning Information (Report to follow)
- (d) Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Final Conference in Katowice, Poland and Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit in Budapest, Hungary in February, 2026 (Pages 21 - 24)

**4. Physical Programme and Asset Management**

- (a) Physical Programme (Report to follow)
- (b) Asset Management (Report to follow)
- (c) Area Working Update (Report to follow)

**5. Finance, Procurement and Performance**

- (a) Contracts Update (Report to follow)
- (b) Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 2nd December (Pages 25 - 42)

**6. Equality and Good Relations**

- (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 1st December (Pages 43 - 100)

**7. Operational Issues**

- (a) Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 11th December (Report to follow)
- (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality (Pages 101 - 106)

# Agenda Item 2a

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

# Agenda Item 3a

	<b>Belfast City Council</b>	STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
<b>Subject:</b>	Draft Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030.	
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2025	
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy	
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth & Anti-Poverty Brian Carr, Portfolio and Programme Manager Michelle McParland, Portfolio and Programme Coordinator	

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information relating to any individual</li> <li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li> <li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li> <li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li> <li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li> <li>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</li> <li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li> </ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>After Council Decision</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sometime in the future</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Never</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to set out for Members consideration a draft council response to the recently published Public Health Agency's draft 'Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030'.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. note the contents of this report</li> <li>ii. consider and agree proposed draft Council response attached at <b>appendix 1</b></li> <li>iii. agree that the proposed Council response, reflecting any comments received from Members of the, be submitted to the Public Health Agency (PHA) in line with the deadline (19 December 2025). The response will state it remains subject to ratification by Full Council in January 2026.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
3.1	<p>The Public Health Agency (PHA) has recently published for consultation a draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy for the period 2025-2030. The purpose of the draft Strategy is to set out a set of priorities with measurable indicators which shows a strong commitment to working with people and communities. A copy of the draft strategy is available @ <a href="#">Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030   HSC Public Health Agency</a>. Feedback is sought by 19<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2025.</p>
3.2	<p>The stated vision is to "to make partnership and engagement working essential to Health and Social Care in a way that supports a healthier population". The draft strategy shows that the PHA is renewing its commitment to working in partnership with others. It intends to do this through two key areas: listening to people's experiences and involving them.</p>
3.3	<p>PHA states that it is making changes to how it works to better support people's health, with plans to deliver services more locally, focusing on neighbourhoods and tackling health inequalities. PHA intends to create a focused team which will support how the PHA engages and partners with service users, carers, families, communities and the general public with a view to improve health and wellbeing for everyone.</p>
3.4	<p><b>Key considerations</b></p> <p>In reviewing the draft strategy, there is a clear omission or reference to the role of local authorities and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.</p>

3.5	<p>In fact, the Council is already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint funding and work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Healthier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.</p>
3.6	<p>The draft response attached at appendix 1, outlines these key points for consideration of the Public Health Agency.</p>
	<p><b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b></p>
3.7	<p>There is no financial or resource implications contained within this report.</p>
	<p><b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b></p>
3.8	<p>There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
	<p>Appendix 1: Draft Belfast City Council response</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

**Belfast City Council response  
CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY  
(2025-2030)**



**Belfast  
City Council**

Public Health Agency  
12-22 Linenhall Street,  
Belfast,  
BT2 8BS,

Via email @ [ppi.secretary@hscni.net](mailto:ppi.secretary@hscni.net)

19 December 2025

Dear colleagues

**REF: PHA Consultation on Partnership and Engagement Strategy (2025-2030)**

Belfast City Council ("the Council") welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recently published Public Health Agency's draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy (2025-2030)

The draft Strategy was considered at a recent meeting of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19 December 2025. Elected Members welcomed the stated vision "to make partnership and engagement working essential to Health and Social Care in a way that supports a healthier population" as well as recognising the commitment to work in partnership, listening to people's experiences and involving them in service design and delivery.

Elected Members also supported the plans to deliver services more locally, focusing on neighbourhoods and tackling health inequalities. This includes the intention to create a focused team which will support how the PHA engages and partners with service users, carers, families, communities and the general public with a view to improve health and wellbeing for everyone. This approach recognises the need for and benefit of adopting place-based approaches.

In responding, the Council would highlight the joint work already underway between the Council, the PHA and other city and community partners through the Belfast Agenda (the community plan for Belfast) and the shared ambition that by 2035 to create a city where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing, an outcome that will necessitate a partnership approached if it is to be realised.

**Specific comments for consideration**

In reviewing the draft strategy, the Council would highlight the following specific comments for the consideration of the Public Health Agency (PHA).

**Belfast City Council response**  
**CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**  
**(2025-2030)**

- i. The Council would note the current absence of any reference to local government and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.
- ii. In fact, the Council is already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Healthier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.
- iii. The Council believes the emerging draft strategy presents an opportunity to reference and highlight the statutory commitment of the PHA to Community Planning, and acknowledge local government as a key partner, particularly given the many challenging health issues that necessitate a partnership and wider population-based approach.
- iv. The Belfast Agenda provides a framework which maximises the opportunities for partnership working for collaborative gain on the agreed priorities within this plan, with health inequalities an identified priority under Our People and Communities theme of this plan.
- v. Our People and Communities theme has a published Action Plan. A key action, led by the PHA, is delivering on a Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. The PHA will be aware the Regional Obesity Prevention Implementation Group head up the regional Whole Systems Approach to Obesity. Within the governance of this programme of work, community planning is a structure that supports and feeds into the work, thereby illustrating one example of where community planning structures act as a key vehicle for partnership working in tackling challenging health inequalities.
- vi. In addition, the Belfast Health Development Unit is a co-located team of staff from PHA, BHSCT and Belfast City Council who are housed in council offices. We would highlight that this is a model of best practice in terms of partnership working and has resulted in the development of a range of innovative approaches in the Belfast council area. This partnership also supports more robust engagement across a range of stakeholders, particularly those who may not normally have their voices heard in relation to health issues, through the local community links that are in place through each service. We would recommend that this best practice is highlighted in the final strategy as a model for effective partnership working and engagement '*that makes the best use of our combined resources*'.

**Belfast City Council response  
CONSULTATION ON THE PHA PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY  
(2025-2030)**

We look forward to continuing to work closely with PHA colleagues and identifying opportunities to bring forward prototype delivery models and test and learn demonstrator initiatives which can be scaled up across the region.

It should be noted that this response remains subject to Full Council ratification on 8 January 2026. We will update you of any further comments which may emerge.

I trust this information is helpful in informing the finalisation of the draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy.

Kind regards,

This page is intentionally left blank



<b>Subject:</b>	Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26
<b>Date:</b>	19th December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Chris Tubridy, Hardship Programme Coordinator Brian Carr, Portfolio Manager Nicola Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer, Community 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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities in response to the Council's request for the Department for Communities to make funding available to support the continued delivery of a Hardship Support Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report including the recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities, dated 10 December 2025, confirming that funding would not be made available in future years to support a hardship programme.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	Members will recall the update provided to members in October 2025 on the positive impact of the £1.1m Hardship Programme, which was implemented between December 2024 and June 2025 and supported in excess of 50,000 individuals. Members will be aware that while the Council had funded this year's programme, it had previously been funded by DfC in 2023/24.
3.2	At the meeting in October, Members had been informed that whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, the amount available was £75,000 which is significantly lower than previous years.
3.3	As agreed by Members, correspondence was issued on behalf of the Council to the Minister for Communities requesting that urgent consideration be given by the Department for Communities (DfC) to the allocation of funding to support the implementation of a much-needed Hardship Programme in 2025/2026. This request recognised the statutory responsibility of DfC to bring forward an Anti-Poverty Strategy to help alleviate the impacts of poverty and hardship on our most vulnerable residents.
3.4	Attached at <b>Appendix 1</b> is the response received from the Minister for Communities dated 10 <sup>th</sup> December 2025 advising that the DfC Hardship Grant Funding provided in 2023/24 would not be available in future years. The response did state that the Minister remains committed to providing services that help people who have fallen on hard times through initiatives such as the Social Supermarket Scheme, Discretionary Support Scheme, Affordable Warmth Scheme as well as the Winter Fuel Payments to those who are eligible.
3.5	<p><b>Hardship Programme Support 2025-26</b></p> <p>Members were advised in October that there is a <b>current budget of £75,000</b> from previous years underspends available to support a Hardship programme for 2025-26. Members previously agreed that this funding would be made available to the 11 Family Support Hubs located across the city to help children and families in emergency need.</p>

	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
3.6	The current available budget for a 2025-26 Hardship Programme is £75,000
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.7	None.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	<b>Appendix 1:</b> Correspondence from Department for Communities to Council issued on 10 Dec 2025

This page is intentionally left blank

**From: The Minister**

John Walsh  
Chief Executive  
Belfast City Council  
City Hall  
Belfast  
BT1 5GS

Via email: [WalshJohn@BelfastCity.gov.uk](mailto:WalshJohn@BelfastCity.gov.uk)

Dear John

**HARDSHIP PROGRAMME 2025/2026**

Thank you for your letter of 10 November 2025 requesting consideration of funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.

My Department's letter to Council Chief Executives dated 28 March 2023 advised that £4m of hardship funding would be available in 2022/23 to allow councils to provide financial support in 2023/24 to the most vulnerable. Chief Executives were also advised that the funding was non-recurrent; it would not be available in future years; and should be considered additional to any hardship support funding already offered by the Council.

I remain committed to providing services that help people who have fallen on hard times through initiatives such as the Social Supermarket Scheme, Discretionary Support Scheme, Affordable Warmth Scheme as well as the Winter Fuel Payments to those who are eligible.

My Department also continues to provide funding to citizens most in need of support through the benefits system. Anyone facing hardship should be advised to contact Make the Call (telephone 0800 232 1271, text ADVICE to 079 8440 5248 or email [makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk](mailto:makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk)) to ensure that they are in receipt of all the benefits they are entitled to.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Lyons".

**Gordon Lyons MLA  
Minister for Communities**



<b>Subject:</b>	Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Final Conference in Katowice, Poland and Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit in Budapest, Hungary in February, 2026
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director, City & Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner, City & Organisational Strategy

#### 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

<b>1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>	
1.1	Members are asked to note the Council's intention to send two officers to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Final Conference taking place on 10 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 in Katowice, Poland which the Council is required to attend as a project partner.

1.2	Members are asked to note the Council's intention to send one officer to the Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit taking place on 10 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> February 2026 in Budapest, Hungary which the Council is required to attend as a project partner.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Note that two BCC Officers will be attending the UPSURGE Final Conference on 10<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026 in Katowice, Poland.</li> <li>II. Note that one BCC Officer will be attending the Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit on 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026 in Budapest, Hungary.</li> <li>III. Note that all costs associated with the attendance at the above events are covered within the grant funding.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><i>UPSURGE Project</i></p> <p>Members will recall that in August 2020 Belfast City Council agreed to take part in the 'Upsurge Project' which focuses on testing nature-based solutions in partnership with four other EU cities, with the aim of sharing learning and good practice. The site selected as the demonstrator for Belfast is the open ground at Lower Botanic Gardens, beside the Queen's PEC. Belfast City Council was subsequently awarded € 660,375 funding through Horizon Europe to deliver the demonstrator project which will include opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing across the city.</p>
3.2	<p>The UPSURGE project presented an innovative opportunity to develop an underused area of land within Belfast City Council's ownership, through a partnership with QUB, EU partners, and local community organisations. A project team has been established which includes Belfast City Council's Climate Team, Innovation Unit, City and Neighbourhood Services, Physical Programmes, City Regeneration, and Planning in addition to QUB representatives. The project acts as a hub, supporting rewilding, enhanced local food production, stimulation of local circular economy, and the development of community education programmes in relation to climate, digital innovation, and community resilience.</p>
3.3	<p>As part of the delivery of the project, a number of Project Group Meetings are taking place at different host cities, where updates on the project will be provided, an opportunity to share learning and expertise on the effective delivery of the project is able to occur, and each of the 5 partner cities (Belfast, Breda, Budapest, Maribor, and Katowice) are asked to report on progress towards the delivery of their demonstrator project. At least one representative from each partner city is required to attend as per the funding agreement.</p>
3.4	<p>Belfast City Council has previously taken part in meetings in Breda in September 2025, Maribor in March 2023 and in Prato in October 2022. The benefits to the project from these</p>

	<p>meetings included building of relationships across project partners, learning on the various work packages, specifications and scope of works for the demonstrator development. It also created opportunities to identify risks, concerns and challenges between the 5 cities and communicate these to the other project partners so that the project can further support the cities to maximise the opportunities to deliver well on each of their demonstrator sites.</p> <p><i>Pathways2Resilience Project</i></p> <p>3.5 The Pathways2Resilience Project is an EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change flagship initiative supporting over 100 regions across Europe to guide participants through transformative framework like the Regional Resilience Journey and the Adaptation Investment Cycle and helps regions co-design their own climate resilience strategies, action plans and investment plans with expert guidance and capacity building support.</p> <p>3.6 Belfast City Council, in partnership with Northern Ireland Environment Link, has been successful in securing €198,000 in funding as part of this project. This funding will cover the commitment of one BCC officer to engage with the programme for the duration of the project and to develop a Belfast Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan over the 18 months.</p> <p>3.7 The Pathways2Resilience Project officially launches with a Summit event to be held from 10-12<sup>th</sup> February 2026 in Budapest, Hungary. At least one representative from each project partner is required to attend as per the funding agreement.</p> <p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.8 There are no financial implications for Belfast City Council. All travel costs can be met within the grant funding for both projects.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>3.9 None</p>
<b>4.0 Appendices – Document Attached</b>	<p>Link to the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project page <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>Link to the Pathways2Resilience project page <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

This page is intentionally left blank



<b>Subject:</b>	Audit & Risk Panel Report and Minutes of Meeting of 2 December 2025
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Corporate Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Claire O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS)

#### 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 purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that were considered and discussed by the Audit & Risk Panel at its December 2025 meeting and present the minutes of the last meeting of the Panel for approval.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee notes the key issues arising at the meeting and approves the minutes of the Audit & Risk Panel of 2 December 2025 at appendix A.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO)</u>
3.1	The <b>Statement of Accounts</b> are a fundamental part of the councils overall corporate governance framework and provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.
3.2	The Panel received an update on the audit of the accounts for the year-end 31 March 2025 by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) which remains ongoing with one priority one issue highlighted so far relating to bank reconciliation. The NIAO have requested that a new significant governance issue is added to the Annual Governance Statement and the Audit and Risk Panel have agreed the wording of this issue.
3.3	The Panel were updated on several measures that Finance have implemented to prevent reoccurrence of the bank reconciliation issue, including the establishment of a process for escalation of unallocated income queries to departments. The delay in completing the audit has meant that the accounts have not been published on the council's website by the legislative deadline of 30th September.
3.4	When the audit is complete the revised set of financial statements, including the updated Annual Governance Statement and Report to Those Charged with Governance (which outlines the system / control issues arising from the NIAO audit) will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources committee for approval and sign off.
	<u>Key reports</u>
3.5	The Panel noted the <b>progress being made against the annual audit plan</b> , with the following three assignments finalised in the period September - November 2025; Agency; Performance Management and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund. The Panel also received a management update report on Asset Management.
3.6	The Panel considered the <b>corporate risk dashboard</b> which provided an analysis and update on the progress being made to manage the 23 risks that are considered to present the greatest threat to the delivery corporate priorities and / or compliance with key statutory requirements. The Panel noted the <b>quarterly assurances provided by directors</b> regarding

	the arrangements in place for the management of risk (including formal departmental risk management arrangements) and the implementation of agreed audit actions.
3.7	Regarding <b>business continuity management</b> , the Panel agreed for the critical services; to complete their annual exercise, review and update of their BCM plans.
3.8	The Panel received an update on the <b>National Fraud Initiative</b> , which is nearing completion.
3.9	The Panel noted the <b>quarter 2 reports on corporate health and safety and absence management</b> and received the mid-year an update on the <b>performance Improvement plan</b> which is report is available to members on request.
3.10	The Panel agreed the initial assessment of how the Panel complies with the <b>NIAO ‘Effective Audit &amp; Risk Assurance Committees – A Good Practice Guide’</b> and the recommendations to further improve the effectiveness of the Panel, which mainly relate to the development of a training programme and update of the Panels terms of reference. The Panel also agreed their <b>2026 programme of business</b> .
	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b>
3.11	None
	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>
3.12	None known at this time.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix A - Minutes of Audit & Risk Panel 2 December 2025

This page is intentionally left blank

# **Audit and Risk Panel**

Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025

## **MEETING OF AUDIT AND RISK PANEL**

Members present: Councillor R. McLaughlin (Chairperson);  
Alderman Rodgers,  
Councillors Hanvey, Groogan  
and Verner; and  
Mr. D. Wilson (External Member).

In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corp Services;  
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Ms. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services;  
Ms. E. Eaton, Corporate Health and Safety Manager;  
Ms. H. Lyons, Corporate Finance Manager;  
Ms. J. Graffin, Principal Auditor; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Also attended: Mr. P. Barr, Northern Ireland Audit Office.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 9th September, 2025, were approved by the Panel.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

**Absence Rates Q/E September 2025**

The Director of Human Resources provided the Panel with an overview of the following report:

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

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Audit Panel of the Council’s performance in managing absence at the end of quarter two, April to September 2025.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Audit Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Key corporate indicators:**

**At the end of quarter two:**

- The Council’s average sickness absence rate stands at 7.60 days, an increase of 0.57 days compared to absence for the same period last year (7.03 days).**
- A total of 17232.86 working days were lost due to sickness absence. This accounted for 6.76% of the total working days available.**
- The table below provides a summary of how departments performed against the target. Two departments did not meet the corporate target of 7.29 days for quarter two.**

End of year target	14.58						
Q2 target	7.29						
Department	Total days lost (FTE)	Number of Employees (FTE)	Actual absence per FTE	Variance	% of workforce	% of absence	
City and Neighbourhood Services	12089.45	1302.6	9.28	1.99	57.46%	70.15%	
City and Organisational Strategy	445.36	97.06	4.59	-2.70	4.28%	2.58%	
Corporate Services	389.42	132.09	2.95	-4.34	5.83%	2.26%	
External Affairs, Marketing and Comms	41	26.08	1.57	-5.72	1.15%	0.24%	
Finance	44.62	46.95	0.95	-6.34	2.07%	0.26%	
Human Resources	20.63	34.38	0.60	-6.69	1.52%	0.12%	
Legal and Civic Services	1123.65	164.59	6.83	-0.46	7.26%	6.52%	
Place and Economy	2194.38	349.2	6.28	-1.01	15.40%	12.73%	
Property and Projects	884.35	114.08	7.75	0.46	5.03%	5.13%	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17232.86</b>	<b>2267.03</b>	<b>7.60</b>	<b>0.31</b>			

**3.2 Additional Absence information:**

- There was a slight increase in the number of staff with no absence this year (62.40%), compared to last year (61.66%).
- There has been a significant increase of 1278.31 days in absence classified as long term (20+ days) this year (12287.12 days) compared to the same time last year (11008.81 days).
- The number of days lost per FTE decreased in quarter two (3.79 days) when compared to quarter one (3.81 days), see figure 1.
- Depression/anxiety/stress (36.61% of total days lost) and Musculo-skeletal (26.33% of total days lost) continue to be the top two reasons for absence. Refer to figure 2 for further information.
- From 1 July to 30 September 2025, 641 employees (750 spells) were off due to sickness absence (accounting for 8615.48 days). Of the cases where the use of discretion was recorded, it was applied to 123 employees (19.2%) and their absence accounted for 2810.29 days (approximately 32.6% of the total absence for quarter two).
- Issues were identified in how absences were being managed in 250 cases. These were discussed in detail with departments during quarter two. Refer to figure 4 for further information.
- Approximately 12.6% of absence (2176.74 days) is recorded as disability related. Approximately two thirds (66%) of disability related absence were managed as long term. Employees who reported absence with Depression / Anxiety / Mental Health (42.68%) accounted for over one third of all disability related absence. Refer to figure 5 for further information.
- 18 employees met the trigger for a Stage4/FAH in quarter two.
  - Two employees resigned prior to their absence hearing.
  - Discretion was applied to 12 of these cases not to progress to a Stage 4/FAH.
    - Three employees were off due to cancer / treatment.
    - One employee was off due to an industrial injury.
    - One employee was off due to significant personal stressors.
    - Four employees returned to work at month seven.

- Two employee's required additional medical information.
- One employee did not progress due to their absence being disability related.
- One employee progressed to a final stage meeting however they were afforded a final opportunity to improve their attendance.
- Three employees met the trigger in late September and case reviews are currently being arranged.

**Departmental improvement plans and Absence reporting to DMT:**

3.4 CHR has reviewed all of the departmental improvement plans for quarter two. All departments provided a progress report for quarter two. In general, meaningful information and updates were provided by the departments.

All of the departments returned absence dashboards for July, August and September.

**Health and Wellbeing Strategy and initiatives:**

3.5 CHR continue to focus on delivering the actions as set out in the Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

Between 1 July – 30 September 2025, the H&WB programme delivered 16 events attended by 303 staff.

CHR was supported by the Internal Communications team to help promote and increase awareness to all staff including those at frontline locations. A quarterly Wellbeing and Development email is sent to all staff directly and a 'Wellbeing Wednesday' Interlink article promotes topics and events each week, which are also displayed on 'big screens' across various council locations. Activities are also promoted via a team of Wellbeing Champions. The programme and wellbeing hub 'Staywell' is also promoted via posters on staff noticeboards.

Activities included:

- Positive Mental Health training
- Stress Awareness for Managers
- Cancer Focus Keeping Well Van - Dunbar Link
- Money Helper Pension Webinar
- Dementia Awareness
- Suicide Awareness & Prevention - Duncrue
- Managing your Inner Critic
- Mental Health Awareness
- 15 Minute Desk Yoga
- Pension Awareness

- **Pension Scheme Benefits**
- **3 Stop Smoking Awareness Events**
- **Healthier You - Eat Well Work Well, Nutrition for Busy People and other webinars with a focus on musculoskeletal issues.**

The Stop Smoking Awareness event supported by Cancer Focus had ten people sign up to a 12 week stop smoking programme. Cancer Focus promoted the initiative with attendance at three stands at various sites - Alexander Park Avenue, Agnes Street and Prince Regent Road as part of their Stoptober event.

Pension awareness week was used to promote webinars through NILGOSC for staff and were well attended. Promotion of different wellbeing themes such as World Heart Day, World Suicide Prevention Day and World Alzheimer's Month were used to specifically promote certain events.

CHR will continue to focus on addiction support and mental health in quarter three and promote Belfast Leading the Way and Active Travel events as we continue to work with Sustrans and partners to introduce active travel initiatives.

**4.0 Resource Implications**

**4.1 Directors are asked to ensure that:**

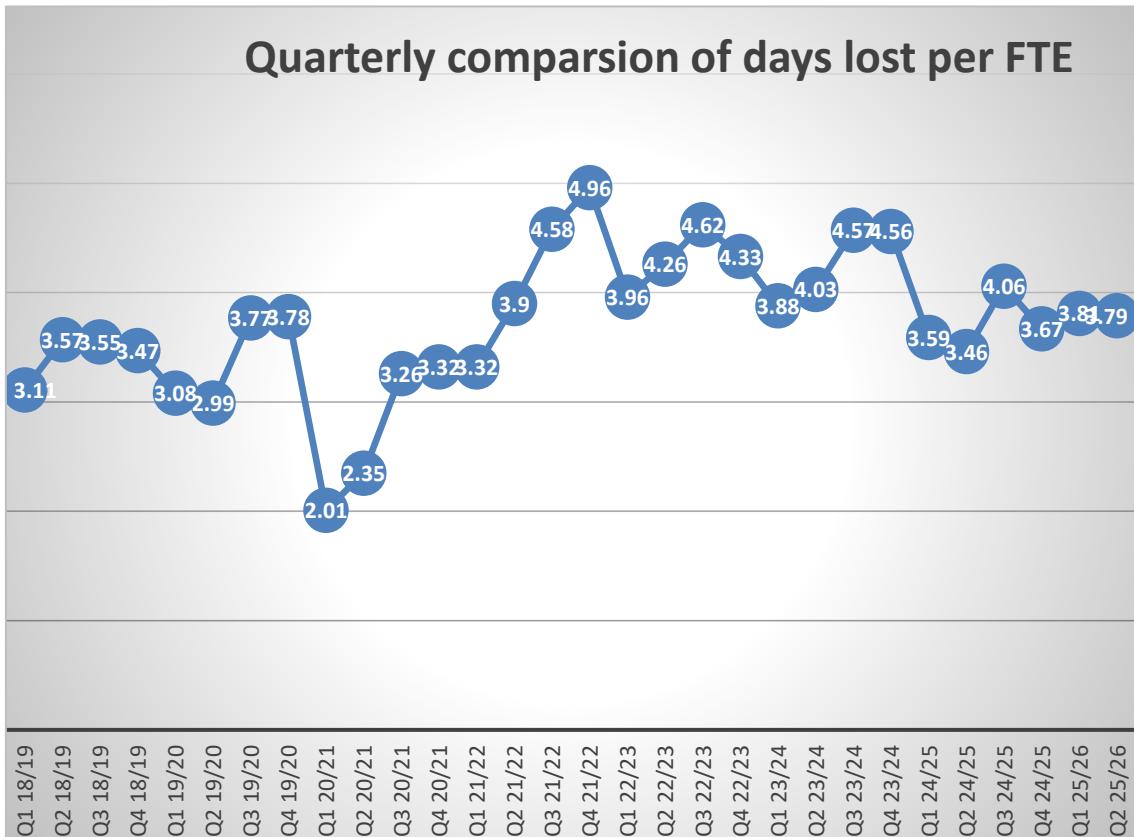
- Resources are in place to ensure that adequate monitoring and review is in place at department level.

**5.0 Equality and Good Relations Implications**

**5.1**

- Approximately 12.6% of absence (2176.74 days) is recorded as disability related and 66.09% of disability related absence was managed as long term.”

**Figure 1:**



**Figure 2:**

<b>Reason for Absence</b>	<b>Total Days</b>	<b>% of total days</b>
Stress, depression, anxiety	6309.46	36.61%
Musculo-skeletal	4536.97	26.33%
Stomach, digestive, etc	1667.61	9.68%
Infections, inc colds & flu	1126.26	6.54%
Neurological, inc headaches	677.55	3.93%
Heart, blood press, circ, etc	673.51	3.91%
Other	592.34	3.44%
Chest and respiratory	566.55	3.29%
Genito-urinary, inc menstrual	461.12	2.68%
Eye, ear, nose & mouth/dental	437.34	2.54%
Infections, Covid19	143.28	0.83%
Pregnancy related	40.87	0.24%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>17232.86</b>	

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

**Figure 3:**

<b>Reason for Discretion</b>	<b>Total Days</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Mental Health	634.19	22.57%
Underlying medical condition/disability	625.68	22.26%
Hospitalisation	245.90	8.75%
Bereavement	241.05	8.58%
Industrial Injury	203.86	7.25%
Unresolved ER Issue	193.97	6.90%
Planned surgery and recovery	179.37	6.38%
Emergency domestic responsibilities	147.02	5.23%
Previous long service and clear record	88.24	3.14%
RTC	74.06	2.64%
Deferred pending OH	69.13	2.46%
Violence at work	42.03	1.50%
Maternity	27.87	0.99%
Personal stressors	26.00	0.93%
Infectious disease	8.92	0.32%
Persistent absence; after a period of long-term absence where an underlying condition has been identified	3.00	0.11%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2810.29</b>	
total days lost in Q2	8615.48	
% of total days lost where discretion applied in Q2	32.62%	
average days off per occurrence in Q2	22.85	

**Figure 4:**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Total</b>
City and Neighbourhood Services	144
City and Organisational Strategy	9
Corporate Services	11
External Affairs Comms & Marketing	0
Human Resources	0
Finance	0
Legal and Civic Services	26
Place and Economy	38
Property and Projects	22

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

<b>Totals</b>	<b>250</b>
---------------	------------

**Figure 5:**

<b>Actual disability</b>	<b>Total days</b>	<b>% of total disability related absence</b>
Depression / Anxiety / Mental health conditions	929.11	42.68%
Fibromyalgia	265.00	12.17%
Cancer	148.78	6.83%
Chronic heart condition	117.87	5.41%
PTSD	100.00	4.59%
Heart attack	93.00	4.27%
Polymyalgia Rheumatica	85.00	3.90%
Parkinsons	82.77	3.80%
Chronic back condition	67.84	3.12%
Chronic hip condition	56.96	2.62%
Osteoarthritis	54.68	2.51%
Chronic neurological condition	38.00	1.75%
Chronic respiratory condition	35.81	1.65%
Other*	101.92	4.68%
Total disability related absence in Q2	2176.74	
Total absence end of quarter two	17232.86	
% If absence lost due to disability	12.63%	
% of disability related absence managed as LTA	66.09%	

In response to a question from a Member with regards to concern around stress, depression and anxiety related absences, the Director of HR outlined the mitigations in place to address stress related absence and stated that she would aim to provide a breakdown of stress, depression and anxiety related absences, in so far as if the absences were work related or personal in addition to available benchmarking information, to the next meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted the report.

**Corporate Health and Safety Performance Report**

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager provided the Panel with an update on the corporate health and safety performance and activities for the quarter ending 30th September, 2025.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

She outlined the progress against the following health and safety key performance indicators for the quarter:

- Agreed Health and Safety and fire safety recommendations implemented;
- Health and Safety service requests responded to within five days;
- Fire risk assessment inspections;
- Number of RIDDOR accidents; and
- Number of workplace accidents.

She provided the Panel with an overview of employee and non-employee accidents/incidents which had been reported during quarter two and a three-year trend analysis.

The Corporate Health and Safety Manager reported that there had been six enquiries received from the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) and she outlined the correspondence and the actions which had been undertaken in response.

The Panel commended the improvement in implementation rates and noted the report.

**Northern Ireland Audit Office –  
Report to Those Charged with Governance**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. Barr, Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), to the meeting.

Mr. Barr explained that there were no outstanding issues and NIAO was in a position whereby the report could be finalised within two weeks.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Finance stated that the meeting dates of the Panel in 2026 would be considerate of the timeline for the Report to Those Charged with Governance.

The Panel noted the update.

**Bank Reconciliations - NIAO request for disclosure  
in Annual Governance Statement**

The Corporate Finance Manager explained that, following the implementation of the new finance system, several issues had arisen around the clearing of unreconciled items on the Council's bank reconciliations for 2024/25. Subsequently, the NIAO had requested a reperformance of those bank reconciliations to clear and match unreconciled items in 2024/25.

She stated that the income team had worked across Council departments to clear unmatched items in the bank reconciliation and ensured that income was recognised in the bank balance in 2024/25 accounts.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

She outlined the following actions which had been taken to address the bank reconciliation issue:

- Configuration of bank rules had been addressed to ensure automatic clearing had been implemented to reduce the volume of uncleared items;
- Teams were being trained in the new system to ensure correct reconciliation codes and coding to allow transactions to be matched and cleared;
- Regular meetings with Digital Services to address any issues with interface journals; and
- Process for escalation of unallocated income queries issued to departments.

She explained that the above actions would be monitored and that a monthly bank reconciliations report would be provided to management.

The Corporate Finance Manager reported that the NIAO had suggested that the issue be included in the Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 and she provided the Panel with the proposed wording for the statement.

The Panel noted the report and agreed with the revised wording for the Annual Governance Statement, to be agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**AGRS Progress Report November 2025**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services and the Principal Auditor provided the Panel with an update on three assignments which had been finalised during the period from September to October, 2025 relating to: Agency; Performance Management; and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

She provided the Panel with an overview of progress against delivery of the 25/26 audit plan and pointed out that 45% of planned activity was either underway or completed.

She summarised the current work in progress that included advisory and an update on the AGRS review of the process for raising and closing health and safety actions.

The Panel received a high-level overview of fraud and raising concerns cases as well as the National Fraud Initiative.

In line with a request from the Panel's meeting in June, the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided an update on the current position regarding the matters that had given rise to the requests for deferral of the following audits

- Management of the corporate risk on Health and Safety;
- Community Services Provision; and

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

- Management of the corporate risk on Bereavement Services.

She advised the Panel that the first two audits would be included in the audit plan for 26/27 and the last audit was currently in progress.

In response to a request from a Member, the Head of Human Resources agreed that an update report on agency resources would be brought back to a future meeting of the Panel.

The Panel noted the AGRS Progress Report for the period September to November 2025 and agreed to defer the internal audit of recruitment and selection and the external review of the Raising Concerns arrangements to 2026/27.

**Corporate Risk Management**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Strategic Director of Corporate Services provided the Panel with an overview of the Corporate Risk Dashboard summarising the key updates from the risk review for the Quarter Ending (QE) September 2025.

She provided an update on compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE September 2025, completed by senior management and on business continuity management arrangements.

The Panel:

- Noted the corporate risk management dashboard and agreed the updates for QE September 2025;
- Noted the assurances from senior management regarding compliance with the Risk Strategy, based on the assurance statements for QE September 2025; and
- Noted the current position regarding the review and update of business continuity plans for the critical services.

**Performance Improvement Q2 Update**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy provided the Panel with a mid-year progress update on the performance indicators that contribute to the performance improvement objectives of the Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26.

He reported that the year-to-date position of the Corporate Delivery Plan had been presented to the CMT Oversight Board on 12th November and that the Corporate Management Team had been addressing areas which were already at risk or behind, through their respective Departmental Management Teams.

He summarised agreed changes made by Chief Officers to the Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 that had emerged during the reporting process and advised the Panel that a mid-year progress report would be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee via the Audit and Risk Panel minutes on 19th December, 2025.

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

The Panel noted the report and approved the Quarter 2 Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 Performance Dashboard Report.

**Place and Economy - H&S / Audit Actions Update**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy explained that the end of Quarter 2 there were 51 open recommendations across the Department of Place and Economy, 33 of which had been categorised as new.

He summarised the following key updates:

- Developer Contributions - four of six open recommendations had been fully implemented, one partially implemented and one outstanding;
- Intelligent Client Function - three recommendations had been implemented and two partially implemented;
- Markets – of three recommendations, two had been fully implemented and one partially implemented.
- Planning Applications - of six open actions, two had been fully implemented and three partially implemented; and
- Building Control – 8 open recommendations that could not be closed until the new building control system was fully implemented and operational.

He explained that the Corporate Health and Safety Team had dedicated significant staff resources, supplemented by specialist external Health and Safety advice, regarding improvements at Belfast Zoo.

He informed the Panel that Audit Governance and Risk Services regularly attended Place and Economy Departmental Management Team meetings with regard to governance issues, that included audit recommendations.

The Panel noted the report.

**Assessment of Compliance with the Good Practice Guide for  
Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committees**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Panel with an overview of an initial assessment of compliance with the NIAO's Good Practice Guide for Effective Audit and Risk Assurance Committees completed on behalf of the Panel for its consideration.

She explained that the Comptroller and Auditor General had encouraged committees to complete the checklist, at least annually and that AGRS had completed an initial assessment.

She reported that eight recommendations for improvement had arisen from the assessment in relation to training for the Panel, updates to the terms of reference for the Panel and providing the Panel with information on innovation, assurance maps and risk to

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

support the Panel in their role. She added that the initial assessment found the Panel to be broadly in compliance with best practice and that AGRS would arrange training for the Panel in 2026.

The Chairperson advised the Panel to contact the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services directly with suggestions for areas of improvement or training.

The Panel noted and agreed the recommendations to further improve its effectiveness.

**Schedule of Meetings for 2026 / Programme of Business**

The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services provided the Panel with an overview of the indicative programme of business and proposed the following meeting dates for 2026:

**Proposed dates for Audit Assurance Board**

- Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026;
- Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026;
- Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2026; and
- Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2026.

**Proposed dates for Audit and Risk Panel**

- Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026;
- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2026;
- Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2026; and
- Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2026.

The Panel approved the indicative programme of business for 2026 and agreed to the proposed meeting dates for 2026. The Audit and Risk Panel agreed for the Chairperson to write to the NIAO with a request for them to bear in mind the timing of the Panels meeting in September when they are scheduling their audit of BCC accounts.

**Asset Management**

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Panel with an update on the progress towards adopting a best-practice Strategic Asset Management approach.

She highlighted the positive steps which had been undertaken in respect of asset management and provided a summary of the following next phase of actions to ensure a strategic approach to asset management:

- Governance - the establishment of a Strategic Asset Management Group within the Council to provide a multi-disciplinary approach and provide a 'challenge' function to assets to be chaired by the Chief Executive;

**Audit and Risk Panel,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

- Framework - the development of an overarching Asset Management Framework, including a Corporate Asset Management Strategy, thematic Asset Management Plans linked into the Strategy and the finalisation of asset management policies as a key workstream of the Strategic Asset Management Group;
- System – that procurement of a new Corporate Asset Management System, designed to support the implementation of a strategic asset management approach was underway; and
- Maintenance Programme- note that a programme of condition surveys and energy audits of Council assets was currently underway which would enable the development of a costed planned maintenance programme.

She explained that adopting a strategic approach would require a change in attitudes and culture towards assets within the organisation and the development and embedment would include ongoing engagement with Elected Members and officers from across the Council, and she summarised the proposed timelines for development and implementation.

The Panel noted the report.

**Date of next meeting**

The Panel noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026.

Chairperson



<b>Subject:</b>	Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2025
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Jim Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Godfrey McCartney, Good Relations Manager (6015)

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	

<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Shared City Partnership meeting held on the 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2025.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	That the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approve the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on the 1 <sup>st</sup> December, including:
2.2	<p><b><u>Presentation – Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Project</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the presentation.</li> </ul>
2.3	<p><b><u>Update from Partnership Members</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updates from members are noted in the minutes for further information, following a proposal from the NIHE, the partnership agreed to receive a presentation from the Housing for All Team to be scheduled for 2026.</li> </ul>
2.4	<p><b><u>Community Recovery Fund Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the contents of the report; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees the content of the report. The Partnership further agreed that any underspend in the programme should be aligned to the Area Based Consortia, WULO, and resources subject to satisfactory evaluation and proposal, the partnership requests that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also agrees this proposal which is outlined in the minutes.</li> </ul>
2.5	<p><b><u>Asylum Dispersal Funding</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership noted the report and agreed the proposed approach for the future allocation of dispersal funding, subject to confirmation of further funding from the Executive Office and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees proposed approach detailed in report.</li> </ul>
2.6	<p><b><u>PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report</li> </ul>
2.7	<p><b><u>Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report</li> </ul>
2.8	<p><b><u>Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report</li> </ul>
2.9	<p><b><u>Community Regeneration &amp; Transformation Thematic Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report</li> </ul>
2.10	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key items reported: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Next Meeting: 12<sup>th</sup> January 13.30 – It was agreed this would be a half day workshop to be held in Girdwood Community Hub, commencing with Lunch; and Key areas of business dealt with at the start of the meeting with the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>remainder of the time to focus on the New Good Relations Strategy, audit and Action Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the new VCSE Community Panel had met and 2 VCSE Reps have been allocated to the Shared City Partnership: Irene Sherry representing Ashton Community Trust (North) and JP Sukumaran representing Karma Kalakendram (City-wide)</li> <li>○ The Good Relations Manager reported that following agreement at the November Shared City Partnership meeting for Council to develop a pilot proposal to progress the programme in conjunction with Social Change Initiative (SCI) a proposal has been submitted, further details are in the minutes.</li> <li>● The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the items raised under AOB; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also notes and agrees the items raised.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Key Issues</u></b></p> <p>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.</p>
3.2	<p>The key issues on the agenda at the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025 meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnership Papers of the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2025</li> <li>● Presentation on Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Programme</li> <li>● Update from Partnership Members</li> <li>● Community Recovery Fund Update</li> <li>● Asylum Dispersal Funding</li> <li>● PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update</li> <li>● Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update</li> <li>● Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update</li> <li>● Community Regeneration &amp; Transformation Thematic Update</li> <li>● Any Other Business</li> </ul>
3.3	<p>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 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025, Appendix 2: Presentation on Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Programme and Appendix 3 Community Recovery Fund Open Call.</p>
3.4	<p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>All financial implications are covered through existing budgets, and the Good Relations Action Plan is included in the current estimates process.</p>
3.5	<p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>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.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Minutes of the Shared City Partnership from the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Presentation Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Programme</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Community Recovery Fund Open Call</p>

This page is intentionally left blank

## SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

Monday 1st December, 2025

### MEETING OF SHARED CITY PARTNERSHIP

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

External Members: Ms. L. Euler, BHSCT  
Mr. L. Gunn, NIHE;  
Ms. J. Irwin, Community Relations Council;  
Rev. G. Kennedy, Faith Representative;  
Superintendent A. Hagan  
Ms. T. Mimna, Executive Office;  
Ms. A. Roberts, Community and Voluntary Sector; and  
Ms. A. M. White, British Red Cross.

In attendance: Mr. G. McCartney, Good Relations Manager  
Ms. D. McKinney, PEACE Programme Manager;  
Mr. D. Robinson, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;  
Ms. L. Dolan, Acting Senior Good Relations Officer;  
Ms. E. Kennedy, Project Officer (Good Relations);  
Ms. V. Postle, Project Officer (Good Relations); and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Members' Services and Digital Services Officer.

#### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor Smyth and Ms. B. Arthurs, Ms. C. Guiness, Mr. M. McBride, Dr. Wasif Naeem and Mr. G. Walker.

#### Change in Membership

The Partnership was advised that Ms. N. Creagh had replaced Mr. P. Anderson as the Department for Communities representative on the Partnership. The Chairperson asked that the Partnership's thanks be recorded to Mr. Anderson for his valuable contribution during his time on the Partnership.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th November 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 21st November.

#### Declarations of Interest

The Chairperson declared an interest in agenda Item 4, Community Recovery Update, in that an organisation with which he was associated, the West Belfast Partnership, was in receipt of funding. As the organisation was not being considered for funding, he was not required to leave the meeting.

The Chairperson also declared an interest, along with Councillor I. McLaughlin, Ms. Roberts and Ms. Irwin, under Item 6, Local Community Action Plan – Mobilisation Update, in that they were associated with organisations delivering projects under the terms of the PEACEPLUS Programme. As the report did not become subject to debate or discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

### **Presentation from Reconnected Belfast PEACEPLUS Project**

(Mr. D. Logan, Senior Programme Delivery Manager and Mrs. B Coyle attended in connection with this agenda item).

The Senior Programme Delivery presented the Partnership with an overview of the Reconnected Belfast Project.

He provided detail in respect of the submission of the PEACEPLUS bid and the funding that had been secured of 13.5m for capital works and the animation of the Waterworks and Alexandra Park. He also provided an overview of the numerous engagement sessions that had been held to date and advised that engagement was ongoing.

The officer advised the Partnership that the vision for Alexandra Park and Waterworks Park was to:

*'build on their unique natural and cultural significance to be cohesive places where biodiversity thrives, people from all communities are supported and prosper through leisure and recreational activities, and the parks become exemplar city green spaces for Belfast and Northern Ireland.'*

He took the Members through the guiding principles and drew their attention to the masterplan and concept designs along with the proposed programming once complete.

The officer concluded by advising that the planning process was ongoing. The Stage 4 Design Team had been appointed, and engagement was ongoing with the City and Neighbourhood Services Department, the Waterworks and Alexandra Park Stakeholder Group, Queens University Belfast Centre for Public Health and Planning and the Department of Justice (DoJ).

The Members discussed the challenges associated with the removal of the interface barrier and the role of the DoJ, along with the importance of community consultation, the need for agreement from the stakeholders and proper animation of the space. The officer advised that the Council was currently waiting to hear back from the DoJ regarding funding.

The Chairperson thanked the officer for attending the meeting and the Partnership noted the information which had been provided.

### **Members' Update**

Ms. White provided the Partnership with an overview on the work of the British Red Cross and the challenges faced by the organisation.

This included detail in respect of orientation/integration support, casework support, the distribution of funding, family reunion support, refugee resettlement, mental health and wellbeing support as well as the provision of weekly social integration activities in central

Belfast. She explained that the work also included Thematic work such as Policy Research Advocacy and the membership on various subgroups, including TEO RRI (Race Relations and Integration) – Racial Equality Subgroup and VCS Refugee Integration Subgroup.

She then provided an overview of some of the challenges faced, as follows:

- Change in Family Reunion Policy for sponsors with protection – pause on family reunion visa applications Appendix family reunion: caseworker guidance - GOV.UK Number of single asylum applicants with no pathway to reunite with families- causing anxiety and continued high number of singles not settled with families. Negative impact for integration- community cohesion;
- Move on period for those granted protection changed from 56 to 28 days- limited time to move on from asylum support- limited support from Home Office Asylum Move on Office- restricted to Belfast. Increase risk of homelessness/destitution given the reduced move on period; and
- NIHE Homelessness Policy change- Full Duty Applicant criteria appears to have changed recently although NIHE has not responded to enquires to confirm such. Housing Rights have approached NIHE and a response is pending. The sector has seen some refugees without access to Public Housing assistance. Potential increase in street homelessness as most newly granted refugees will not have deposit/guarantor to access private sector housing. Increase in pressure to access support services.

She concluded by advising that social integration activities had now moved to the city centre, these were held every Wednesday afternoon at the Food Stock Community Hub. She advised that 4 new volunteers with lived experience of forced migration/displacement would be joining the team soon and it was anticipated that these additional resources would help with the provision of the services.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. White for her update.

Discussion ensued regarding housing matters, specifically access to housing and community safety issues, during which it was agreed that it would be helpful if a representative from the NIHEs 'Housing for All Team' would attend a future meeting to discuss and update on these matters. It was also suggested that it would be useful to hear from a member of staff from their Good Relations Section and for an update to be provided at a future meeting on the internal review processes being undertaken by the NIHE in regard to legislation requirements.

Several Members highlighted the success of the specialist housing officers that had been appointed in the North and West of the City, particularly in dealing with community safety challenges, and endorsed this approach being rolled out in South and East Belfast.

Rev. Kennedy referred to the fact that the faith representative on the Partnership was a rotating position annually, he stated that in an attempt for the faith sector to be closer aligned on common themes throughout the city that representatives from the 4 main Churches had agreed to meet to try and encourage a joined-up approach to Good Relations issues. The group would be co-ordinated by the Rev Karen Campbell, the representatives were keen to try and identify common themes from the Churches and ways that they could work together to try and address issues, such as race relations in the city, he stated that he looked forward to

updating the Partnership. He also took the opportunity to remind the Members about the forthcoming 4Corners Festival which was scheduled for 30th January – 8th February 2026 and encouraged the Members to get involved as there would be a focus on race relations at some of the sessions, more information was available [here](#)

The Partnership noted the update and agreed to hear from representatives from the NIHE to provide updates at future meetings of the Partnership.

Noted.

### **Community Recovery Fund Update**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

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

**1.1 To provide an update on the status and progress of the Community Recovery Fund, previously approved by Council.**

**2.0 Main report**

**2.1 Background**

The Deputy Prime Minister of the UK established a Community Recovery Fund to support areas impacted by the public disorder that occurred between July and August 2024, including Belfast. The funds were allocated to the Department of Finance to assist the most affected communities. In Belfast, the City Council's Good Relations Unit, with cross-departmental support, has been responsible for managing the local implementation of this support.

The Community Recovery Fund was delivered through a cross-departmental approach approved and agreed by Council. This involved close collaboration between Officer across internal departments particularly across Neighbourhood Services and external community partners. Neighbourhood Integration Managers led the engagement on consortium bids, ensuring that each project was tailored to meet the specific needs of local areas across the city. Community Development teams also played a vital role by designing inclusive events at community centres that celebrate the city's diversity.

In response to the public disorder during July and August 2024, the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) implemented targeted in-house initiatives. At the same time, the Good Relations Team oversaw the quotation process and open call for applications. This process revealed the exceptional quality of submissions and showcased the inspiring anti-racism work happening throughout Belfast—initiatives that can now be supported through this funding stream and the opportunities it provides.

## 2.2

### Community Recovery Fund Update

#### Appendix 1 – Detailed Community Recovery Report

#### CRF001 – Safer Neighbourhood Officer Community

#### Engagement Project

This project is delivering strong progress in supporting communities affected by the 2024 public disorder by enhancing safety, reducing harm, and fostering social cohesion across Belfast. Through the deployment of Safer Neighbourhood Officers (SNOs), it addresses antisocial behaviour and hate crimes while promoting inclusion via community engagement, events, and leadership workshops. A particular focus is placed on ethnic minority, migrant, and refugee communities, with collaboration among local partners helping to build trust and resilience.

SNOs are now actively engaging with a range of ethnic minority organisations including Diverse Youth NI, City of Sanctuary, Belfast Islamic Centre, and EMSONI, and have participated in community events such as the Refugee Picnic. With recent changes to SNO work patterns, there is increased potential to connect with more groups and attend further events, strengthening relationships and expanding the project's reach. Together, these efforts are contributing to safer neighbourhoods and a more inclusive, cohesive Belfast.

## 2.3

### CRF002 - Integration and Inclusion

#### Awarded to: Wheelworks

The programme is designed to promote diversity awareness, challenge stereotypes and misinformation, and support integration within communities. It engages teachers, Boards of Governors, community youth leaders, and young people, equipping them with practical tools to foster inclusion and counter hate. Core elements include training programmes, interactive toolkits, workshops, and youth-led initiatives, with content focused on understanding prejudice, developing critical thinking, building cultural awareness, preventing hate crime, and strengthening relationships. Overall, the programme seeks to create cohesive, informed, and inclusive communities through education and engagement. Progress to date has been very positive. The toolkit is being developed by artists and co-designed with young people from schools and community groups including Blessed Trinity, St Dominics, Donegall Pass Youth Group, and Diverse Youth NI. Feedback from these sessions has been used to finalise the toolkit, ensuring it reflects the voices and experiences of those involved. Wheelworks are now preparing to engage with Schools of Sanctuary, where they will deliver a three-hour twilight workshop on using the toolkit—demonstrating excellent collaboration between two CRF-funded programmes and further strengthening the impact of this initiative.

2.4

**CRF003**

**Belfast City Council Community Centre Programme**  
**- Reaching Out**

The Community Development Department has been allocated funds to deliver local neighbourhood projects across both Council-run and independent community centres in Belfast. Progress to date has been encouraging. Of the 26 Council-run community centres, 16 have already advanced their projects, delivering a wide range of initiatives from crafting classes to cultural competency training. All six independent community centres have successfully concluded their programmes, and the first monitoring and evaluation forms received highlight very positive outcomes. Together, these efforts are strengthening inclusion, building community connections, and showcasing the value of collaborative neighbourhood development.

2.5

**CRF004**

**Challenging the Narrative**

Edie Shillue Consulting was awarded the contract for *Challenging the Narrative*. The initiative will deliver eight workshops, with two held in each area of Belfast, aimed at training key groups on migration and integration. With strong migrant-led input, the programme focuses on reducing hate and misinformation while building understanding and cohesion across communities.

Progress to date has been very positive. Six sessions have already been completed, with a further three planned for early 2026. In addition, work is underway to develop a training booklet to complement the workshops, ensuring participants have practical resources to support ongoing learning and engagement. Together, these efforts highlight the programme's success in fostering inclusion and challenging harmful narratives.

2.6

**CRF005**

**Expansion of Schools of Sanctuary**

The project aims to expand Schools of Sanctuary across South and North Belfast, particularly in areas impacted by racism. Its purpose is to promote social cohesion by making schools more welcoming for refugees and asylum seekers. School communities are supported in adopting inclusive practices and anti-racism education, while the initiative also strengthens partnerships with local stakeholders and provides leadership training. Family support services, including multilingual clinics, further aid integration and positive community relations.

The programme is progressing well, with 14 schools identified and completing their introductory sessions this month. Each of these schools will be buddied with schools that have already achieved School of Sanctuary status, ensuring peer learning and shared best practice. In addition, schools will benefit from the training

toolkit developed by Wheelworks, providing practical resources to embed inclusive approaches and enhance the impact of the initiative.

**2.7 CRF006 – Belfast City Council, Economic Development – Business Mentoring, Engagement, and Integration Programme**

The initiative aims to boost enterprise and business growth in the WULO area using £20,000 from the Community Recovery Fund. It focuses on engaging the community, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting existing businesses through drop-in sessions, promotional outreach, and tailored resources, ensuring inclusive access to mentoring and development programs.

**2.8 CRF007 - WULO – LORAG Engaged Citizens**

The Engaged Citizens project fosters community cohesion and trust in Belfast's Wider University and Lower Ormeau area. It supports those affected by hate crime through inclusive dialogue and cultural celebration. Residents are trained as ambassadors to welcome newcomers and counter harmful narratives. Creative programs and exhibitions highlight shared identities and experiences. The project partners with local groups to ensure sustainable, community-led solutions. This project is progressing well and meeting all targets to date.

**2.9 WULO - Forward South Creating a shared vision through building a Shared Space**

This project, led by Forward South Partnership, aims to build community cohesion and resilience in South Belfast in response to recent racist hate crimes. It will include storytelling workshops, community dialogues, and discussions with unionist women to address prejudice and misinformation. Activities will take place in an inclusive space supporting services like the Roma Support Hub, with a focus on engaging minoritised and migrant communities through culturally sensitive programming and translation support. The goal is to foster trust, counter disinformation, and promote a shared, inclusive future, again the project is progressing well and meeting all targets to date.

**CRF008b - Focused Consortium Projects**

**3.0 North Belfast - Greater Shankill Alternatives - Community Navigator Support Programme**

To support migrant and ethnic minority communities, a Community Navigator will link newcomers to vital services. Workshops and outreach will promote inclusion, safety, and awareness of rights. Hate crime prevention materials and youth engagement will help reduce tensions. Collaboration with local

agencies will strengthen community ties and amplify lived experiences. This project is progressing well and has helped deescalate issues which have arisen within the community.

### 3.1 South Belfast Consortium – A Celebration of Cultural Diversity

In November 2025, the South Belfast consortium was awarded to the Belfast Bands Forum, with the project now set to begin. The programme sets out a connected series of initiatives designed to strengthen community leadership, promote inclusion, and rebuild trust following the racist hate crime and public disorder that took place in Sandy Row and the Village during the summer of 2024.

- Central to the work is a Community Leadership and Conflict Management Training programme that will create a network of 24 accredited local leaders, drawn from bands, youth groups, and community networks, who will be trained in de-escalation, communication, and inclusion. These leaders will be equipped to mediate conflict, safeguard public spaces, and respond confidently to emerging tensions, ensuring resilience within local communities.
- School and Community Outreach and Tuition Projects will provide creative, educational, and intercultural learning opportunities in schools and youth clubs across South Belfast, including those serving families in Sandy Row and the Village. Through music-making, storytelling, and shared cultural education, children from diverse backgrounds including newcomer and minority ethnic pupils, will gain greater understanding of each other's traditions, building empathy, confidence, and respect from an early age.
- The programme will culminate in *Sounds of Tradition – A Celebration of Cultural Diversity*, a civic event showcasing local and Commonwealth cultures through music, dance, and food, reinforcing the message that Belfast's diversity is its strength.

Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive response to the 2024 unrest, safeguarding communities, preventing future disorder, and rebuilding social trust through education, dialogue, and shared cultural celebration. The combined programme aims to leave a lasting legacy of peacebuilding, integration, and shared pride in the Sandy Row and Village communities.

**3.2 West Belfast - Blackie River – Newcomer Family Liaison Project**

This initiative aims to support and integrate migrant communities in West Belfast, especially those impacted by the racist hate crime and unrest of July–August 2024. It seeks to foster social cohesion and rebuild trust among migrant, refugee, asylum-seeking, and host communities in the Greater Falls area. By addressing root causes of tension through proactive engagement, the project hopes to prevent future disorder. Key actions include hiring a part-time Liaison Officer, distributing welcome packs, and serving as a bridge between new families and local services. The NFLP continues to make excellent progress. To date, they have engaged with over 50 families, receiving highly positive feedback on our support and services. In response to requests from families, they are now arranging homework assistance to help overcome language barriers and ensure children can thrive academically. They are currently in the process of distributing 50 air fryers as part of their welcoming packs, further enhancing the practical support we provide to new arrivals.

In addition, they have established a strong working relationship with MEARS Housing, who will be sharing data to help them identify and reach families most in need of assistance. This collaboration will enable them to extend their impact and ensure resources are directed where they are most required.

**3.3 East Belfast - East Belfast Alternatives Connswater Community Recovery Project**

This initiative fosters healing and unity in East Belfast by bridging divides between host and migrant communities. Through dialogue, cultural exchange, and youth engagement, it addresses the root causes of unrest. It empowers minority leaders, promotes trust in public services, and strengthens community networks. The project is progressing well to date.

**3.4 CRF008  
Open Call**

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a detailed progress report on the delivery of the Community Recovery Fund.

**3.5 CRF009 – Hate Crime Hardship Programme  
Belfast City Council**

The initiative aims to provide practical support to victims of hate crime through the Belfast PCSP's Home Security Service. It is developing sensitive referral pathways with partners like PCSP, PSNI, and Bryson to ensure victims receive both emotional support and home safety measures. Key community groups involved include Association Darfur NI, Afghan Community, and NI Somali Association, among others. This collaborative effort

**seeks to enhance personal safety and foster trust within diverse communities.**

**3.6 Financial and Resource Implications**

**The proposals in this report are 100% funded through Community Recovery Fund. CRF funded projects have been offered project extensions until 31st August 2026.**

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

**These proposals have strong good relations outcomes and complement the work being delivered through the Council's Good Relations Action Plan and the Belfast Agenda.**

**4.0 Evaluation and Monitoring Reporting Requirements**

**Internal projects are required to submit Belfast City Council Evaluation and Monitoring Forms. These forms must clearly demonstrate alignment with the aims and objectives of the Community Recovery Fund.**

**External projects must provide the following:**

- CRF004 and CRF002 required mid-way report – both have been provided and are satisfactory**
- All other end of project of Belfast City Council evaluation and monitoring form**

Following a query from Ms. AM White regarding the distribution of welcome packs, it was agreed that officers would liaise with the Member directly to clarify that no overlap in the provision of support was occurring with other organisations in the sector.

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that there was an underspend in the programme of approximately £30,000. He also highlighted that following the work on CRF004 there might be the need for resources and asked the Members to consider this when agreeing the reallocation of the monies.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that:

- the underspend be assigned to the area-based consortia and wider university and lower Ormeau area, with officers progressing on this basis, subject to satisfactory review, evaluation and proposal;**
- if required, be permitted to factor in funding from the underspends for resources to CRF004; and**
- a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership to provide more detail in respect of what data was being shared with Mears.**

## **Asylum Dispersal Funding**

The Project Officer reminded the Members that, since 2023, the Executive Office had provided the Council with Asylum Dispersal Funding to support the delivery of services for people in the asylum process and to assist with their integration and inclusion.

Funding had been fully allocated for the current financial year, supporting nine projects through an open call and two larger-scale projects through a public tender process, however, it was anticipated that further funding would be made available by the Executive Office this year. Given the lead in time required to procure and commission projects, officers had assessed the needs across the city to ensure that, should additional funding be confirmed, projects could be progressed without delay. The Executive Office had advised Councils that future funding should prioritise advice and information hub-type activities for asylum seekers.

The Members were asked to recall from the presentations at November's meeting that two large-scale projects had been commissioned under the current year's asylum dispersal allocation. These included:

- a high-level advice project, delivering in four community organisation settings, across Belfast, providing mobile advice clinics and level 1 immigration advice and casework to people in the asylum process; and
- a training and capacity-building project, aimed at enhancing the expertise and confidence of organisations that had not traditionally worked with asylum seekers, whilst also supporting the development of minority-led organisations.

At that meeting, the Law Centre had highlighted the growing demand from community and voluntary organisations for continued support and training to build capacity in providing advice to asylum seekers and refugees. The International Organisation had also reported significant demand for specialist advice provision, noting the need for services that extended beyond basic signposting. In addition, engagement with partner organisations had indicated that these approaches were delivering a positive impact, and it was felt that the focus on capacity building and delivering advice in new settings across Belfast was creating a level of sustainability. It was therefore proposed that, should further funding become available, the Council would maintain this approach around delivering high quality advice and investing in the capacity of organisations, this would also align with the outworkings and discussion arising from the Good Relations Audit.

The Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree:

- to commission a specialised advice service through a procurement process to deliver high-quality, targeted support for asylum seekers and refugees;
- to commission a Phase 2 of the Capacity-Building Programme through procurement, aimed at strengthening the skills and confidence of community, voluntary, and minority-led organisations; and
- to reserve a portion of funding for an open call, allowing organisations to propose innovative projects for consideration, thereby encouraging a responsiveness to emerging needs.

It was also recommended to note that, in terms of part 1 and 2 of the proposed approach, officers were proposing that programmes would be commissioned for 2 years, with the possibility of an extension of one further year; break clauses would be in place each year which would be based around a satisfactory review and the budget availability.

## **Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update**

The Partnership considered the undernoted report:

### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**The purpose of this report is to provide Shared City Partnership members with an update on the mobilisation of PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community 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 also note the content of the report.**

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **3.1 Mobilisation**

**As previously reported, mobilisation of the Action Plan now focuses on the capital and animation elements of the Community Regeneration & Transformation theme, and the Multiculturalism to Interculturalism Lot 1 project.**

#### **3.2 Contract Awards and Procurement**

**The Board is advised that the CCD5 Lot 1 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism project was re-tendered at the end of October 2025. Members should note that the tender closing date has been extended to 8 December 2025 to maximise response.**

#### **3.3 Financial Controller**

**The formal Call Off Contract between Belfast City Council and KPMG has been submitted to SEUPB for approval.**

#### **3.4 Action Plan Modification – CRT5 Sanctuary Theatre Animation**

**Members are requested to note a minor typographical error has been rectified through a formal modification agreed by SEUPB. The project summary contact hours for participants engaged in the CRT5, Sanctuary Theatre animation project was amended from 4 to 3 hours, which aligns with the project narrative. The modification has no impact on the Letter of Offer (LoO).**

### 3.5 JeMS Reporting and Claims

The Partnership is reminded that delays in formal contracting on SEUPB's JEMS system and the contracting of a Financial Controller, has led to a backlog of 7 outstanding claims and reports to be submitted on the system. The claims and reporting process comprises of 3 separate elements, and progress of each element is outlined below:

1. *Partner Reports* include a small amount of narrative on progress of the Action Plan.  
Partner Reports 1 and 2 (1st January 2024 to 30th June 2024) are drafted on the system  
Partner Reports 3 and 4 (1st July 2024 to 30th December 2024) are to be drafted in coming weeks.
2. *Financial Claims* align with the Partner reports and comprises of expenditure to be claimed and supporting evidence eg procurement documents.

Claims Expenditure 1 to 4 (1st January 2024 to 31st December 2024) are drafted on the system. Supporting evidence is to be uploaded over the coming weeks.

SEUPB has agreed that 4 partner reports and claims should be built on the system and submitted in phases once the Financial Controller is contracted. This will allow for claims to be checked, and any clarifications or lessons learned from previous claims be implemented before the next partner report is submitted.

On this basis, the submission deadlines for the first partner reports are fluid and will depend on when the previous report has been reviewed, and feedback received.

3. *Project Content Reports* include substantial narrative on project progress, including reporting on Horizontal Principles, Target Groups, project activities and deliverables. A timeframe for submission has been agreed with the SEUPB, as follows:

Project Reports 1 to 3 (1st January 2024 to 30th September 2024) – submitted.

Project Reports 4 and 5 (1st October 2024 to 31st March 2025) – being drafted and due for submission by 14th November 2025.

Project Reports 6 and 7 (1st April to 30th September 2025) – due for submission by 12th December 2025.

Project Content Report 8, 1st October to 31st December 2025 is to be submitted by 28th January 2026. This will bring Council on track and in line with the Programme Manual which requests

Project Content Reports are submitted 28 days after the end of the reporting period.

### **3.6 Communications Process – Delivery partner approvals**

The Partnership is advised that a communications checklist is being introduced for delivery partners to complete, when submitting communications materials for approval. The aim of the checklist is to reduce the number of compliance errors before communications material is submitted to Council, and to increase the knowledge and understanding Delivery Partners on the communications regulations.

### **3.7 Flexibility and Tolerances**

As members are aware each project within the Action Plan has distinct KPI targets, deliverables, activities, cohorts and participant numbers which contribute cumulatively to the overall Programme deliverables.

As recently reported, there have been several project requests to realign targets and payment schedules, mainly due to participant retention issues.

Officers approached the SEUPB to discuss project tolerances within participant numbers and contact hours. SEUPB advised that attrition rates for participant contact hours were not permitted within the call document and as such projects must complete what was outlined in the application and Action Plan. It was noted there is a degree of flexibility for participant contact hours within Council's Action Plan, and SEUPB advised that Council should manage the tolerances in line with the application and internal procedures.

A detailed process on project tolerances is currently being developed, and will be submitted for approval by the Board in early 2026.

Members are requested to note that, as an interim measure, the Programme Board agreed to delegate authority to the Good Relations Manager and Programme Manager to consider requests to realign targets and payment schedules and consider contact hour tolerances within 10% of the required hours. It should be noted tolerances to contact hours will not fall below the minimum contact hours of each project.

### **3.8 Assurance Audit**

As previously reported, clarifications for the AGRS audit have been provided and the audit report including recommendations are due in November 2025. The audit report and recommendations will be reported through the PEACEPLUS Governance structure.

### **3.9 Staffing**

Members are advised of resource pressures within the PEACEPLUS team, with three vacancies and an officer on long term sickness absence.

The Project Officer post was re-advertised on 6th November 2025, with interviews scheduled for 4/5 December 2025. Recruitment for a new Project Support Officer is progressing via the reserve list.

Recruitment for a Monitoring and Data Analyst was unsuccessful and a timeline for reissue of the post is being finalised.

### **3.10 Financial and Resource Implications**

All expenditure associated with the PEACEPLUS Action Plan is reimbursed by SEUPB and is eligible from 1 January 2024. As previously reported referenced at 3.6 above, PEACEPLUS claimable expenditure to 30 September 2025 is approx. £1.44m.

### **3.11 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 noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

## **Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update**

The Partnership considered the following 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 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**

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).

Delivery of 4 sessions of the OCN Level 2 in Community Development progressed during October 2025 with 17 participants from 15 organisations. The sessions focused on community learning for social change and understanding and engaging communities. the OCN course will run until the end of November 2025 and is the first of six courses that will be delivered over the lifetime of the programme.

Local Community Empowerment Plans (LCEPs) have commenced in South Belfast with Stage 1 baselining for LCEP 08 (Balmoral/Botanic, led by FSP) and in for LCEP 09 (Lisnasharragh/Ormiston/Titanic, led by EBCDA).

Discussions on the composition and membership of the City-wide Capacity Building Forum are ongoing, and the Partnership will be updated with any recommendations arising. Members should note that a phased approach to recruitment to the Forum, aligned with recruitment to the LCEPs may be taken forward.

The first Citywide non accredited training session will focus on Facilitation Skills and is planned for December 2025.

NICVA has reported circa 100 wider participants completing target hours. Technical issues relating to NICVA's CRM have been ongoing since July, and some evidence of M&E data has been provided but it has required further cleansing to enable upload onto the BCC system, in line with Programme monitoring requirements. This data upload is due imminently.

**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.

Members are advised that the two change control processes reported last month, (i) Additional Facilitators, and (ii) Membership of the Programme Oversight Group (POG), are

ongoing. The delivery partner noted that if approval was received in November 2025, then delivery would likely commence in January 2025.

Due to the delay in completion of Phase 1 and ongoing clarifications required in relation to an Additional Facilitators approval process, which are delaying the commencement of cohort delivery, a meeting was convened on 6 November 2025 to review project implementation with all key individuals involved with the project. A number of actions were agreed to help create a pathway to commencement of delivery.

A further meeting with the delivery partner on progress is being arranged.

### **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.

As reported in October 2025, 411 participants have completed the project. A key focus during this period has been the accuracy of all Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) and KPI data on the system. Giga has agreed to consider their approach to data gathering/entry to streamline this process moving forward. Giga have also agreed to ensure alignment of KPI's with project content delivery and the development of a young person friendly attitudinal survey is under considered. This is in response to some attitudinal survey questions responses not achieving the 70% baseline.

Giga and partner BEAM Creative have met to plan for project delivery in 2026.

The Phase 2a payment for achievement of deliverables has been processed. The project is progressing towards Phase 2b payment upon completion of all M&E alignment and analysis of KPI data.

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 realigned Phase 1 target of 70 participants have now completed Cohort 1 and attitudinal surveys with an average positive response of 86%.

Social action activity was delivered w/c 27 October 2025. Key themes were poverty, homelessness & period poverty, approximately 400 items were distributed to: Ballynafeigh Community Association, Welcome Centre, Women's Aid and Community Associations including Archway Youth Club,

**Shaftesbury Community Hub, Cregagh Youth Centre and Holy Family Youth Club.**

**As recommended by the Programme Board, officers within Belfast Health Development Unit and the Policing & Community Safety Partnership were informed of the project, and leaflets provided by BHDU were included in the period poverty packs.**

**ACN and partners have been actively recruiting during this period focussing on schools delivery in North Belfast, with Rosario, Ledley Hall and Lagmore Youth having a youth and community focus in South, East and West Belfast. 60 young people from the youth and community sector and 50 young people from schools have signed up to the project, the participant registrations are to be uploaded to Council's M&E system.**

**Members are requested to note that ACN has submitted a proposal relating to the increase in costs for cross border residential activity and have proposed the delivery of a NI residential or a cross-border day trip with participants. The proposal is currently under review by Officers in compliance with Programme regulations.**

**The Board is requested to note there has been a staff restructure within ACN, with new staff members appointed to the management of Lot 2 and a new staff member appointed to the M&E admin post.**

**The realigned targets for Phase 2a have been achieved and been approved.**

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

**Project Partner YEHA (Youth Educational Health Advice).**

**Participant numbers are varying, as a further 3 participants have disengaged due to school workload. As such, 42 young people are now registered and actively participating, with 23 young people having completed the required minimum 80 meaningful contact hours.**

**All participants have been progressing through the Diversity & Good Relations OCN which is due to complete before Christmas.**

**The international residential to Poland took place 10 November – 13 November 2025, with 26 young people and 4 staff members. The participants have now completed stage one of the project and are progressing with Stage 2, which includes the delivery of OCN Level 2 Diversity and Good Relations.**

**Delivery of activity is progressing towards Phase 2a and quarter 2 payment on completion of all M&E alignment.**

**3.7 Lot 4: 19-25 years olds (Young adults) – Lead Partner GEMS NI**  
Project Partners: Diverse Youth NI (DYNI), Training Network for Women (TWN).

Recruitment has been ongoing with 26 participants now signed up activity commenced on 6 November 2025. Participant registration data is to be uploaded to Council's M&E system.

TWN has now confirmed ILM modules for delivery to ensure the inclusion of the 25 year age group.

GEMS NI continue to develop links in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Basque region of Spain to explore the development of the international residential element of the programme.

The project launch event is planned for 27 November 2025 at 6:00pm in Training for Women Network's premises.

The Phase 1 contract initiation payment is now complete.

**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.

New participant groups for Pillar 1 coach education (16–18-year-olds) are progressing with 41 participants currently engaged from St Mary's Grammar School and Ulster University Belfast. Participant registration data is to be uploaded to Council's M&E system.

Participants have commenced the OCNNI qualification in Diversity at St Mary's, coaching and leadership training at UUB. First Aid training was delivered on 7 November 2025 for UUB participants.

A key focus for the coaches is to complete Pillar 1 pre baseline assessments for use in the Pillar 4 research element.

Pillar 2 sports sessions (11-16-year-olds) groups: 290 participants are currently engaged across 7 schools and 1 community project: Nettlefield PS (East), St Matthew's PS (East), Harding Memorial PS (East), St Anne's PS (East), Knockbreda School PS (East), Black Mountain School PS (West), St Joseph's School PS (West), Bridge n Divide Project (North)

Delivery of activities are centred on building confidence, leadership, and resilience through sport, delivered via both primary school and community-based sessions. The needs of the young people in these communities are high and opportunities to try new sports and activities is a key focus.

Members are requested to note that the payment schedule will likely require realignment to reflect the level of achievement for phase 2a. This is currently under review by Officers.

The Board is requested to note there has been a staff restructure within ACN, with new staff members appointed to the management of the Sport for Peace project and a new staff member has been appointed to the M&E admin post.

The project will progress towards Phase 2a and quarter 2 payment on completion of all M&E alignment.

**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.

264 participants have been registered to date, which is 117% of the overall target for the end of the current reporting period. A total of 31 people has completed the required 36 hours across both strands of the project to date, with digital badges issued. Engagement is city-wide, with particularly strong participation in South Belfast and feedback from participants has been positive as evidenced by the post project surveys.

Four new cohorts commenced delivery, with Strand 1 (Vocational Language Courses) focusing on Construction, Health and Social Care, and Customer Service. New partnerships were also developed with Springvale Learning and Fane Street, which will enhance the referral and delivery network. A total of 56 new participants were registered across the cohorts.

In total, 4 participants achieved the required 36 hours across both strands, which is below the target, and follow-up actions are being implemented to identify barriers to completion and improve engagement and retention.

Strand 2 activities have included group discussions, employability workshops, air fryer courses, a walk around Queens University and practical integration sessions designed to build confidence and communication.

As reported last month, a change request was due to be submitted to reflect the realignment of targets, to help rectify a current and projected shortfall in achieved participant targets. This change request has now been received and is under review. The Programme Board and Partnership will be notified of the outcome.

No new cohorts are due to commence in November 2025 as the delivery partner is putting all efforts into the current cohorts

completing the required 36 hours across both strands. Attendance challenges are being managed proactively through learner follow-up and scheduling of adjustments.

**3.10 TPC 6 Arts Across the Genres – Delivery Partner Maywe**  
Project Partners: BEAM Creative Network

Project activity now progressing with 96 participants registered and logged to the project database, with 81 actively participating.

**Project 1: Polyphonic**

39 participants are now recruited of whom 27 are actively participating, and capacity building sessions have continued with 7 sessions delivered for area groups. Capacity building sessions have focused on Making Music and Art with Meaning, Using Creativity to Deal with Social Issues, Unlocking Confidence through Creativity and Bringing Your Ideas to Life.

Recruitment is continuing with a focus on West Belfast community groups following dropout of West area participants.

Additional sessions have been scheduled for January 2026 to provide additional hours if a further intake is needed post-Christmas.

The co-design and launch event took place on 6 November 2025 where participants will begin to co-design and event-plan for their joint artworks and showcase.

**Project 2: Creative Exchange**

38 participants are recruited, and actively participating and creative arts and wellbeing are progressing. North, East and West participants are all confirmed, and capacity building sessions have started in East and West, with North sessions commencing on 6 November 2025. Work is ongoing to confirm the South Group, and sessions will begin in Mid-November 2025 until January 2026. Capacity building sessions focus on Who We Are, Colour and Celebration, Nature and Calm, Symbols and Stories, Patterns and Connections and Expression and Celebration.

**Project 5: Media Production**

The project is fully recruited with 19 participants recruited of whom 16 are actively participating. Capacity Building sessions have been completed, and skills sessions continue in November 2025.

Participants continue to attend and capture imagery and video of Project 1 and 2 sessions for the documentary film and content for socials and newsletter.

**3.11 TPC Thematic Steering Group**

The quarterly TPC Thematic Steering Group took place on 5 November 2025 in NICVA's Offices. Seven delivery partners were represented at the meeting, with two apologies.

A Theme update was provided, it was highlighted 5 of the 9 projects have inputted data to the M&E system. Some partners outlined they were having difficulty using the system, however, were being supported by the PEACEPLUS team to address these, and other projects are in the recruitment phase.

Opportunities for collaboration were identified between delivery partners; it was agreed that project related activity will be circulated through the TSG distribution list as members agreed to share contact details.

An issues log developed following the last TSG meeting, was reviewed and members agreed with the actions assigned to each issue. It was agreed that two issues: community background target achievement and participant retention across strands were closed as they are included in the TSG risk register. Please see Appendix 1 for TSG Issues Log

All thematic risks are reading as fair or good and no issues were identified for escalation to the Programme Board.

The next meeting is taking place on 4 February 2025 and Ashton Community Trust has agreed to host the meeting.

**3.12 Financial and Resource Implications**

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

**3.13 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.

At the request of the Chairperson, it was agreed that an e-mail would be circulated to the Partnership to provide clarity on the cross-community background targets in respect of the delivery partners.

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

## **Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update**

The Partnership considered the following 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 Cultures and Diversity (CCD) Theme of the PEACEPLUS Belfast Local Community 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 are at various stages of implementation and an overview of project progress 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

Corrymeela continue to develop and strengthen relationships with key faith representatives across Belfast attending meetings with key individuals/organisations and mosques and synagogues.

Recruitment is ongoing across the three key streams. Three online information sessions have been delivered with 60+ individuals expressing an interest. 36 participants are now registered from across the city, north, south, east and west, and from a variety of religions including Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Baha’I, Quaker, Protestant and Sikh.

Four co-design sessions are planned for across the 3 streams.

Stream 1: The Reference Team is developed with members from a variety of religions, including Protestant & Interfaith, Muslim, Jewish, Roman Catholic, Hindu and Humanist, to provide expertise on the development of the youth education resources to be delivered to young people in schools and youth settings.

Stream 2: The three Capacity Building sessions are now complete

Stream 3: The Interfaith Walking City Pilot Tour will take place on 9 November 2025.

Members are advised that delivery is behind schedule by approximately 4 months, due to the recruitment of a project

manager and the challenging external factors within this sector. Officers are working closely with the Delivery Partner, through the monthly contract meeting and supplementary meetings on the realignment of Phase 2a and Phase 2b.

**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**

As reported in October 2025, work is ongoing with council officers and the delivery partner to confirm Welcome Hub locations within 3 council community spaces. Following agreement in principle to Morton CC as the pilot location, it is anticipated that a full report with all 3 locations confirmed will be provided in December 2025.

Onboarding activities are ongoing for Cohort 1 (Leadership & Mentoring) and Cohort 2 (Facilitators). 28 EoI's were received for Cohort 1 and 20 EoI's for Cohort 2.

Participant activity for Cohort 1 commenced on 7 November 2025, and participant data is to be uploaded w.

Strand 3 recruitment is due to commenced w/c 16th November 2025 and welcome hub recruitment to commence by end of November 2025.

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

Members are requested to note that rebranding of the project, Out Connections Belfast, has been approved.

A strategic planning partner, Collaboration Ireland, has been appointed to progress the Strand 2 Strategic Planning element of the project. The launch conference, originally scheduled for 14 November 2025 has been postponed and will now take place in January 2026.

Other activity being progressed includes research scoping, development of comms strategy, and initial scoping for design phase of research strand.

Members are requested to note that two issues were highlighted that require urgent change requests, as follows:

**1- Strand 1 & 2 Steering Group & Strategic Planning Membership**

To widen the membership of the Project Steering Group and Strategic Planning activity, to increase diversity and representation of the sector by allowing service users to

participate in these activities. There is no impact to the target of 25 participants across the 2 strands.

**2- Realigned Implementation Plan/Gantt Chart and Payment Schedule.**

- To realign some activity targets for Strand 2 (strategic planning), Strand 5 (research) and Strand 7 (conferences) due to delays in staff recruitment. There is no impact to deliverables, or the project completion date.

The Partnership is requested to note that the Programme Board delegated authority for the Good Relations Manager and PEACEPLUS Programme Manager, to consider and approve the change request, subject to meeting compliance requirements, with further detail and the outcome reported to the Programme Board and the Shared City Partnership.

**3.5 CCD4 – Community Empowerment Ex Politically Motivated Prisoners**

Lead Delivery Partner: Coiste na nIarchimí Project Partners: Tar Anall, Action for Community Transformation, Charter NI, and Tar Isteach

The Contract Initiation meeting has taken place, and Initiation actions and start-up detail are to be progressed during the first monthly management meeting, which is scheduled for 17 November 2025.

**3.6 CCD5 From Multiculturalism to Interculturalism**

**Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access**

The tender was re-released on 24 October 2025 and was due close on 24 November 2025. The Partnership is requested to note that the closing date has been extended to 8 December 2025 to maximise response opportunities.

**3.7 Lot 2 – Cultural Spaces (Come On Over) Lead Delivery Partner: MayWe**

The project's initiation phase is progressing towards completion. Branding for the project has been approved as Come On Over - Bringing People and Places Together Through Culture.

Members are advised that some cultural spaces have withdrawn, and participation of new venues is now confirmed (in bold) as below.

Originally in bid:	Now confirmed:
The MAC	<b>The MAC</b>
Banana Block	<b>Banana Block</b>
Belfast Intercultural Romanian Community	<b>Belfast Intercultural Romanian Community</b>
An Droichead	<b>An Droichead</b>

Lyric	Eastside Visitor Centre
ASCONI	St Comgall's
	Discover Ulster-Scots Centre
	An Chultúrlann

Officers have considered the cultural spaces and can advise that the venues meet the tender requirements and criteria for participation.

A further 4 venues are to be recruited to reach 12 cultural spaces' target however the activity can commence with a minimum of 6, as specified in the tender. Staff/volunteers from each of these have been confirmed as recruited onto the project steering group and these cultural spaces will also form the basis for the steering group capacity building programme and capacity building for grassroots groups linked to the cultural spaces. The first steering group meeting is scheduled for 20 November 2025.

Project planning documents are being finalised as part of the Phase 1 milestones.

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

The Councils' M&E data shows 11 participants recruited of whom 4 actively participating.

The Mentoring Programme commenced on 22 October 2025 with an induction event. The first capacity building session for mentors from the festivals sector took place on 6 November 2025 and focussed on Challenges and Opportunities of social media, Digital Marketing Strategy and Cyber Security. The next session will focus on leadership. A next Flagship Steering Group meeting is planned for 25 November 2025.

The delivery partner has advised that needs analysis for the mentor/ mentee element highlighted that OCN accreditation is not required for some participants. Initial discussions indicate that participants achieving OCN accreditation will reduce from 84 to 66 across the Festivals and Flagship Events project. Further information is being sought from the delivery partner.

Members are requested to note that the Programme Board agreed to delegate authority to the Good Relations Manager and Peace Programmes Manager to consider and agree the request with a further report and outcome to the Programme Board and the Shared City Partnership.

The Board is advised that the Flagship Steering Group has identified the 6 events for inclusion in the Flagship Event Small co-designed animation activity, which are currently being considered by Officers.

A press launch and media release for the Mentoring Programme, Flagship strand, and Capacity Building Programme is being planned for late November 2025.

The project implementation plan/ payment schedule is being finalised which will complete Phase 1 Contract Initiation and Planning documentation.

3.9 **Lot 4 – Culture and Shared Built Heritage - Lead Delivery Partner: Arts Ekta**  
**Project Partners: Cairde na Cille, Kabosh Theatre**

Delivery of the OCN Level 2 Tour Guiding classroom-based lessons continues in Belfast Met. For the Civic Voices Theatre Programme, the first workshop programme (North Belfast cohort) has been completed, and its performance took place 30th October at Duncairn Arts Centre. As part of the Burial Traditions Programme, workshops and animation events were delivered at Shankill Graveyard and Giant's Ring.

Planning and concept development for the Faith-based Trail Programme also took place with activity due to commence in November 2025. Planning has commenced for Phase 2 concept plans for Events, Tours & Burial Traditions Programme.

3.10 **CCD Thematic Steering Group**

The quarterly CCD Thematic Steering Group took place on 4th November 2025 in GEMS NI Offices.

All seven delivery partners within this theme were represented. Opportunities for collaboration were identified and a process is being developed for communicating project related activity, such as launch events, conferences, and opportunities for participants progression from one project to another, throughout the groups within the thematic area.

It was also identified that each organisation has services, over and above PEACEPLUS activity, that other groups could potentially use within their projects, such as provision of tours, museums, facilitation. A directory will be developed outlining services and products available to procure from each organisation.

All thematic risks are reading as fair or good and two issues were raised for escalation as follows:

**Issue 1: M&A supporting evidence requirements.**

Clarification is requested on what supporting evidence should be required for M&A quarterly payment approval. A delivery partner raised concerns that Phased Payment evidence was being aligned to these payments and was holding up payments relied on for salaries.

The Programme Manager is liaising with the Project Managers to ensure consistency and clarity on requirements, and this can be communicated to delivery partners.

**Issue 2: Community background terminology**

Concerns that 'catholic, protestant, other' does not truly reflect the nature of community background of many individuals within communities.

Clarification was provided at the meeting that terminology was based on the 2021 Census and SEUPB terminology and are required by the funder, as part of the Letter of Offer. It is proposed that guidance is issued to delivery partners to provide clarity for participants on the terminology, with a recommendation that completion of the questions is facilitated to address concerns and ensure the maximum completion rate.

Please see Appendix 1 for CCD TSG Issues Log.

The next meeting is taking place on Tuesday 4th February 2025 and MayWe have agreed to host the meeting in 2 Royal Avenue.

**3.11 Financial and Resource Implications**

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

**3.12 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 noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

**Community Regeneration and Transformation 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 an update on delivery of the Community Regeneration and Transformation Theme of the PEACEPLUS Local Community 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 also note the contents of the report.**

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **3.1 Capital Update – Design**

**As previously reported, design teams have been appointed for all 5 CRT projects and meetings with Design teams and each project Steering Groups and stakeholders have now taken place.**

**3.2 Design teams have provided delivery programmes and timelines for each project outlining key steps, such as. planning, tender preparation, contractor procurement, construction. Property & Projects are reviewing the timelines to provide as realistic timeframes as possible. This will enable the finalising of Animation tender documentation aligned with best estimates of capital timelines.**

**Members are advised that processes are being developed to manage Compensation Events (CEs). SEUPB has advised that in the interim, any CE's are to be submitted to the JS Case Officer for approval.**

**A request for additional works in the form of surveys which sit outside of PEACEPLUS scope has been raised through the Council's Finance Working Group/Oversight to ensure there is a financial allocation in place for these works, possible CEs, and/or ineligible spend. This arrange is similar to those agreed for PEACE IV projects including Forth Meadow Community Greenway, Shankill Women's Centre and Black Mountain Shared Space.**

#### **3.3 Procurement Update - Animation**

**Project Managers are progressing tender specification and ITT documentation for each procurement.**

**Property & Projects and the respective Design Teams have provided an update on expected timeframes for delivery, so this will enable the detail in the animation programme to be finalised and procurement to progress. The Board should note that there may be some slippage from the timelines provided in October's report due to these refreshed best estimates for the capital timelines.**

### **3.4 Governance update**

The first meeting of the Capital Project Board took place on 30 October 2025, key points for discussion included governance, terms of reference and membership.

Members are requested to note the key actions that are being progressed, as follows:

- correspondence should be issued to SEUPB (from Director of Neighbourhood Services) regarding representation of SEUPB and CPD on the Capital Project Board.
- the governance model should be reviewed and representation to include relevant CNS officers, and that the approval process is clearly outlined.
- Lines to take should be developed for each project.
- Site visit for the Board should be arranged.

External Project Steering Groups for each project have been established and continue to meet regularly with PMU and PEACEPLUS Officers in attendance.

### **Capital and Animation updates**

#### **3.5 CRT1: LGBTQIA+ Hub**

As previously reported the Mechanical & Engineering Assessments are underway.

Members should note the interdependency of the 2RA ground floor is a key factor in progressing the project, and to date there is no confirmation on plans for the 2RA ground floor. The next steering group meeting is scheduled for 13th November 2025.

Discussions are ongoing regarding legal agreements to ensure delivery of the animation activity through enhanced service provision.

#### **3.6 CRT2: Annadale:**

An internal meeting of the Annadale Steering Group took place on 15 October 2025 to discuss project timelines and introduce the Design Team. Discussions included the funding required for the 3G pitch (which is not within the PEACEPLUS funding allocation). Members are requested to note that the pitch will be included in the design masterplan for readiness should funding become available.

It was agreed that the scope of the PEACEPLUS project and planning approach was clearly outlined at the Stakeholder Meeting on 17 November 2025. It was also outlined that the site

will be a Council asset subject to booking in line with Council policy was highlighted.

Procurement for preliminary activity (event management training) will be progressed over the coming months for a supplier to be in place to begin delivery in February 2026.

The design and construction timeframes will inform the timeline and delivery of the animation programme and enable procurement to progress.

The next Steering Group meeting is scheduled for 10 December 2025.

**3.7 CRT3: Distillery Street:**

Discussions continue regarding maintenance responsibilities relating to land ownership on the development site.

The issue of the animation tender, due 31 October 2025, has been delayed ensuring alignment with the design team and construction timelines, which are critical. The Board should note that procurement for animation will be progressed w/c 5 January 2026 with delivery commencing in May 2026.

**3.8 CRT4: Access to the Hills:**

Discussions and scoping of the routes are ongoing and the possibility of a phased approach is being considered, similar to Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

It is anticipated that procurement for animation activity will be progressed over the coming months. As noted above, updated timeframes for design and construction will inform the procurement approach for the animation programme. The next steering group meeting is scheduled for 26 November 2025.

**3.9 CRT5: Sanctuary Theatre**

As previously reported, no planning is required for the Sanctuary Theatre capital works.

SEUPB have approved an amendment to correct a typographical error within the minimum contact hours (3 hours) for CRT5 Sanctuary Theatre animation activity.

The updated design and construction timeframes will enable procurement for the animation activity to be finalised and progress by end of November 2025.

### **3.10 Forth Meadow Community Greenway Signage Update**

**Members are reminded that installation of signage along Forth Meadow Community Greenway is progressing.**

**Beacons will be installed January/February 2026 across the Greenway. Interpretative and wayfinding signage is currently out to tender, and it is envisaged that a new signage contractor will be appointed by December 2025.**

**Members are requested to note that wording for the final panel to be installed outside the new Transport Hub, Grand Central Station, is outlined in Appendix I. The panel wording outlines key locations along the Greenway and will include a map of the Greenway route. The wording has been agreed by Corporate Communications and SEUPB.**

**Members should also note minor modifications to the titles of two previous agreed narratives as follows:**

- 1 - 'Gunning for Victory' to 'Sporting Heroes Victory'**
- 2 - 'Bullets to Church Bulletins' to 'Ballygomartin Bulletins'**

**The content of the narrative remains as agreed, and the title changes better reflect the content and locations.**

### **3.11 Financial and Resource Implications**

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

### **3.12 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 noted the contents of the report and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

### **Any Other Business**

The Good Relations Manager advised the Partnership that the new Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Panel had met, and it had agreed to allocate two representatives to the Shared City Partnership, as part of its Community Planning role. The officer reported that Ms. Irene Sherry representing the Ashton Community Trust and JP Sukumaran representing Karma Kalakendram (city-wide) would be invited to all future meetings, if the Partnership agreed the appointments.

The Good Relations Manager advised that, as reported last month, the Social Change Initiative (SCI) was undertaking a pilot programme focusing on building the capacity and

competence of women in the Unionist Community and the organisation had expressed an interest in working with the Council to progress the initiative.

The officer advised that a proposal, valued at just over £7000, had now been received from the SCI which was focused on supporting community activists working in South Belfast. He detailed SCI had been supporting work with community activists working in South Belfast (Donegall Road/Sandy Row/Donegall Pass/Annadale areas) through a partnership with the Forward South Community Partnership. The work was focused on current challenges and opportunities around community cohesion, working through women activists and local stakeholders.

The Good Relations Manager advised that the budget for this was available within the current Good Relations Action Plan.

The proposal was to hold a residential for some 15 women community activists in February 2026 to focus on the following issues:

- to support and develop the needs of women community activists from these areas;
- to identify priority issues that are of concern at local community level both in relation to community needs and future community cohesion; and
- Agree action points that will offer a programme of support and development for local activists to take account of the current needs and changing demographics of the local areas.

The Partnership agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that:

- Ms. I. Sherry and Mr. JP Sukumaran be appointed as external Members to the Shared City Partnership; and
- funding of £7000.00 be granted to the Social Change Initiative to run a residential for women, which would be funded from the current Good Relations Action Plan budget.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Partnership was reminded that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Monday, 12th January, 2026.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Partnership would be held at Girdwood and that this would be an in-person meeting only, with lunch provided. The meeting of the Shared City Partnership would take place at 1.30 p.m. and this would be immediately followed by a workshop for Members of the Partnership which would run until 4.30 p.m. to enable the Members to consider the new Good Relations Strategy, Audit and Action Plan.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

# Reconnected Belfast

## Shared City Partnership

1 December 2025



**Belfast  
City Council**



# Project Background

## Reservoir Safety Programme



- Council's statutory requirement to maintain the reservoirs
- £1.6m committed from council's capital programme

## Reconnected Belfast



- Submission of PEACEPLUS bid in September 2023
- Investment Area 1.4: Re-imaging Communities which seeks to 'create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services, which will benefit and embed peace and reconciliation.'
- Secured €13.5m for capital works and animation of Waterworks and Alexandra Park
- 7,080 participants from different communities engaged jointly within new shared spaces



# Engagement

- Visioning and engagement exercise (Summer 2023)
  - Workshops and interviews with key stakeholders
  - 3.99k visits to Your Say Belfast Page
  - Over 1,200 responses to the survey
- Pre-planning consultation (Jan-March 2024)
  - 4 public sessions in range of venues
  - 3 tailored sessions (access, youth, women and girls)
  - 2.48k visits to Your Say Belfast Page
  - Over 280 responses to the survey
- Continued engagement and Design Information Sessions (Spring 2025)
  - 5 public sessions in range of venues



# Vision

Alexandra Park and Waterworks Park will build on their unique natural and cultural significance to be cohesive places where biodiversity thrives, people from all communities are supported and prosper through leisure and recreational activities, and the parks become exemplar city green spaces for Belfast and Northern Ireland.



# Guiding Principles

1. Cohesive connection (celebrating USPs)
2. Active use of Open Space for Recreation & Play
3. Inclusive, Shared and Safe Space
4. Biodiversity and Climate Change
5. Animation of the parks / community engagement
6. Exemplar Approach and Delivery
7. Destination parks



Belfast  
City Council



# Masterplan & concept designs





# Programming

- Capacity Building and Leadership Programme
- How to Manage and Implement Events Training Programme
- Events Programme
- Sports Facilities Games Programme
- Schools Programmes
- Biodiversity Education Programmes
- Cultural Learning Programmes
- Health and Wellbeing Programmes



# Interface Barrier



# Interface Barrier



Belfast  
City Council

# Current status

- Planning application process ongoing
- Stage 4 Design appointed
- Ongoing engagement
  - City & Neighbourhood Services
  - Waterworks and Alexandra Park stakeholder group
  - Queens University Belfast Centre for Public Health and Planning
  - DoJ



# Timescales

Milestone	Dates
Detailed design	December 2025
Planning approval	Spring 2025
Works commence	Summer 2026
Works complete	Summer 2027
Animation	Summer 2027 - 2029



Community Recovery Fund – Open Call	Project Description
<b>ACSONI</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £17,900</b>	ACSONI are now no longer in a position to fulfil this training. Council officers are in the process of reclaiming the first payment.
<b>Annadale Community Centre</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £18,400</b> <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b>	<p>The project responds to increased hate speech and division following the 2024 public disorder in South Belfast. It aims to rebuild social trust and cohesion through inclusive community engagement.</p> <p>A part-time Community Engagement Officer has been hired to lead outreach and programme delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities include leadership training, volunteer management, and inclusive programme design due to commence in January 2026.</li> <li>Media literacy workshops will target misinformation about migrants and refugees for both youth and adults. ACC are currently securing a facilitator to deliver this training.</li> </ul> <p>The initiative fosters mutual understanding between host and migrant communities through shared activities. The goal is to create a safer, more inclusive community where diversity is embraced and respected.</p>
<b>Voicing the Void</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £19,600</b> <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b>	<p>The project addresses the aftermath of 2024's public disorder in Belfast, focusing on hate crime, racism, and community division.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It uses trauma-informed restorative storytelling to foster empathy, inclusion, and healing across newcomer and host communities.</li> <li>Four 10-week storytelling courses will engage 36–40 participants, including refugees, asylum seekers, and local residents. The first two of these courses have been completed.</li> <li>Participants will earn accredited OCN qualifications and develop leadership, advocacy, and public speaking skills.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities include storytelling workshops, resilience training, creative media production, and public events.</li> <li>Outreach will be delivered through school sessions, community events, and digital campaigns.</li> <li>The project is co-designed with partners like PBNI, ArtsEkta, Queen's University, and the PSNI.</li> </ul> <p>It promotes integration by empowering marginalised voices and challenging harmful narratives. Public events and media outputs will raise awareness and promote upstanding behaviour against hate.</p>
<p><b>Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum</b>  <b>Amount Awarded: £11,900</b>  <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b></p>	<p>The project addresses the needs of minority ethnic residents in North Belfast, particularly in Cliftonville and Lower Oldpark, following the 2024 public disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It aims to reduce hate crime, build trust with statutory services, and promote integration through structured engagement.</li> <li>Key issues identified include barriers to accessing services, low trust in authorities, and widespread misinformation about Muslim communities.</li> <li>The programme includes thematic workshops on housing, benefits, education, healthcare, and hate crime reporting, with interpreters and direct agency engagement.</li> <li>History and myth-busting sessions will challenge stereotypes and foster cross-community understanding.</li> <li>Accredited hate crime and hate speech training will be delivered to residents and service providers, empowering them as peer leaders.</li> <li>Visual signposting materials in multiple languages will be co-produced and distributed to improve access to key services.</li> <li>The project is delivered in partnership with the Northern Ireland Muslim Culture Association (NIMCA), ensuring grassroots involvement.</li> <li>Activities will be hosted at Cliftonville Community Centre and Girdwood, with a focus on dialogue, inclusion, and cultural awareness.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Upper Andersonstown Community Forum</b>  <b>Amount Awarded: £7,150</b>  <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b></p>	<p>The project responds to increased hate crime and racial tension in Belfast, particularly targeting the Syrian Muslim community but not (exclusively) after the 2024 public disorder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is a partnership with "Happy Life Together N.I." (HLTNI), a Syrian family support group, to promote integration, safety, and cultural understanding.</li> <li>The project will provide HLTNI with office space and access to meeting rooms for 9 months at Tullymore Community Centre.</li> <li>Activities include cultural awareness workshops, Syrian cooking sessions, and discussions on hate crime legislation and Section 75.</li> <li>A Level 1 OCN-accredited Community Safety Awareness course will be delivered to 10 participants, enhancing their confidence in engaging with statutory services.</li> <li>Youth and community groups will participate in joint workshops to build relationships and understanding with the Syrian community.</li> <li>Evaluation will be conducted through surveys and feedback, with political representatives invited to key events to reinforce community support.</li> </ul>
--	---

<p><b>Dreamscheme NI</b>  <b>Amount Awarded: £8,160</b>  <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b></p>	<p>The project targets young people in South Belfast, especially those from Belvoir and Milltown estates, affected by the 2024 public disorder and exhibiting racist attitudes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It partners with Breda Academy, a diverse school with over 40 nationalities, to support newcomer pupils and foster inclusion.</li> <li>Activities include one-to-one mentoring, small group workshops, and after-school youth cafés to build empathy and challenge prejudice.</li> <li>The programme addresses social exclusion, bullying, and emotional distress among migrant-background students.</li> <li>It promotes integration between Protestant/Loyalist youth and newcomers through relationship-based interventions.</li> <li>Youth leadership is developed through training in communication and project delivery, empowering participants to co-lead sessions.</li> <li>The project is co-designed with school staff and young people, ensuring responsiveness to real needs and experiences.</li> </ul>
---	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships with community safety officers and youth services ensure alignment with broader anti-hate crime efforts.</li> <li>The initiative aims to reduce future disorder, rebuild social trust, and create a more inclusive, resilient school and community environment.</li> </ul>
<b>NI Food to Go</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £16,400</b> <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b>	<p>The project responds to hate crimes targeting migrant-owned food businesses in South Belfast during August 2024, aiming to rebuild trust and cohesion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It will deliver nine multicultural food and cultural events across Belfast over nine months, starting January 2026.</li> <li>Events will showcase cuisines, music, and traditions from newcomer communities alongside local Belfast culture.</li> <li>The programme is coordinated by the NI Food to Go Association, representing 1,200 food businesses, one-third of which are ethnic minority-owned.</li> <li>Events will be held in both affected areas and neutral city centre venues to promote inclusivity and safety including St George's market.</li> <li>The project includes skills development and entrepreneurship support for migrant food businesses, in partnership with Belfast Met and the Council's Enterprise Team.</li> <li>Activities will feature cookery demos, taster sessions, workshops, and cultural performances linked to Belfast's UNESCO City of Music status.</li> <li>Communications will be multilingual and community-driven to ensure broad engagement and accessibility.</li> </ul>
<b>West Belfast Partnership Board</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £16,000</b> <b>Potential Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b>	<p>The project addresses rising racial tensions and hate crimes in West Belfast, particularly affecting newcomer and asylum-seeking families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It aims to build integration and social cohesion between newcomer and host communities through community-led initiatives.</li> <li>Activities include co-designed training programmes, a "Community Neighbourhood Guide," and a "Good Neighbour Agreement" tailored to five Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project will engage 50 participants (10 per area) from both minority ethnic and local communities, including youth and emerging leaders.</li> </ul>
<b>Northern Ireland Somali Association</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £11,385</b> <b>Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b>	<p>The project supports refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia but also from Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, and other communities in Belfast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It responds to the fear and disruption caused by the 2024 race-related violence, which led to the suspension of community services and increased anxiety.</li> <li>• The initiative includes 10 workshops covering racism awareness, supporting children, online safety, legal rights, and bystander intervention.</li> <li>• A final cultural community event will bring together migrant and local residents to promote understanding through food and storytelling.</li> <li>• Workshops will be delivered in English, Somali, and Arabic to ensure accessibility and cultural relevance.</li> </ul> <p>The project is community-led and co-designed with members who have lived experience, ensuring it meets real needs. It aims to empower individuals with practical tools to respond to racism, report hate crimes, and support others. The programme strengthens intergenerational support by working with both parents and young people.</p>
<b>Market Development Association</b> <b>Amount Awarded: £16,000</b> <b>Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b>	<p>The project addresses racial tensions and lack of integration in the Market area of Belfast, where diverse communities live side by side but with limited interaction. It aims to reduce hate crime and promote social cohesion through two strands: a local multicultural programme and a citywide partnership training initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strand 1 includes a 6-week multicultural cooking course where participants share traditional meals, fostering dialogue and cultural exchange.</li> <li>• This strand also includes anti-racism and political economy training, encouraging participants to explore racism at personal, cultural, and structural levels.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strand 2 involves seven partner organisations from across Belfast in an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) course.</li> <li>The ABCD approach focuses on community strengths and assets, empowering residents to lead inclusive development and challenge discriminatory narratives.</li> <li>The project is supported by the Belfast Community Research &amp; Innovation Network (BCRIN), which includes partners from diverse neighbourhoods and Queen's University. The 7 partners have undertaken this training with positive outcomes reported as a result.</li> </ul>
--	--

<p><b>Rosario Youth Club</b></p> <p><b>Amount Awarded: £17,268.44</b></p> <p><b>Completion Date: 31 August 2025</b></p>	<p>The project targets young people aged 14–17 in the Ballynafeigh/Ormeau area, which has a high number of newcomer and minority ethnic residents affected by racism and hate crime. It aims to reduce future disorder and rebuild social trust through a shared programme of youth work activities focused on inclusion and good relations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered in partnership with St Malachy's Youth Centre, the programme will engage 24 young people identified as vulnerable to exploitation and involvement in unrest.</li> <li>Activities include groupwork sessions, cultural celebration events, art creation, pro-social outings, and a residential experience.</li> <li>Young participants will become community inclusion ambassadors and co-create a community inclusion charter to promote long-term cohesion.</li> <li>The programme will explore the causes, impact, and consequences of hate crime, racism, and discrimination through structured workshops.</li> <li>It promotes empathy, critical thinking, and experiential learning to challenge misinformation and encourage understanding across cultures.</li> <li>Monthly cultural events and art sessions will celebrate diversity and foster positive relationships within the community.</li> <li>The project includes training in leadership, advocacy, and teamwork, empowering young people to influence peers and contribute to policy.</li> </ul>
---	--

**Féile an Phobail**  
**Amount Awarded: £18,500**  
**Completion Date: 31 August 2025**

The project responds to the 2024 public disorder in Belfast by addressing its root causes—social division, racism, and community disconnection—through inclusive, community-led programming.

It aims to rebuild trust and cohesion by engaging children, youth, and the wider community across political, cultural, and religious backgrounds in arts, cultural, sporting, and educational activities.

- Key components include community connection workshops, anti-racism education campaigns, storytelling and cultural events, and youth exchange programmes to foster empathy and understanding.
- A Diversity Ambassadors Programme will train and mentor young people, especially from minority ethnic backgrounds, to become community leaders and role models.
- The project includes cultural orientation workshops, mentorship schemes, and collaborative community projects like public art and gardens to promote integration and shared achievement.
- It uses innovative methods such as dialogue circles, youth-led debates, and community mapping to explore and challenge hate speech, stereotypes, and misinformation.
- Activities are designed to be inclusive and accessible, with continuous feedback and adaptation to ensure relevance and impact across diverse communities.

This page is intentionally left blank



<b>Subject:</b>	Requests for use of the City Hall
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nora Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Christopher Burns, Interim Functions and Exhibition Manager

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> X	
<b>Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.</b>	
Insert number	<input type="text"/>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information relating to any individual</li><li>2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual</li><li>3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)</li><li>4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter</li><li>5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained</li><li>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</li><li>7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</li></ol>	
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

1.0	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
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 28 November 2025.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
	<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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>functions which support other events in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not.</li> <li>functions which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>functions organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes.</li> </ul>
3.3	Functions not permitted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conferences, meetings, seminars, performances, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead use local private sector facilities.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>functions which involve exceptionally large or disruptive set-ups or pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building or grounds.</li> </ul>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.4	Committee will recall that at its meeting on 24 <sup>th</sup> 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 up until the end of the current financial year. Events from April 2026 onwards will not have prices confirmed to organisers until conclusion of current review.
	<b><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></b>
3.6	None, any recommendations for hospitality will be met from existing budgets.
	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>
3.7	None.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	Appendix 1 - Schedule of function requests received up to 28 November 2025.

This page is intentionally left blank

## DECEMBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Indian Women's Association	1 March 2026	<b>International Women's Day Celebrations</b> – an event to celebrate local women with speeches, group discussion and cultural entrainment  Numbers attending - 120	B & D	£300
Forge Integrated Primary School	11 April 2026	<b>Forge Integrated Primary School 40th Anniversary Gala Ball</b> – School community celebration event to mark milestone with reception, dinner, presentations and entertainment.  Numbers attending - 250	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	26 May 2026	<b>Launch of Newly Co-produced Dementia Information Booklet</b> with round table discussion; guests to include community/ volunteer sector and Dementia Acute services.  Numbers attending - 80	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
African Caribbean Community Network (ACCN) and Minorities Recognition Award Northern Ireland (MRANI)	6 June 2026	<b>Africa Day 2026</b> will be a vibrant cultural celebration designed to honour and showcase the rich diversity, unity, and contribution of African communities living in Belfast and across NI. The event will gather the local community for a day of music, art, dance, food, and cultural exchange.  Numbers attending – 300	B & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences (ORAHS)	23 July 2026	<b>Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences Conference Dinner</b> with drinks reception, dinner, awards and entertainment. Main conference being hosted by QUB.  Numbers attending – 200	A	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Ulster Youth Orchestra	16 August 2026	<b>Post-Ulster Hall Concert Reception</b> will follow earlier that week a performance at the Konzerthaus in Berlin, as part of the prestigious Young Euro Classic Festival. The reception will recognise this notable achievement.  Number attending – 120	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

## **DECEMBER 2025 CITY HALL FUNCTION APPLICATIONS**

Thiepval Memorial Loyal Orange Lodge 1916 (Lodge of special purpose)	21 November 2026	<b>Thiepval Memorial LOL 1916 – 30 Year Anniversary Celebration</b> with reception, dinner, awards and presentations  Numbers attending – 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
---	---------------------	---	---	---