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## BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

27th June, 2025

### **SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Tuesday, 1st July, 2025 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 14)
  - a) Call-In - Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (to follow)
5. Official Announcements
6. Change of Membership - Positions of Responsibility
7. Request to Address the Council - Lagmore Community Forum
8. Request to Address the Council - Trócaire
9. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 15 - 82)
10. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 83 - 90)
11. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 91 - 140)
12. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 141 - 152)
13. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 153 - 176)
14. Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 177 - 180)
15. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 181 - 190)
16. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 191 - 192)

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

John Walsh

Chief Executive

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## Council

### ANNUAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,  
on Monday, 2nd June, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);  
The High Sherriff (Councillor McAteer);  
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,  
McCullough and Rodgers; and  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black,  
Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,  
Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite,  
Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,  
Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,  
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Kelly, Long,  
Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin,  
McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay,  
McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy,  
Nelson, O'Neill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

### Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Declarations of Interest

#### Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillors R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared interests in the 'Shared City Partnership' item in that they worked for, or were associated with, organisations which had applied for PEACEPLUS funding. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, Carson, M. Donnelly, Duffy and Groogan declared interests in the 'Social Supermarket Fund' item in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for support under the fund. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

#### Standards and Business Committee

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick) declared an interest in the item 'Stranded Dreams Report launched by Anaka Women's Collective' in that he worked for an organisation which provided funding to the collective. Since the item did not become the subject of debate, the Member was not required to leave the meeting.

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**People and Communities Committee**

Councillor Bradley declared an interest in the item "Belfast City Tribunal Service", in that her employer was the current contract holder and she left the room when the item was under discussion.

**Minutes of the Council**

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st May, be taken as read and signed as correct.

**Official Announcements**

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated the Bloomfield Community Association on the recent announcement that it was to receive Capital Investment for a full rebuild.

Councillor I. McLaughlin congratulated Woodvale Youth Academy Girls Football Team who had won their first competitive tournament, the Seaview Bank Holiday Soccer Tournament, less than ten weeks after coming together as a team.

Councillor McKeown thanked Ms. Bríd Ruddy and all the residents who had worked so hard to create the new Wildflower Alley in the south of the City.

Councillor McCabe paid tribute to Anthony Cacace, who had recently won the IBO Super Featherweight World Title and requested that the Lord Mayor would send a letter of congratulations.

Alderman Copeland paid tribute to Mr S. Smyth and Mr. G. Stevens, both of whom had lost a child to cancer, who had both worked tirelessly to encourage young people to sign up and donate stem cells.

The Lord Mayor congratulated Ms. L. Cameron, Business Relationship Manager, on the recent birth of her daughter.

**Request to Film Proceedings**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that a request to film parts of the Council meeting had been received from a number of media outlets.

The Council acceded to the request.

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**Appointment of Positions of Responsibility 2025/2026**

The Chief Executive drew the Council's attention to a report which identified the persons who had been selected by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to hold the following Positions of Responsibility in year three of the current Council term:

| <b>Internal Positions of Responsibility</b> | <b>Councillor</b>       |
|---|-------------------------|
| Lord Mayor                                  | Councillor Tracy Kelly  |
| Deputy Lord Mayor                           | Councillor Paul Doherty |

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

|                    |                                  |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Natasha Brennan       |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown |

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Ian McLaughlin |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Joseph Duffy   |

**People and Communities Committee**

|                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Ruth Brooks |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Fred Cobain |

**Licensing Committee**

|                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Jordan Doran |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Arder Carson |

**Planning Committee**

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Ryan Murphy   |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Sammy Douglas |

**Climate and City Resilience Committee**

|                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Micheal Donnelly |
| Deputy Chairperson | Alderman Frank McCoubrey    |

**Standards and Business Committee**

|                    |                          |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Anthony Flynn |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Davy Douglas  |

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**

|                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Chairperson        | Councillor Eric Hanvey      |
| Deputy Chairperson | Councillor Bradley Ferguson |

**Policing and Community Safety Partnership Political Members**

**Chairs**

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>PCSP</b>        | Councillor Ian McLaughlin |
| <b>North DPCSP</b> | Alderman Dean McCullough  |

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|                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>South DPCSP</b> | Councillor Gary McKeown     |
| <b>East DPCSP</b>  | Councillor Pádraig Donnelly |
| <b>West DPCSP</b>  | Councillor Claire Canavan   |

**Other Changes to Memberships of DPCSPs**

|                    | <b>Outgoing</b>          | <b>Incoming</b>                 |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>South DPCSP</b> | Councillor Tracy Kelly   | <b>Councillor Sarah Bunting</b> |
| <b>West DPCSP</b>  | Councillor Nicola Verner | <b>Alderman Frank McCoubrey</b> |

The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the positions of responsibility as set out above.

**Expressions of Thanks**

The Lord Mayor reviewed his year in office, which he stated had been an incredible honour. He outlined that he had been privileged to be the first openly gay Lord Mayor of the City and that he had been proud to represent his community through his work. He thanked the Deputy Lord Mayor, the two High Sheriffs which he had worked alongside, Council staff, his Political Party and his partner, family and friends for all of their support and wished the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor every success for the year ahead.

The Deputy Lord Mayor reflected on his year in office and paid tribute to the Lord Mayor, the two High Sheriffs, his Political Party, his family and Council staff for the valuable assistance which they had provided. He paid tribute to his wife and his two young daughters and stated that he was looking forward to spending more time with them again. He stated that he had been grateful to have worked with a number of important charities during his time in office, including the Alzheimer's Society, the Mary Peters Trust, Women's Aid and Friends of the Cancer Centre. He wished the incoming Lord Mayor and Deputy Mayor well in their forthcoming term of office.

**Tributes**

Representatives of all the Political Parties paid tribute to the Lord Mayor and the Deputy Lord for the manner in which they had fulfilled their duties during their year in office.

**Installation of Lord Mayor**

The Chief Executive reminded the Council that it had, earlier in the meeting, approved the Positions of Responsibility for 2025/2026 and that Councillor Kelly had been nominated to serve as Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Kelly was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2026.

Councillor Kelly thanked her Political Party for nominating her to serve as Lord Mayor. She stated that she was honoured to be the first female Democratic Unionist the second ever female Unionist Lord Mayor of Belfast. She paid a special tribute to the

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late Christopher Stalford MLA, who had not only been her political mentor, but also a close friend. She paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor for the manner in which they had carried out their duties. She stated that she was looking forward to the year ahead and to working with the Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff.

(The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly, in the Chair.)

**Installation of Deputy Lord Mayor**

The Council was again reminded that earlier in the meeting Councillor Doherty had, under the Positions of Responsibility for 2025/2026, been nominated to serve as Deputy Lord Mayor.

Accordingly, Councillor Doherty was installed in Office for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in 2026.

He paid tribute to the previous Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, thanked his Political Party for nominating him, thanked his family and friends for their support, and outlined his main objectives for his term in office. He stated that he was looking forward to the year ahead, to listening and learning, and to working with the Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff.

(The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty, in the Chair.)

**Appointment of Members to Committees 2025/2026**

The Chief Executive drew the Council's attention to a report which identified the following persons who had been nominated by the Nominating Officer of each Political Party to the Council's Standing Committees and to the (District) Policing and Community Safety Partnerships for 2025/2026:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

|    |                                      |                                  |
|----|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Sinn Féin)       | Councillor Natasha Brennan       |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b> (Alliance) | Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown |
| 3  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Ciaran Beattie        |
| 4  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Christina Black       |
| 5  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly   |
| 6  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Matt Garrett          |
| 7  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Ronan McLaughlin      |
| 8  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Ryan Murphy           |
| 9  | Sinn Féin                            | Councillor Tomás Ó Néill         |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party            | Alderman Frank McCoubrey         |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party            | Councillor Sarah Bunting         |
| 12 | Democratic Unionist Party            | Councillor Fred Cobain           |
| 13 | Democratic Unionist Party            | Councillor Bradley Ferguson      |
| 14 | Democratic Unionist Party            | Councillor Ian McLaughlin        |
| 15 | Alliance                             | Councillor Michael Long          |
| 16 | Alliance                             | Councillor Jenna Maghie          |
| 17 | Alliance                             | Councillor Sam Nelson            |

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|    |                                    |                             |
|----|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 18 | Social Democratic and Labour Party | Councillor Séamas de Faoite |
| 19 | Social Democratic and Labour Party | Councillor Carl Whyte       |
| 20 | Green Party                        | Councillor Brian Smyth      |

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

|    |  |                             |
|----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Democratic Unionist Party) | Councillor Ian McLaughlin   |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b> (Sinn Féin)          | Councillor Joe Duffy        |
| 3  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Christina Black  |
| 4  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Conor Maskey     |
| 5  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Áine McCabe      |
| 6  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Siobhán McCallin |
| 7  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Conor McKay      |
| 8  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Ronan McLaughlin |
| 9  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Tomás Ó Néill    |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Alderman James Lawlor       |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Councillor Sarah Bunting    |
| 12 | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Councillor Sammy Douglas    |
| 13 | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Councillor Andrew McCormick |
| 14 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Eric Harvey      |
| 15 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Fiona McAteer    |
| 16 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Micky Murray     |
| 17 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Sam Nelson       |
| 18 | Social Democratic and Labour Party             | Councillor Séamas de Faoite |
| 19 | Social Democratic and Labour Party             | Councillor Dónal Lyons      |
| 20 | Green Party                                    | Councillor Áine Groogan     |

**People and Communities Committee**

|    |   |                                |
|----|---|--------------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Democratic Unionist Party)        | Councillor Ruth Brooks         |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b> (Democratic Unionist Party) | Councillor Fred Cobain         |
| 3  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Christina Black     |
| 4  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Nichola Bradley     |
| 5  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Claire Canavan      |
| 6  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Micheal Donnelly    |
| 7  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly |
| 8  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Matt Garrett        |
| 9  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor JJ Magee            |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Councillor Sarah Bunting       |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Councillor Jordan Doran        |
| 12 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Councillor Nicola Verner       |
| 13 | Alliance  | Councillor Hedley Abernethy    |
| 14 | Alliance  | Councillor Micky Murray        |



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|    |                                    |                            |
|----|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 15 | Alliance                           | Councillor Christine Bower |
| 16 | Alliance                           | Councillor Jenna Maghie    |
| 17 | Social Democratic and Labour Party | Councillor Gary McKeown    |
| 18 | Green Party                        | Councillor Anthony Flynn   |
| 19 | Ulster Unionist Party              | Alderman Sonia Copeland    |
| 20 | People Before Profit Alliance      | Councillor Michael Collins |

**Licensing Committee**

|    |  |                             |
|----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Democratic Unionist Party) | Councillor Jordan Doran     |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b> (Sinn Féin)          | Councillor Arder Carson     |
| 3  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Brónach Anglin   |
| 4  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Nichola Bradley  |
| 5  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Micheal Donnelly |
| 6  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Pádraig Donnelly |
| 7  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Caoimhín McCann  |
| 8  | Sinn Féin                                      | Councillor Conor McKay      |
| 9  | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Alderman McCullough         |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Councillor Davy Douglas     |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                      | Councillor Sarah Bunting    |
| 12 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Hedley Abernethy |
| 13 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Tara Brooks      |
| 14 | Alliance                                       | Councillor Fiona McAteer    |
| 15 | Social Democratic and Labour Party             | Councillor Gary McKeown     |
| 16 | Social Democratic and Labour Party             | Councillor Carl Whyte       |
| 17 | Green Party                                    | Councillor Brian Smyth      |
| 18 | Ulster Unionist Party                          | Alderman Jim Rodgers        |
| 19 | Traditional Unionist Voice                     | Councillor Ron McDowell     |
| 20 | Independent                                    | Councillor Paul McCusker    |

**Planning Committee**

|    |   |                            |
|----|---|----------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Sinn Féin)                        | Councillor Ryan Murphy     |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b> (Democratic Unionist Party) | Councillor Sammy Douglas   |
| 3  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Brónach Anglin  |
| 4  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Natasha Brennan |
| 5  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Arder Carson    |
| 6  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Matt Garrett    |
| 7  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor JJ Magee        |
| 8  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Áine McCabe     |
| 9  | Sinn Féin   | Councillor Caoimhín McCann |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Alderman James Lawlor      |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Alderman Dean McCullough   |
| 12 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Councillor Jordan Doran    |
| 13 | Democratic Unionist Party                             | Councillor Davy Douglas    |

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|    |                                    |                             |
|----|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 14 | Alliance                           | Councillor Hedley Abernethy |
| 15 | Alliance                           | Councillor Tara Brooks      |
| 16 | Alliance                           | Councillor David Bell       |
| 17 | Alliance                           | Councillor Eric Hanvey      |
| 18 | Social Democratic and Labour Party | Councillor Carl Whyte       |
| 19 | Green Party                        | Councillor Áine Groogan     |
| 20 | Ulster Unionist Party              | Alderman Jim Rodgers        |

**Climate and City Resilience Committee**

|    |  |                             |
|----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Sinn Féin)                           | Councillor Micheal Donnelly |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b><br>(Democratic Unionist Party) | Alderman Frank McCoubrey    |
| 3  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Brónach Anglin   |
| 4  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Pádraig Donnelly |
| 5  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor JJ Magee         |
| 6  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Conor Maskey     |
| 7  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Caoimhín McCann  |
| 8  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Séanna Walsh     |
| 9  | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Ruth Brooks      |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Sammy Douglas    |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Bradley Ferguson |
| 12 | Alliance   | Councillor Micky Murray     |
| 13 | Alliance   | Councillor Tara Brooks      |
| 14 | Alliance   | Councillor David Bell       |
| 15 | Social Democratic and Labour Party                       | Councillor Paul Doherty     |
| 16 | Social Democratic and Labour Party                       | Councillor Dónal Lyons      |
| 17 | Green Party  | Councillor Áine Groogan     |
| 18 | Ulster Unionist Party                                    | Alderman Sonia Copeland     |
| 19 | People Before Profit Alliance                            | Councillor Michael Collins  |
| 20 | Independent  | Councillor Paul McCusker    |

**Standards and Business Committee**

|    |  |                             |
|----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b> (Green Party)                         | Councillor Anthony Flynn    |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b><br>(Democratic Unionist Party) | Councillor Davy Douglas     |
| 3  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Nichola Bradley  |
| 4  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Arder Carson     |
| 5  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Pádraig Donnelly |
| 6  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Siobhán McCallin |
| 7  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor JJ Magee         |
| 8  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Ronan McLaughlin |
| 9  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Ryan Murphy      |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Alderman James Lawlor       |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Alderman Dean McCullough    |
| 12 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Andrew McCormick |

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|    |                                    |                                  |
|----|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 13 | Democratic Unionist Party          | Councillor Ian McLaughlin        |
| 14 | Alliance                           | Councillor Fiona McAteer         |
| 15 | Alliance                           | Councillor Christine Bower       |
| 16 | Alliance                           | Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown |
| 17 | Alliance                           | Councillor Michael Long          |
| 18 | Social Democratic and Labour Party | Councillor Séamas de Faoite      |
| 19 | Social Democratic and Labour Party | Councillor Dónal Lyons           |
| 20 | Traditional Unionist Voice         | Councillor Ron McDowell          |

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**

|    |  |                             |
|----|--|-----------------------------|
| 1  | <b>Chairperson</b><br>Alliance                           | Councillor Eric Hanvey      |
| 2  | <b>Deputy Chairperson</b><br>(Democratic Unionist Party) | Councillor Bradley Ferguson |
| 3  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Natasha Brennan  |
| 4  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Claire Canavan   |
| 5  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Áine McCabe      |
| 6  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Caoimhín McCann  |
| 7  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Conor McKay      |
| 8  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Tomás Ó Néill    |
| 9  | Sinn Féin  | Councillor Séanna Walsh     |
| 10 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Ruth Brooks      |
| 11 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Andrew McCormick |
| 12 | Democratic Unionist Party                                | Councillor Nicola Verner    |
| 13 | Alliance   | Councillor Christine Bower  |
| 14 | Alliance   | Councillor David Bell       |
| 15 | Social Democratic and Labour Party                       | Councillor Séamas de Faoite |
| 16 | Green Party  | Councillor Anthony Flynn    |
| 17 | Ulster Unionist Party                                    | Alderman Sonia Copeland     |
| 18 | People Before Profit Alliance                            | Councillor Michael Collins  |
| 19 | Traditional Unionist Voice                               | Councillor Ron McDowell     |
| 20 | Independent  | Councillor Paul McCusker    |

The Council agreed to appoint the Members to the Council's Standing Committees for 2025/2026, as set out above.

**Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd and 30th May, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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**Amendment**

**City Hall Income Generation Project**

Moved by Councillor Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor McDowell,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd May under the heading 'City Hall Income Generation Project' be rejected.

On a vote, two Members voted for the amendment and fifty-three against and it was accordingly declared lost.

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd and 30th May, 2025, were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of People and Communities Committee**

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor McKeown,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May, be approved and adopted.

**Amendment**

**Play Service Rental Agreement**

Moved by Councillor Doran,  
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May under the heading 'Play Service Rental Agreement' be rejected and accordingly the Council agrees to extend the current play service rental agreement with the Benview Residents Association for a further period of five years.

On a vote, twenty Members voted for the amendment and thirty-eight against, and it was accordingly declared lost.

**Amendment**

**Belfast City Tribunal Service**

Moved by Councillor Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

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That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May under the heading 'Belfast City Tribunal Service' be referred back to Committee for further consideration, with the Tribunal Service to be invited in.

On a vote, twenty-six Members voted for the amendment and thirty-two against and it was accordingly declared lost.

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th May, 2025, were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th and 28th May, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Licensing Committee**

Moved by Councillor Doran,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 21st May, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Murphy  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 13th May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee**

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,  
Seconded by Councillor R-M. Donnelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 8th May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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**Council Climate Action Plan**

At the request of a Member, the Council agreed that a section be added to the Action Plan, including key recommendations and findings, to examine the environmental impact of segregation in the City.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 8th May, 2025, were approved and adopted.

**Standards and Business Committee**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 22nd May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Ad Hoc Committee**

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 22nd May, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**To reconsider the motion on  
the Armed Forces Covenant**

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,  
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

“That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces services leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately.”

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the motion, twenty-nine against and with three no votes, it was accordingly declared lost.

**Annual Meeting of Council,  
Monday, 2nd June, 2025**

**Notice of Motion**

**Voting Rights for the Election of  
the President of Ireland**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor R-M. Donnelly proposed the following motion:

“That this Council notes that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both; recalls that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 counties the right to vote in presidential elections; further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Brennan.

On a vote, forty-one Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson

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## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 20th June, 2025

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director  
of Corporate Services;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood  
Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property & Projects  
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development;  
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;  
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;  
Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, Belfast Stories; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

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

### **Declarations of Interest**

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 20th June, 2025**

Councillor Beattie declared an interest under items 2(d) Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25, 2(f) Community Support Plan and 4(f) Social Value Levy Fund Update in that he was associated with groups/organisations which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

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

**Restricted Items**

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

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

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

**2024-25 Quarter 4 Finance Report**

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

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

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

**Proposal**

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 20th June, 2025**

**Further Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor RM Donnelly,

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

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded Councillor Long,

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

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

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

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

Accordingly the Committee:

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 20th June, 2025**

**Public Local Inquiry for Dalradian Gold Application**

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

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

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

**Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge**

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

The Committee:

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

**Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25**

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

The Committee:

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 20th June, 2025**

**Belfast Tartan**

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

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

**Community Support Plan**

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

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

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

The Committee:

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 20th June, 2025**

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

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

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

The Committee:

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

**New Crematorium Update**

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

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

**Update on Fleadh Cheoil**

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

The Committee noted:

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

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The Committee also approved the:

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

**Summer Community Diversionary Programme Update**

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

**Assets Report - Restricted**

The Committee:

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

**Targeted Acquisition**

The Committee:

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

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Notice of Motions - Quarterly Update**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

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

**2.0 Recommendations**

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

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

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

**Category 1 Recommended Closure:**

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

**Category 2 Recommended Closure**

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

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

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

development of a Sustainable Food Strategy. It is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Accordingly, the Committee:

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

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Belfast Region City Deal – update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

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

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

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

**3.0 Main report**

**Deal Delivery**

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

- 3.2 Key highlights on progress across the pillars of investment since the last update in December include:

**Innovation**

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

3.4

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

3.5

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

3.6

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

3.7

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

Digital

3.8

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

have been progressing well and capabilities were showcased at the launch event for the centre, which is located in Belfast City Centre.

3.9

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

3.10

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

3.11

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

3.12

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

3.13

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

3.14

Tourism and Regeneration

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

3.15

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

3.16

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

3.17

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

3.18

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

3.19

Infrastructure

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

3.20

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

3.21

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

3.22 Employability and Skills (E&S)

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



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

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

#### **Mourne Mountain Gateway**

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

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

**BRCD Council Panel**

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

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

3.30 **Financial & Resource Implications**

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

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

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Belfast Stories Update**

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

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

1.1 **Purpose of the report**

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

consultation as part of RIBA stage 2 Concept Design development.

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

## **2.0 Recommendation**

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

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

## **3.0 Main Report**

**3.1** Members will be aware that Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open in 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods.

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

### **Belfast Stories Programme**

**3.3** All programme activities have been underpinned by a programme of ongoing engagement that recognises that the success of Belfast Stories hinges on the active participation and input of those who know the city best—its residents, local communities, cultural groups, business owners and visitors. Engaging with these diverse stakeholders through a structured consultation process is crucial to ensuring that the project reflects the collective vision and meets the needs and aspirations of all who will use and enjoy Belfast Stories.

- 3.4 A first public consultation on Belfast Stories was delivered from August to November 2022 running for 14 weeks. The consultation focused on:
- Raising awareness of Belfast Stories so that people are excited and want to continue to be engaged in its development
  - Making sure that Belfast Stories can be a positive experience for everyone, including consultation on the EQIA, RNIA and Story Collection Framework
  - Asking people how they would like to continue to be involved in the ongoing engagement.
- 3.5 The reach of this consultation included 2,755 visits to the online consultation hub, 149 responses to online survey and polls, 65 consultation workshops and 1,148 direct participants.
- 3.6 Whilst the feedback received during this consultation was overwhelmingly supportive of Belfast Stories, there were several areas that were noted as requiring careful ongoing consideration throughout the development of the project. In particular, responses indicated that the main barriers that would stop people enjoying Belfast Stories included concerns over the experience not being considered inclusive, potential to be politically partisan or lack of trust in how the stories would be represented.

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

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

**What we consulted on**

- 3.9 The information presented during this consultation was commensurate with the current design phase. As such it did not

present detailed designs, however, it offered a genuine and inclusive opportunity to engage on two primary areas of interest, the design of the building and the envisioned visitor experience. Through the public consultation, Belfast Stories and the design teams received both quantitative and qualitative responses to inform the next stage of project development up to the end of RIBA stage 2 and beyond. By undertaking consultation events, workshops and targeted activity, Belfast Stories continues to ensure the potential of the project to deliver on inclusive growth through focusing on positive economic, social and environmental impacts. The full report including findings and recommendations is available at Appendix 1 and summarised in Appendix 2.

#### Design Concept

- 3.10 Emerging proposals seek to bring the former Bank of Ireland back into the life of the city respecting the importance of Royal Avenue whilst developing the full site, ensuring that the design orientates towards and embraces local communities. In designing a home for stories, the design teams have aimed to place significant emphasis on inclusivity and generosity, making spaces for stories and for a multiplicity of uses. Proposals focus on making spaces for both visitors and local people. The purpose of the consultation was to test whether the proposed approach to date, was successful in delivering on the ambition.

#### Facilities Mix

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

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

#### Story Gathering

- 3.13 The emerging masterplan for the visitor experience challenges a conventional thematic approach to storytelling and replaces it with a narrative framework comprising of the two main proposed routes of time and space, supported by a series of crossroads that will support large scale interventions and creative installations. This approach also emphasises the importance of the city's authentic voice focusing on engagement with the people of Belfast through an extensive programme of ongoing story gathering as well as establishing a creative commissioning model for local artists. Given the level of feedback on the proposed themes during the first public consultation in 2022, this second consultation provided an important opportunity to test how the emerging concept had responded to previous concerns.

#### Purpose of the consultation

- 3.14 The specific objectives of this consultation were to:
- Promote the project, raise awareness and gain buy-in
  - Ensure that Belfast Stories is for everyone including undertaking an equality impact assessment and rural needs impact assessment
  - Gain feedback on current plans and thinking
  - Inform next phase of project development and design.
- 3.15 Activities and opportunities for feedback during the public consultation focused on the:
- Emerging design concept to reflect the current stage of the project, RIBA Design stage 2 of an industry standard eight-stage RIBA process
  - Proposed facilities mix including public space, visitor attraction and creative hub
  - Visitor experience as informed by the *draft* Interpretive Masterplan, and specifically focusing on primary audiences (visitor journeys) for all elements of the Belfast Stories site.
- 3.6 Consultation activities were structured around five key themes, aligned to the overarching aspirations of Belfast Stories and mapped against the physical form that the building could potentially take. These themes are:

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

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

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

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

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

**Support for the Belfast Stories concept**

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

82% of survey respondents were likely to recommend Belfast Stories to a friend visiting Belfast. Support was even stronger at face-to-face engagements such as workshops and focus groups. Survey results indicate people from some Section 75 categories may have concerns that should continue to be monitored going forward.

#### Architectural concept

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

#### Curatorial/Ethical framework

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

#### Story Gathering

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



**Language strategy**

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

**Travel and transport**

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

**Safety**

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

**Ongoing engagement**

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

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

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

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

Operational model

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

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

Equality consultative forum

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

be established to provide continuity and advice between and throughout public consultation.

#### **Consumer Testing**

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

#### **Next steps**

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

- **Operator Model programme, actions and engagement.**

**Financial and Resource Implications**

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

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

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

The Committee:

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

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

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

**Planning Information**

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

**City Regeneration Members Working Group**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

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

#### **Main Report**

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

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

#### Ormeau Park

- 3.4 All Councillors from Botanic, Lisnasharragh and Titanic were invited to attend the engagement session in December 2024 . The members present were confident that they could put forward projects based on prior engagement with their constituents and the general feeling was that once costings are available that projects can be narrowed down by elected representatives and progressed via the Council's Capital process. It was agreed that when projects are finalised that this will be communicated effectively with key stakeholders. Projects nominated for costing included:
- A dog off lead enclosure – Approx costings £45k-65k. Please note that costs may vary depending on the size and scale of the project)
  - Upgrade the outdoor basketball and tennis courts – The upgrade to the Basketball courts is to be delivered via the capital programme.
  - Upgrades to the bowling pavilion – still to be costed
  - Refurbish the bandstand – Still to be costed
  - Commission a feasibility study for the Nettlefield MUGA – approximately £10K

#### Boucher Playing Fields

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

**Botanic Gardens**

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

**Financial and Resource Implications**

Funds available are:

Ormeau Park £71,148.00

Boucher Road £60,742.00

Botanic Gardens £15,717.00

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

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

**Proposal**

Moved by Council Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

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

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

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Donnelly,

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 20th June, 2025**

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

The Committee:

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

**Pilot Sunday City Animation Project**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

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

**2.0 Recommendation**

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

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

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

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



whether there is an appetite for the pilot Sunday trading and animation project and the timescales for implementation.

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

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

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

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

**3.13 Designation as a Holiday Resort**

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

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

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

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

**3.16** The issues behind the proposals to designate the city centre as a holiday resort were similar to the current position: ongoing challenges to city centre viability; a desire to accommodate a growing tourism audience and a recognition that there was

limited retail and hospitality provision in the city centre on a Sunday morning, compared to other days of the week.

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

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

### Animation

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

probably co-located with other activities – e.g. Blackstaff Square, Grand Central Station, or Halt.

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

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

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

3.30 **Financial and Resource Implications**

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

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

None associated with this report.”

### **Proposal**

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Nelson,  
Seconded by Councillor Long,

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

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

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

### **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

#### **Physical Programme**

The Director of Property and Projects submitted the following report:

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

1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects

which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme and an update on the Fleet Programme 2025/26 - replacement of the Lord Mayor's car, and signage at Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Olympia Leisure Centre.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

### **2.1 The Committee is requested to –**

- **Capital Programme Movements** -
  - **IT Programme – Service Desk Management System Solution** - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme and moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
  - **Black Mountain Pathway/ Greenway** - Agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
  - **Historic Cemeteries – Health & Safety Works at Clifton Street Cemetery** - Agree that this project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and that a satisfactory tender return has been received for the works that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £231,000 be allocated
  - **Beacon Programme** - Agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £103,250.

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

### 3.0 Main report

#### Key Issues

#### Physical Programme

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

#### Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:



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

### **3.3 IT Programme – Service Desk Management System**

This project will enable the implementation of a new IT service desk solution to enhance operational capability and efficiency, user experience, and service response. It will replace the current inhouse legacy CRM system and align IT services with organisational goals. This project is part of the overall IT Programme and a business case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme and moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

### **3.4 Black Mountain Pathway/ Greenway**

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

submitted. A series of community consultations have been undertaken and the project received positive feedback and support from the local community and key stakeholders. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. Match funding opportunities are being explored for this project. Members are also asked to note that work is ongoing on the other Access to the Hills/Connectivity projects.

### 3.5 Historic Cemeteries

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

### 3.6 Beacon Programme

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

### 3.7 Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**In summary**

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.14 Financial & Resource Implications

#### *Financial Implications –*

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

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

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

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

*Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.*

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

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

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

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

### Asset Management

The Committee:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Finance, Procurement and Performance**

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

The Committee:

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

### **Contracts Update**

The Committee:

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

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

**Appendix 1**

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

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

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|  |               |            |         |  |
|--|---------------|------------|---------|--|
|  |               |            |         | contingency for Fleadh in 2026   |
| Provision of dog kennelling facilities and related services            | Up to 4 years | £320,000   | D Sales | The Dog Warden Service requires a provider to supply dog kennel facilities to keep, return and rehome stray and other dogs which come into the care of the Council. This would include kennelling of illegal breeds and other related services such as provision of veterinary care to dogs housed at the facilities   |
| Purchase PCSP crime prevention Equipment                               | Up to 3 years | £90,000    | D Sales | The equipment aims to provide a tool to improve policing and community safety and help people to feel safer. The Community Safety Unit's Anti-Social Behaviour Officers and PSNI have in the past welcomed the availability of such community resources as an engagement tool, offering practical support for residents and community groups across Belfast. |
| Removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers | Up to 5 years | £3,600,000 | D Sales | This is a critical service that ensures filled skip containers are transported and emptied in a timely manner ensuring there is no downtime or closures of household recycling centres or other operational OSS sites due to skip availability.  |



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**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

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

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|  |  |  |  |   |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | managed by the airport's sales team and charged directly to George Best Belfast City Airport. |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|

**Table 3: Modification to Contract**

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

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|  |                 |                                |             |  |  |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------|--|--|
|  |                 |                                |             | modification approved for 5 months in January 25 due to resourcing issues within the unit to allow procurement to take place. These issues have not been resolved which has led to further delays in procurement.  |  |
| T2015 – Supply and delivery of paints & sundries | Up to 52 months | Additional 3 months and £6,000 | S<br>Grimes | 3-month extension required to allow for additional time for the re-tender exercise to be completed and ensure continuity of supplies.<br>Note - Original expiry on 28/2/25 and contract modification approved for 4 months and £6k in Feb 25 SP&R. The new tender, T2517, is at evaluation stage and this approval is sought for 3 months to allow the evaluation and award to take place. | PPG<br>Architectural<br>Coatings<br>UK Ltd |
| T2034 - Supply of SCARAB Vehicles approved Parts | Up to 3 years   | Additional 1 year and £30,000  | D Sales     | 1 year extension required to allow for additional time to research and engage with the market to see if other manufacturers can supply the equivalent OEM part at a more competitive cost and a quicker lead time.   | McCreath<br>Taylor Ltd                     |

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

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

**Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

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

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|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | See additional<br>information<br>below |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

**Appendix 1a**

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

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

**Equality and Good Relations**

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

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

**Presentation on The Climate Action Plan**

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

**Asylum Dispersal Programme Update**

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

**Community Recovery Fund – Update**

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

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objectives of these funding streams, and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the contents of the report and approves allocation of the said funds as outlined in the detail of the report.

**PEACE IV – Secretariat Update**

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

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

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

**Maternity Pay Provisions**

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

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

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

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

**2.0 Recommendations**

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

**Main report**

**3.1 Statutory Maternity Leave and Pay**

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

Employees are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) provided they have at least 26 weeks service with their employer prior to the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC) and

they are earning, on average, an amount which at least equals the lower earnings limit which applies on the Saturday at the end of your qualifying week. The lower earnings limit is currently £125 a week.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Financial & Resource Implications**

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

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

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

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

**Diversity Action Plans**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

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

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

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

**3.0 Main report**

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

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

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

**Gender Action Plan (GAP)**

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

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

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

#### LGBTQIA+ Action Plan

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

3.7 Achievements in 2024/25 include:

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

#### Disability Action Plan

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

approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and reported on annually, runs from 2022 until 2025.

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

#### Race Equality Action Plan

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

#### Financial & Resource Implications

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

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

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

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

**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of Party Group Leaders  
Consultative Forum**

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

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

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

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

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

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| NAME OF ORGANISATION                       | FUNCTION DATE   | FUNCTION DESCRIPTION  | CRITERIA MET | ROOM CHARGE  | HOSPITALITY OFFERED                         |
|--|-----------------|---|--------------|--|---|
|  |                 | Reception, Dinner and entertainment to recognize the work of C for C helping organisations improve their productivity and growth through the provision of recognised training certifications and bespoke in-house staff and process development.<br><br>Numbers attending – 200 |              | Profit Group   |   |
| Rhythms of India Dance and Performing Arts | 10 October 2025 | <b>Award Ceremony and Cultural Celebration of NI October Mahotsav</b> a multicultural celebration with singing and dancing designed to highlight Belfast's growing cultural richness fostering Indo-NI friendship.<br><br>Numbers attending – 50                                | C            | Room hire £450<br><br><i>(getting support from QUB/ UUJ)</i> |   |
| Guide Dogs NI                              | 18 October 2025 | <b>40th Anniversary Celebration</b>   | C            | Current rate free as Charity and                             | Drinks Reception as significant anniversary |



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

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

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

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

Chairperson

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## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 3rd June, 2025

### MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);  
Alderman S. Copeland; and  
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower,  
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Collins,  
M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Doran, Flynn,  
Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Murray, McKeown  
and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and  
Neighbourhood Services;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet,  
Open Spaces and Streetscene;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood  
Services; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

There were no apologies received.

### Minutes

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

### Declarations of Interest

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

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

**Restricted Items**

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

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

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

**Reconsidered Item - Closed Bin/Bin Liner Policy**

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

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

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

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

**Ending Violence Against Woman  
and Girls - Change Fund Agreement**

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

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

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

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

**Dog Fouling**

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

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

**Healthwise and Physical Activity  
Referrals – Six Monthly Update**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Operational Issues**

**Pride of Place Awards 2025**

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

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

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

In addition, the Committee:

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

**Play Service Rental Agreement**

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



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

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Doran,  
Seconded by Councillor Verner,

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

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

**Partnership Agreements**

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

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

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

**Summer Schemes - Additional Needs Grants**

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

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

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

**Social Value Levy Fund – Update**

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

**Requests for the Use of Parks and Open Spaces**

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

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

**Dual Language Street Signs**

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

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

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**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor Verner,

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

**Amendment**

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

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

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

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

**Street Naming**

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

**Items Raised in Advance by Members**

**Antisocial Behaviour in Marrowbone Park**

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

**Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

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

Chairperson

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## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 4th June, 2025

### MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;  
Alderman Lawlor; and  
Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite, S. Douglas,  
Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, Maskey, McCabe,  
McCallin, McCormick, McKay, R. McLaughlin,  
Murray, Nelson and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;  
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;  
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;  
Ms. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager;  
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager (Physical Programme); and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 7th and 28th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June, 2025.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to item 2(a) 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme' in that his employer had submitted an application to the scheme and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the same item in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme and that she was acquainted with an applicant to the scheme and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to item 5(a) 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) Taskforce' and item 6 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2025/26 Programme' in that he was on the Board of the

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Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in relation to item 5(b) 'City Events Update' in that her employer had received funding as part of the St Patrick's Day celebrations.

**Restricted Items**

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

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

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Vacant to Vibrant Programme**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Scheme and outlined the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant Assessment Panel following the receipt and assessment of recent applications.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme, which would be supporting up to 64 businesses/organisations to locate or expand into long term vacant units; and
- ii. agreed the recommended city-wide grant award as outlined within Section 3.23 of the report.

**Belfast Place-Based Growth Proposition**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition.

In response to a Member's query on the potential for regeneration powers to be transferred to local government, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised the Committee that the Place Based Growth Proposition had outlined an

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emerging proposition for the devolution of regeneration funding and powers to the Council.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition, including the updated Place Proposition report and the emerging proposed asks from Government;
- ii. noted the update on strategic engagement with the UK Government, Irish Government, and the Northern Ireland Executive, as part of a strategic engagement programme aligned to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, working with city, regional and national government partners to seek to secure place based and regeneration investment funding;
- iii. noted the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and Ministerial level; and
- iv. agreed to write to the Minister for Communities requesting an update on what consideration had been given to the transfer of regeneration powers to local government.

**Housing Led Regeneration –  
PSP Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update following the appointment of GRAHAM as the private sector partner (PSP) to work alongside the Council to deliver a housing led regeneration programme.

The Director advised the Committee that the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) had been signed which contractualised the initial Overarching Business Plan (OBP) and the Joint Venture (JV) project governance structures that had been negotiated through the Competitive Dialogue procurement process.

She provided the Committee with further detail in respect of the initial Development Programme, Site Specific Business Plans and the work that had been undertaken by the PSP in respect of potential funding to help deliver the programme.

The Committee was provided with an update on the initial tranche of Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) Phase 2 sites and informed that the SPA provided for the introduction of Additional Opportunity Sites to be considered by the JV.

The Director recommended to the Committee that the existing City Regeneration Members' Working Group be utilised as an appropriate forum to engage with Members on the PSP housing led regeneration programme in advance of matters being brought before the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval. In response, a Member suggested that the Working Group to be

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solely utilised for that purpose and that all other regeneration and development issues be submitted to the Committee for its consideration.

The Member further suggested that a report be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee that would provide an update on the SSA Phase 1 sites.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the progress on the Council's Private Sector Partnership (PSP) for housing led regeneration, including completion of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA); timelines for submission and agreement on the initial development programme; and the Joint Venture (JV) governance arrangements as agreed through the Competitive Dialogue procurement process;
- ii. noted the update in respect of the first tranche of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) Phase 2 sites; the potential to consider Additional Opportunity Sites as part of the JV, alongside housing associations, on the basis of a comprehensive approach across a number of sites, and that the detail of any such proposals would be brought back to the Committee;
- iii. noted the initial approach to funding that was being explored by the PSP and that funding detail for individual sites would be brought forward for approval through the site approval process (Site Specific Business Plans) as agreed in the Strategic Partnership Agreement, with reports to be brought back to the Committee;
- iv. noted the potential for further targeted acquisitions aligned to objectives of the JV; the wider placemaking ambitions in the vicinity of Ormeau Avenue, Cromac Street and Stewart Street; and that further reports would be brought back to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- v. agreed that an update report be submitted to a future meeting in respect of the SSA Phase 1 sites; and
- vi. agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the City Regeneration Members' Working Group be solely utilised as an appropriate forum to engage with Members on the PSP housing led regeneration programme in advance of matters being brought back to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for approval, and that all other regeneration and development issues should be submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for consideration.



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**Sandy Row and Grosvenor  
Road Revitalisation Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the ongoing work strands in relation to the Department for Communities funded revitalisation of the Sandy Row and Grosvenor Road areas.

The Committee also considered a recommendation, outlined within the report, to amend the eligibility criteria for the Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme.

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development and the Senior Development Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to businesses affected by disorder within the City in August, 2024, uptake of the Sandy Row Revitalisation scheme and the potential widening of the scheme's eligibility criteria.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the Department for Communities funded Sandy Row Revitalisation Scheme;
- ii. agreed to amend the eligibility criteria for businesses which sought to avail of the grant to include all businesses, service providers, charities and community organisations trading within the red line boundary area; and
- iii. noted the update on the proposed Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Scheme.

**Markets Quarterly Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided a quarterly performance and financial update for the period to end June, 2025 and set out future plans for the coming quarter.

The Committee also considered an application for a market licence as part of the Maritime Festival in September, 2025.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development and the Markets Development Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to St George's Market, the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF) Young Traders Market, support for young traders, the Markets Rights Policy and signage.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the markets update against priority business plan activities;
- ii. noted the update on the financial performance of St George's Market for Quarter 4;

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- iii. approved an external market application as part of the Belfast Maritime Festival in September, 2025; and
- iv. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would explore the potential of expanding the Young Traders Market events to youth service providers within the city.

**Belfast Zoo Q4 Performance Report**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Committee with an update in relation to the performance of Belfast Zoo for Quarter 4 of the 2024/25 financial year, covering the period January to March, 2025.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,  
Seconded by Councillor O'Neill,

Resolved – That the Committee recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that an appropriate Council body be established with a focus on the long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo and complementary assets, and that this body would report to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the Belfast Zoo performance update report for Quarter 4 (January to March, 2025); and
- ii. agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that an appropriate Council body be established with a focus on the long-term financial sustainability of Belfast Zoo and complementary assets, and that this body would report to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Belfast Bikes Q4 Performance Report**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme for Quarter 4 of the 2024/25 financial year, covering the period January to March, 2025.

The Committee noted the Belfast Bikes performance update for Quarter 4, year 10 of operation.

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**Belfast Bikes: Tariff Structure  
for New Operation**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update in relation to the new operation of the Belfast Bikes scheme, including the proposed tariff structure, the proposed corporate membership structure and the launch of the new scheme.

The Committee also considered a recommendation that the Belfast Bikes tariffs be reviewed on an annual basis to align with other Council Scale of Charges, and that prices would be reviewed in line with usage data, inflation and budgetary requirements.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development and the Client Manager (Physical Programme) answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the transition from the current scheme to the new operation, the supply of bikes, communications, quality checks, docking stations and the proposed annual review of pricing.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved the proposed tariff structure for the new operation of the Belfast Bikes scheme;
- ii. approved an annual review of the pricing of the scheme;
- iii. noted the proposed corporate membership structure for the new operation; and
- iv. noted the update regarding the launch of the new scheme.

**York Street Interchange Placemaking  
and Active Travel Development (PATD) –  
Committee Response**

The Director of Director of City Regeneration submitted for the Committee's consideration a report in relation to the Council's response to the outcome of York Street Interchange (YSI) Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR) as presented to the Committee by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) at its special meeting on 28th May, 2025.

The Committee also considered a request from Mr. M. Hackett to present on the Alternative YSI Design.

The Senior Development Manager presented to the Committee a detailed overview of the YSI scheme, the findings and recommendations of the PATR and a summary of the issues raised by Members following DfI's presentation to the Committee in May.

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During discussion, several Member's highlighted the strategic importance of the YSI scheme to Belfast and the need for a comprehensive response from the Council to DfI in relation to the recommendations outlined in the PATR presentation.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the York Street Interchange Placemaking and Active Travel Review;
- ii. agreed to defer consideration of the Committee's response to the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the York Street Interchange to a special meeting in June, 2025; and
- iii. agreed to refer a request from Mr. M. Hackett to present on the Alternative York Street Interchange Design to the North Belfast Area Working Group.

**Positioning Belfast to Compete**

**International Relations – Draft Framework**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the International Relations Draft Framework to a future meeting to enable further engagement between the Members and officers in relation to the draft framework.

**City Events Update**

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism presented for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a summary of the:**

- St Patrick's Day Celebrations 2025 post event information and forward planning for 2026
- Christmas Planning Update for 2025
- Update on Oireachtas Festival
- Update on Maritime Festival
- Update on Halloween and the Open

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to:**

- note the contents of this report on the 2025 St Patrick's Day Programme

- note the outline approach for delivery of the St Patricks Day 2026 Programme
- note the on-going festival contracts position in respect of St Patrick's Day
- note the updates in approach to Christmas 2025 delivery including festive lights
- note the update on Oireachtas festival and approval funding provision to Foras na Gaeilge up to the value of £30,000
- note update on Maritime Festival
- note update on Halloween and the Open.

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **3.1 St Patrick's Day - Background to procurement**

Members will be aware that the 2024 procurement was split across a number of lots;

- Lot 1: A Parade / Pageant (£95k)
- Lot 2: City Centre Weekend Music Programme (£70K)
- Lot 3: Cross City Music Showcase (£50k)
- Lot 4: An 'Open Call' (£50k)

With remaining budget retained for parade logistics (circa £25k) and support for programming and marketing activity.

The outcome of this process was that Lot 3 only, was subsequently awarded to Féile an Phobail – for a three - year agreement (2024 to 2026). St Patrick's Day 2026 will be the final year of this contract.

Tradfest were appointed to deliver Lot 2 and approved at SP&R in November 2023, initially for a one-year agreement. Tradfest subsequently secured a new tender for the city centre music programme for 2025, with the option to renew for 2026 and 2027.

In regard to Lot 1 Council Officers took forward the option to deliver the Parade in-house for 2024, This involved engagement with a number of organisations on the provision of professional performance, community engagement, and parade assets. Following the 2024 event, a number of parade specific procurement exercises took place with 2025 being the 1st year of up to three-year arrangements.

##### **3.1.1 2025 Programming**

**In the lead-up to St. Patrick's Day and the day itself, a series of additional activities were delivered across the city, significantly enhancing the festive atmosphere. These were a combination of curated partners and Council:**

**Delivered by Féile an Phobail, TradTrail celebrated Belfast's status as a UNESCO City of Music with performances from the best local and national trad musicians from Monday 10th to Monday 17th March, offering free music performances in bars, restaurants, hotels and visitor attractions across the city.**

**Seachtain na Gaeilge, presented by Conradh na Gaeilge began on Saturday 1st March and continued until St Patrick's Day itself. This included an Irish language family fun day - Spraoi Cois Lao – which took place at Custom House Square on Saturday 8th March, the biggest fun day of its kind. This event included musicians, dancers, activities, games, food and entertainment, celebrating the Irish language, and was free to access.**

**Belfast TradFest presented the St Patrick's Music Festival – four days of concerts, céilís, displays, taster sessions and workshops in venues throughout the Cathedral Quarter. Combining traditional music with bagpipes, highland dancers, Irish dancing and bodhrán circles, a festival village located at Cathedral Gardens included a host of free performances, alongside food stalls, céilí workshops and more. In addition, there were a number of ticketed performances including:**

- **Cara Dillon at Ulster Hall**
- **Afro Celt Sound System at Mandela Hall**
- **Máirtín O'Connor, Zoë Conway & Dónal O'Connor at St Joseph's Church**
- **Anúna at St Anne's Cathedral (to an audience of 550)**
- **Céilí events and workshops across the Cathedral Quarter**
- **Performances by Glengormley School of Traditional Music, Tír na nÓg Irish Dancers, and various pipe bands**

**Council provided further family-friendly programming in 2 Royal Ave, via the Council - appointed operator MayWe, which was well attended by families for a day of free events, including art workshops, dance performances, music and a games area.**

**Council, in partnership with Ards Comhaltas, programmed live music in St George's market on both Saturday 15th and**

Sunday 16th March, to showcase the asset and profile the successful bid for Fleadh Cheoil in 2026.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade was held on Monday 17th March, a large scale participatory event aimed at providing a family-friendly experience in celebration of cultural heritage. The St Patrick's Day Parade was curated and delivered by the Council Events team incorporating engagement, animation and participation from a number of professional, voluntary and community organisations; dance troupes, schools, community groups and musicians who joined the floats for a free multi-cultural, cross-community celebration. Commencing from Belfast City Hall, the parade followed a circular route and concluded back at the City Hall, ensuring a vibrant celebration which was accessible to the large audience.

The St Patrick's Celebrations were delivered within the budget allocation of £300,000. Members should note that Good Relations funding of £20k was also secured to enhance the community offering within the parade.

Officers are continuing to work with good relations and wider units across council to identify opportunities to enhance the cultural offering and connect communities in how they can be associated and engaged with the St Patricks Day Celebrations. This can provide a pathway into engagement and programming work associated with the delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil given in 2026.

### **3.1.2 Outcomes**

In summary, the programme was delivered on budget, was well attended, and well received. All partners have been very positive in their feedback, and there was less risk with event delivery given that many key creative contractors were working under multi-year agreements.

There was an estimated visitor attendance of 25-30,000 in the City Centre on the 17<sup>th</sup> for the Parade and Festival Village – similar numbers to 2024, when the weather was better. Over 700 performers and community participants took part in the parade

In 2025, audience response was overwhelmingly positive. Over 16,000 people attended events across 13 venues as part of the St Patrick's Music Festival, with an estimated 12,000 visitors engaging with programming at Cathedral Gardens alone over the course of the weekend. The festival featured

410 participants, over 60 hours of content, and performances from a diverse range of artists including Cara Dillon, Afro Celt Sound System, Máirtín O'Connor, Zoë Conway, Dónal O'Connor, Anúna, and various traditional pipe bands, dancers, and community music groups.

The TradTrail, delivered by Féile an Phobail, extended across 60 venues citywide, featuring 87 artists, reinforcing Belfast's status as a UNESCO City of Music and supporting businesses in hospitality and tourism through accessible trad programming. The partnership model across venues and artists has proven both sustainable and impactful.

Spraoi Cois Lao – which took place at Custom House Square on Saturday 8th March, the biggest fun day of its kind. Almost 6,000 attended this event.

At 2 Royal Avenue, over 3,550 visitors engaged with a tailored programme of family-friendly activity, including arts, dance

As with previous years, there was clear evidence of elongated dwell time in the city, with footfall clustering in Cathedral Gardens, Writers' Square, and 2 Royal Avenue before and after the parade. This wrap - around experience will continue to evolve, with plans to expand the storytelling element across Council-owned assets in future years. This will align with the future opening of Belfast Stories and the wider place-making strategy.

A key consideration for 2026 will be the redevelopment of Cathedral Gardens, scheduled to begin in October 2025 and lasting approximately 12 months. This will impact use of that site for next year's programme, requiring early planning around alternate locations and infrastructure.

Operationally, while the parade route does have pinch - points due to the high density of the spectators attending; new measures (such as a screen) were introduced in 2025 to mitigate against these particular risks, in consultation with the H&S Advisory and other stakeholders. There was also the addition of audio description for those with limited sight.

### **3.1.3 Alignment to the Cultural Strategy**

The 'City Imagining Strategy' approved by Council has a focus on supporting developing local arts and cultural organisations, through funding, commissioning and capacity building. In this regard, there was engagement with local arts, voluntary and community organisations to create props or



coordinate performances of varying nature to enhance the overall production of the parade and highlight the local arts and culture within Belfast. Additionally, partners worked with the sector in the delivery of the wider programme.

The ongoing development work aligned to an events action plan will continue to consider development opportunities for St Patrick's Day.

**3.1.4 Key Findings: Belfast St Patrick's Day 2025 socio-economic survey**

**Visitor profile:**

- 51% of visitors from Belfast City Council area
- 30% from elsewhere in Northern Ireland
- 4% Republic of Ireland; 9% Great Britain, 6% other regions
- 44% of those outside Northern Ireland, the event was the main reason for their trip
- 24% staying in accommodation away from home
- 32% attended the event with children
- 58% had attended a St Patrick's Day event in Belfast before, 42% had not
- 27% heard about the events by family /friends

**Visitor Spend:**

- 93% ate out during the event, average spend per group £72.95
- Total average spend per group *excluding* accommodation £91.10
- 20% staying in accommodation in Belfast region

Overall estimated direct spend for the St Patrick's Celebrations excluding accommodation £788,062.28

**Overall Rating:**

- 86% gave the Parade a rating of 8-10, including 30% who rated it as 'Extremely good'.
- 97% of visitors agreed that the event improves NI's reputation as a host for events like these.
- 97% of visitors agreed that the event improves the reputation of NI as a place to visit.
- 90% agree /strongly agree events like this have can help shape a more accepting citizenship in our city.
- 100% of respondents believe that events like this encourage people to come to Belfast.

- 93% said that such events improve their sense of wellbeing and community.
- 96% felt the St Patrick's Celebrations were inclusive for all people from all cultural heritages.
- 94% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast.
- 98% would recommend the event to other people.
- 94% likely/very likely to visit St Patrick's Day celebrations in future years.

### **3.1.5 Marketing and Communications**

An integrated marketing and PR campaign was delivered beginning in October 2024 with headline announcements and built to a full programme launch in February 2025.

The marketing and communications campaign achieved widespread positive media coverage across broadcast, print and online media, plus strong interest and engagement on social media.

Coverage spanned BBC, UTV, Cool FM, Q Radio, and major print and digital outlets including the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, and Belfast Live. Notably, Cool FM delivered a 4-hour live broadcast from 2 Royal Avenue.

Council operated a digital and outdoor advertising campaign from 24th February to promote the events taking place under the St Patrick's Celebrations banner, including all partner activity and the events at St George's and 2 Royal Avenue.

The advertising campaign included online advertising, radio and outdoor promotion in the form of adshells, impact wraps, digital hubs, adshel lives and bus T-sides. The campaign directed people to [belfastcity.gov.uk/stpatricks](http://belfastcity.gov.uk/stpatricks) where the event information was displayed prominently on the page. Editorial features were also placed with Belfast Media Group and EasyJet magazine.

Additionally, further details could be found on programming at partner and stakeholder websites and social media platforms including Visit Belfast, Tourism NI, TradFest, Conradh na Gaeilge, Féile, Beam Creative and MayWe.

A press release was also issued on 21<sup>st</sup> February to promote the finer and confirmed details of the event schedule and this was followed by a traffic reminder and update on plans closer to the event. TradFest issued additional press to promote the music activity.

Visit Belfast provided analytics of their Spring campaign which included the St Patrick's Day Celebrations.

This included a double page spread in Belfast City Spring Guide, of which 30,000 copies were printed with a 150,000 Readership.

The St Patrick's Day landing page - live from 24th February <https://visitbelfast.com/ideas/st-patricks-day-in-belfast/> had 21,280 web visits.

Social media advertising was across Meta & Tik Tok - 2x weeks targeted to NI region and Greater Belfast area closer to the event. The final stats:

- Organic Social = 254,458 Impressions, 87,637 Views, 63,625 Engagements
- Content Series = – Best Place for Guinness – 94,277 Views, 187,869 Impressions, 2,879 Engagements
- Paid Social = Meta - 240,370 impressions - 55,877 engagements, 94,100 video plays
- TikTok - 206,486 impressions, 3,220 clicks, 204,912 video views

Additionally, there was a dedicated E-Zine and blog posts, and a small number of organic posts.

### 3.2 Way Forward 2026

A number of multi-year agreements are now in place with regards to the delivery of the wider St Patrick's Celebrations allowing for earlier planning and programme development for the 2026 event. The budget for the Celebrations is currently as per 2025.

Members are advised that ongoing future developmental approaches will be addressed in the Events Action Plan and findings brought back to Committee in due course. This will address holistically the challenges and opportunities in relation to city events in their current form. For example, we know that SPD in particular requires consideration of a multi year planning approach.

#### 3.2.1 As per the outlined procurement processes:

- Féile an Phobail will progress into Year 3 of their award to deliver Trad Trail

- Tradfest will progress into year 2 of their agreement to deliver the City Centre Music Programme
- The Council will again in 2026 deliver the parade in-house with 'creative' contractors on year 2 of a three - year agreement on parade floats, professional performers and community engagement respectively.

### **3.3 Christmas Lights Switch On Planning Update**

Members will be aware that Officers were asked to consider the engagement of a 'celebrity' to headline a future Christmas Lights Switch On. Officers have considered the proposal and consulted with contracted Health & Safety advisor. There are a number of concerns on how the reintroduction of a celebrity after a number of years would affect the existing crowd dynamics. The current demographic is mainly a family audience, and the inclusion of a celebrity with mass appeal could diversify the audience. Additionally, the current programme of entertainment has proven popular since the return of the switch on event post covid, currently programming demonstrated wide appeal to key audience segments, programming output is almost entirely Belfast based which represents good value for money. This aligns with the Cultural Strategy of supporting the local creative sector. Officers are seeking approval to continue with the existing approach to programming.

Members will be aware that after a large audience descended on the City centre for the 2013 Switch On, it was agreed that the event necessitated ticketing. With the implementation of ticketing the event, officers face the challenge of converting a live city centre into a ticketed event space in a 15–20-minute window. Upon review of the 2024 event, a small number of additional operational measures can be implemented for 2025, including a wider perimeter on the approach to the ticketed zone supported by VMS advisory signage, and restricting parking within the event site on the day of the event. Furthermore, the start time could be 15-30 minutes later when shopping footfall continues to diminish.

With previous years, there is always a high demand for tickets, yet a significant number of no-shows on the evening. This additional capacity does allow the Events team to admit non-ticket holders in the city centre.

In addition to the core programming for the switch on event officers are developing plans to include a weekend animation programme up to the value of £50,000

The Christmas lights switch on event marks the opening of the festive season and is aligned to the opening of the continental market and the implementation of the festive lights scheme.

Members will be aware that an ongoing tender exercise has been underway to appoint a contractor to facilitate and deliver the festive lights programme. A contractor has been appointed with kick off site meetings occurring in early June. As part of the tender process indicative designs, core footprint and critical paths for delivery were sought.

Officers will work with the incoming supplier and key stakeholders to engage with the detail regarding the scheme proposals, with additional support from the BCC estates team to secure the associated wayleaves and bring these under BCC ownership as previous schemes have utilised wayleaves via BCCM.

Following the site visits in June officers propose to bring back a more detailed plan to August committee.

#### **3.4 Oireachtas Festival**

Members will be aware of the decision taken at CG&R committee in August 2023 and again in October 2023 to approve proceeding with the Bid and consideration of any subsequent financial commitments to support the delivery of the Oireachtas na Samhna in 2025.

The event takes place from the 29th October to 2nd November 2025. The festival is a significant cultural event that celebrates Irish language, arts and traditions. It is an annual event that attracts as many as 10,000 participants and spectators from across Ireland and beyond. Hosting the festival provides both economic and cultural benefits to the city; namely

- A unique opportunity to celebrate the Irish language
- Attracting visitors and generating economic impact through bed nights and day spend
- Marketing and promotional opportunities
- Community engagement
- Opportunity to engage with a significant number of first time ROI visitors
- Opportunity to build relationships with key media partners ahead of the Fleadh Cheoil

A programme board has been facilitating the event planning as well as identifying opportunities to support wider engagement and development of additional activities which will augment fixed Oireachtas programme.

The event will take place across a number of city centre venues including the ICC & Waterfront Hall, Ulster Hall, City Hall and Europa Hotel. Officers are continuing to engage with the event organisers to support on delivery, marketing and visitor servicing for the event.

To maximize the impact of such a festival, a small grants scheme for community groups has been identified as providing additional benefits. This scheme can provide the necessary financial support to grassroots organisations, enabling them to actively participate and contribute to the festival's success.

The aim of this initiative is to generate community-based arts activity and engagement with civic events being hosted as part of Oireachtas na Samhna 2025 in Belfast city centre.

Through Foras na Gaeilge's *Scéim Forbartha Líonraí Gaeilge* (Irish language Networks Development Scheme, or SFLG), Foras na Gaeilge fund 6 community-based projects in the Belfast City Council area to implement programmes of Irish language activity on a language planning model with a view to increasing awareness and usage of the Irish language in the community.

Due to capacity and restricted timeframes to deliver a small grants programme it is proposed that a small events and activities fund of £30,000 to be divided among these 6 Belfast-based groups in 2025 and administered by Foras na Gaeilge

- Ionad Uíbh Eachach
- Glór na Móna
- Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain
- Ionad na Fuiseoige
- An Droichead
- Croí Éanna

One of the primary benefits of this small grants scheme is the empowerment of community groups. These groups often operate on limited budgets and may lack the resources to participate in large-scale events. By providing small grants, the scheme enables these groups to develop and implement projects that align both with the festival's objectives and the

Belfast Agenda. Community groups can use the grants to organise events, workshops, and performances that highlight different aspects and provide pathways into participation of the competition elements of the event.

Delivering tangible benefits in local communities, in businesses and in tourism, this support for local Irish language groups in Foras na Gaeilge's SFLG scheme will help the Oireachtas na Samhna festival achieve its full potential, creating a lasting and positive impact on the city.

### **3.5 Maritime festival**

Planning is well underway for the Maritime Festival to be delivered across the weekend of the 6-7<sup>th</sup> September 2025

As per previous years this is delivered in partnership with Maritime Belfast Trust (MTB). The event is supported by a programme board delivery structure with key partners Maritime Belfast Trust, Visit Belfast, Belfast Harbour, DfC. Planning is well underway with new additional activation of the Slipways, Hamilton dock and the City Quays Gardens. This year will be the first year that MTB are delivering co funded programming including a Saturday evening concerts with Hot House Flowers.

Maritime Belfast Trust (MBT) have entered into a delivery partnership with Council under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to programme Hamilton Dock and Titanic Slipways as part of the Belfast Maritime Festival 2025. Within the existing SLA, MBT will programme daytime activity but have also proposed to extend the Maritime offering to include an evening programme with a food and drink offering and a 'live' concert headlined by 'Hothouse Flowers.'

As in previous years, Council would provide further in-kind support; covering daytime security, medical and health and safety provision, - all of which were in addition to the SLA.

This in-kind support will now also extend to the evening offering, with Council covering security costs to further assist the delivery of the MBT concert. This allocation will be taken from existing project budgets.

### **3.6 Halloween**

In September 2024 members considered and approved proposals from BID one to support enhanced Halloween animation within the city centre.

Officers are continuing to explore partnership proposals and associated costs through the BIDS to support animation activity in 2025 and will bring further details to the August committee.

**3.7    The Open**

Officers are working in partnership with Tourism NI to support city dressing options at city hall and also with Visit Belfast to deliver visitor servicing:

- With the front of house Visitor Servicing team participating in TNI Get Open Ready customer service training designed to enhance visitor engagement.
- Development of a comprehensive 'Open 153' fact sheet to assist frontline teams across all 4 VB Visitor Information Centres (VICs) in handling inquiries.
- Frontline staff will be kept informed and updated on any promotional offers from partners related to the Open event.
- Key visitor information regarding the Open will be shared in the upcoming Quarterly Industry Briefing at the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre (VBWC) on June 3rd, attended by approximately 40-45 participants.
- Visit Belfast in partnership with Fáilte Ireland hope to have a staffed presence at the Tourism Northern Ireland stand during the Open on July 18th and 19th.
- The VBWC and the Belfast International Airport (BIA) will feature golf-themed branding and VBWC develop a front window display with golf merchandise, in the lead-up to the event.
- Golf-related materials, including 'Made for Golf' leaflets, are available at the VBWC and BIA, along with a selection of golf merchandise for sale.

**Publications:**

- The upcoming Summer Publication of Belfast City Region Guide (30,000 printed and distributed) will include a 'Beyond the Open' article, highlighting activities and showcasing golf partners for visitors interested in golfing during their stay. This content will also be adapted into a blog on the website.



**Digital Engagement:**

- A 'Beyond the Open' blog will be created to provide guidance on navigating the city, including coach and travel information.
- Social media content will be developed, focusing on activities available to visitors during breaks between rounds and after the event, utilising existing footage to streamline content creation. Featuring restaurants, bars and attractions alongside golf theme.
- Open-related Landing page featuring offers and events collated from industry partners will be promoted on the visitor website visitbelfast.com.
- Consumer E-Zine featuring Open-related offers and events, as well as a planning guide for city activities, will be distributed to various databases including Great Britain, Rest of World, and core markets.

Overall, Visit Belfast is actively enhancing visitor engagement and promoting the city through targeted activity, staff and industry briefings, training, city publications, and engaging digital content to maximise opportunities and enhance the visitor experience leading up to and during The Open event.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

Financial resources will be met from within existing departmental budgets.

**5.0 Equality & Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessment**

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

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to St Patrick's Day, the potential expansion of Halloween activities, the potential for a New Years Eve event, the 2025 Christmas Lights Switch On event and the Festive Lighting Scheme.

In relation to the 2026 St Patrick's Day Programme, a Member suggested that a report be brought back to the Committee that would explore the potential to expand the programme of events to additional sites.

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A further Member suggested that, given the significance of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 for Belfast, the Committee should be provided with regular updates in relation to the planning and preparation for the festival.

In response to a Member's query on the Festive Lighting Scheme, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism advised the Committee that following the appointment of the new contractor to deliver the scheme, officers would conduct site visits with the new contractor to undertake a full assessment of existing infrastructure. It was reported that following the site visits, officers would submit further detail in respect of the scheme to the Committee in August.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the 2025 St Patrick's Day Programme; the delivery of the 2026 St Patricks Day Programme; St Patrick's Day contracts; delivery of the 2025 Christmas Lights Switch On including festive lighting; the Maritime Festival; the Oireachtas Festival; Halloween; and the Open Championship;
- ii. approved funding provision to Foras na Gaeilge up to the value of £30,000;
- iii. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would explore the potential to expand the 2026 St Patrick's Day Programme to additional sites;
- iv. agreed that regular updates be provided to the Committee in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026; and
- v. agreed that a report be submitted to a future special meeting in respect of the 2026 festive lighting.

**Launch of Cultural Multi-Annual Grants**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- **Update Members on the investment programme that supports the cultural strategy, *A City Imagining 2020-2030*.**
- **Seek approval for the opening of the cultural multi-annual two-year scheme in August 2025 for funding from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2028.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 It is recommended that Members:**

- Note the contents of this report and agree to open cultural multi-annual grants in August 2025 for Arts and Heritage organisations and Events and Festivals for funding from 1 April 2026 and 31 March 2028 subject to final recommendations being agreed by Committee in February 2026.

**3.0 Main report**

**Background to Cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG)**

**3.1** At a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28 August 2019, a new ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, was agreed. As part of this strategy a new investment approach was approved including phased implementation of new funding programmes. Similar to the Belfast Agenda, the recommended investment model for culture proposed a new partnership approach to supporting the cultural sector, with the aim of sustaining and developing accessible cultural activity and infrastructure across Belfast. This investment is central to creating positive cultural, social and economic impacts for the city, delivering on our overall targets for the period, positioning Belfast as a regional driver, and creating the conditions for long-term transformation.

**3.2** As included in the strategy, the aims of the cultural investment model are to:

- support the cultural life of the city by enabling citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change
- invest in the cultural and creative sectors skills development and capacity for production and innovation
- position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking
- establish Belfast as a cultural destination.

**3.3** The first phased implementation of the cultural investment model commenced with the opening of a competitive funding programme for cultural multi-annual grants for the period April 2020 to March 2024. It was agreed that these multi-annual grants would cover two main areas:

- Arts and heritage organisations, which have a year-round programme of cultural activity (*Anchor* four-year grants and *Enable* two-year grants)
- Festivals and events organisations, which have a festival or event with an audience of 65,000 or more (*Imagine* four-year grants), or an audience of 10,000 or more (*Activate* two-year grants) by end of grant period.

3.4 These two strands of funding, Arts and Heritage and Festivals and Events, each with two tiers of investment available (two-year and four-year) replaced previous core multi-annual funding for arts and heritage and previous one-off funding agreements to events and festivals awarded on an annual basis via the Committee process.

3.5 The Arts and Heritage strand of funding is similar to and replaced the established core multi annual funding first implemented in 2013. It was designed to sustain our existing cultural offer covering both programmes and infrastructure. The Festivals and Events strand of funding was a new element and was designed to develop large events and festivals that will help Belfast become a year-round events destination. Furthermore it created a transparent and open process in line with the arts and heritage funding process.

3.6 Plans and process for launch of Cultural multi-annual funding

In advance of the new financial year in April 2026, it is planned to launch CMAG in August 2025 with approval of awards and contracts by March 2026. A summary of this timeline is included below:

- Open call for application submissions - August 2025
- Information sessions for applicants - August 2025
- Submission deadline for application – October 2025
- Eligibility check, scoring, officer assessment and independent assessment – Oct to Jan 2026
- Committee Approval of awards - February 2026
- Council Ratification approval of awards – March 2026

3.7 Similar to other grants, Cultural Multi-Annual Grants will be advertised widely. This will include:

- Information and application details emailed directly to a GDPR compliant mailing list representing over 370 organisations from across the cultural and creative sectors.

- Information shared with sectoral networks, websites and socials including the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and Community Arts Partnership.
- Promotion through Council communication channels
- Three information sessions and one-to-one meetings held in advance of the deadline.

### **3.8 Criteria for Decision making**

Assessments will be made, and scoring applied under three key areas of criteria:

- Quality of programme: this includes their vision, content, audience experience and marketing and audience development.
- Impact of activity: this includes how the programme contributes to the four strategic themes (A City Belonging, A City Challenging, A City Creating and A City Exploring) and how they will monitor and evaluate that impact.
- Readiness for investment: this includes planning, financial management, staff, governance, and environmental impact.

Assessments will be made only based on information supplied by the applicant within their submission. This will include the application form and supporting documentation such as business plans and strategies.

### **3.9 Principles of the Assessment Process**

Applications are received and eligibility checked by the Central Grants Unit before being passed to officers for scoring. Officers undertake a thorough assessment of all eligible applications. Applications and assessments are discussed and agreed at an internal moderation panel. An independent assessment panel co-ordinated by Central Grants Unit and chaired by a Senior Managers is then convened. The role of this assessment panel is 'to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification or validation of sampled applications and the overall process'.

### **3.10 Financial & Resource Implications**

There are currently no financial implications to this report. Funding relating to Cultural Multi Annual Grants will be met from the recurrent budget for Cultural Development subject to Committee approval and confirmation of departmental

**budgets for 2026-27. Payments and costs won't be incurred until the new financial year.**

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

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

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report; and
- ii. agreed to open the cultural multi-annual grants in August, 2025 for Arts and Heritage organisations and Events and Festivals for funding from 1st April, 2026 and 31st March, 2028, subject to the Committee approving final recommendations in February, 2026.

**City of Music Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the work relating to the UNESCO City of Music designation and seek approval of the 25/26 workplan related to the music strategy.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the contents of this report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’**
- **Agree the actions for 2025/26 as set out in the report and in Appendix 1 including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets**

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’. Mirroring A City Imagining cultural strategy the music strategy has four strategic themes, each having four strategic priorities. There are a number of actions**

and recommendations for each priority addressing various areas of need across the music sector, namely:

- Theme 1: Place artists at the heart - Recognising the value of creators
- Theme 2: Nurture the sector - Strengthening the structures to support those who guide and invest in creators
- Theme 3: Ignite the live experience - Liberating the live music sector as a major catalyst for cultural and economic growth
- Theme 4: Unlock the unifying power of UNESCO – Connecting Belfast internationally

3.2 Detail on the substantive progress against each of these initiatives in 2024/25 is detailed in Appendix 3.

3.3 The rest of this paper speaks to workplan proposals for 2025/26

#### **The Belfast Music Board**

3.4 The Music Strategy recommended establishing a Belfast Region Music Board to oversee the roadmap's implementation. Appointed in April 2023, the board comprises 22 members from diverse backgrounds and has co designed initiatives under the core themes of the strategy.

#### **3.4 Theme 1 - Placing Artists at the Heart**

A range of programmes under this theme are recommended. Highlights include the continuation of:

3.5

- **Output Belfast** - Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the conference is due to take place on 25<sup>th</sup> September, features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public.
- **Micro Bursaries scheme** - This programme provides up to £1,000 to individual musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. In 2023 and 2024, this programme was delivered in Collaboration with Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival, through enhancing their existing bursary programme to include a music micro-bursary. 38 musicians have received support to date
- **Gradam Ceoil bursary scheme** - Running since 2021, the Gradam Ceoil Bursary Scheme is a series of three annual awards awarded to young (18–25-year-old)

traditional musicians in Belfast, in partnership with Duncairn Arts Centre, Red Shoe productions and TG4.

- Health and wellbeing - In 2023/24, officials have worked on a range of partnerships with key organisations such as the Music Leaders Network to co-design practical wellbeing events and initiatives focusing on the physical and mental health of music creators. This has manifested as a number of practical schemes, including a pilot programme with NI Alternatives entitled 'Fit to March' which launched in September 2024.
- Music Industry sessions - In 2024/25, officials delivered 6 industry free industry sessions for musicians. Proposed events thus far include focuses on women in sound design, managing your vocal health, radio plugging and tour booking. The UNESCO City of Music Hannover have agreed to partner with BCC on these sessions, supplying industry experts from their city for relevant topics.

3.6 A new initiative under this years planning would be to introduce Teenage Kicks: Youth Music Programme

The music strategy includes several key commitments aimed at engaging young people in the local music scene. Notably, commitment 1.7 focuses on 'ensuring that music activities are accessible in safe spaces for all ages,' while commitment 4.4 seeks to 'amplify and encourage the influence of young people within the music sector.' Furthermore, the UNESCO Creative Cities network has embraced the principle of 'Bringing youth to the table for the next decade' as a core commitment during the UNESCO 2024 Annual General Meeting.

To fulfil these commitments, we propose the development of a pilot youth music program specifically designed for individuals under 18. This initiative aims to boost attendance and raise awareness of music events among young people in the city. By hosting concerts across a variety of venues, we will showcase the diversity of Belfast's music scene and cultivate a vibrant community of young audiences. Additionally, the program will foster sector engagement through the introduction of micro-grants (up to £2,000) available to promoters, venues, and festivals, enabling them to organize high-quality music events tailored for under-18s in Belfast.



**3.7 NI Music Prize/Sound of Belfast**

At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting on September 13, 2023, members agreed to support an independent review of the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast. Assessing alignment with the music strategy and potential for a long-term strategic partnership, with associated resources. It involved consultations with peers and benchmarking against similar events nationally and internationally, resulting in a series of recommendations that form a roadmap for development. The findings of this review are detailed in Appendix 2 of this report

**3.8** The Northern Ireland Music Prize honours and celebrates the best of new, established, and emerging Northern Irish music, serving as a key event for Belfast and its UNESCO City of Music status. Organized annually by the Oh Yeah Music Centre, the awards night takes place at the Ulster Hall during the Sound of Belfast Festival, reflecting similar efforts in other regions of the UK and Ireland.

**3.9** It is a significant milestone for Belfast, acting as a regional driver for the music industry in Northern Ireland. Belfast City Council is the primary funder of both the NI Music Prize and the Sound of Belfast programme. In 2023, the £30,000 funding from Belfast City Council was allocated to support the NI Music Prize, increasing to £45,000 in 2024, marking the first time it was shared between both Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize. The additional £15,000 allowed Oh Yeah to enhance its marketing efforts (£5,000) and cover rising travel and accommodation costs for visiting industry professionals (£10,000), which had significantly increased compared to the previous year. Funding acted as a lever for broader partnerships and investments, including Arts Council NI, BBC, PPL, PRS for Music, Arts & Business, Musicians' Union, Help Musicians, Rio Ferdinand Foundation, PRS Foundation, and others, contribute to this initiative.

**3.10** The report recommends that:

- Belfast City Council support the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast through a multi-year agreement, enabling organisers to plan effectively, strengthen delivery, and focus on long-term goals.
- Funding be increased to enhance, scale, and strengthen the activities delivered at Sound of Belfast, including the NI Music Prize.

- Dedicated marketing and communications campaign to champion artists, promote the events, and engage new audiences with Sound of Belfast and the NI Music Prize.

3.11 Based on the recommendations from this report and consultation with the Music Board, it is proposed to enter into a three-year multi-year agreement covering the event from 2025 to 2028. While the review suggests an investment of £65,000 per annum, it is important to consider the financial pressures on the music development budget across various themes. Therefore, it is recommended to allocate £55,000 annually to the NI Music Prize and Sound of Belfast, ensuring we can support these initiatives while addressing the broader funding needs across the music sector.

3.12 Theme two – Nurture the sector

A range of initiatives are proposed within this theme with highlights including:

- Sounds Atypical Scheme - The Sounds Atypical Music Grant scheme provides funding for d/Deaf, disabled, and neurodivergent musicians to create accessible music events in various performance spaces across Belfast. This initiative was developed in collaboration with the University of Atypical for Arts and Disability (UofA), a disabled-led organization dedicated to arts and disability.
- Music Business Accelerator Programme - partnering with colleagues in Economic Development to develop a Music Business Accelerator Programme tailored to the spectrum of needs within the music industry

3.13 Theme 3 - Igniting the Live Experience

- A range of programmes are recommended for 2024/25, highlights including:
- Strategic Partnership with Music Venue Trust - The Music Venue Trust is a UK wide charity which acts to protect, secure and improve Grassroots Music Venues. The organisation has been a key partner during both the formation of the Music Strategy and at implementation stage.
- Greening the Sector - we have partnered with Native Events on the creation of a Sustainability Toolkit for the music industry. We have completed Stage One where a steering group was formed and a sustainability survey was sent out to the sector to identify needs and priorities.

**3.14 Theme 4 – Unlocking the unifying power of UNESCO**

Theme 4 of the Music Strategy aims to provide more opportunities for embedding music in all corners and communities of the city and also seeks to position the Belfast City of Music brand on the international stage as a gateway to visitors and investors.

- 3.15** As part of Belfast's application and status as a City of Music, member cities are committed to '*work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.*'. Between 2023 - 2025, support has been provided for local music creators and industry to undertake international exchanges with other UNESCO Cities of Music such as Kansas City, USA, Hannover, Germany, Brno, Czech Republic, and London, Ontario Canada. In addition, a partnership with the Belfast International Arts Festival has provided a platform for a special UNESCO day each year featuring acts from other UNESCO cities at the Festival. It is proposed to continue this partnership with the Belfast International Arts Festival through hosting a UNESCO City of Music day in November 2025, featuring musicians from Daegu, Korea.

- 3.16** As well as collaboration between cities, UNESCO Member cities are also expected to take part in official UNESCO events, including the annual UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) conference and UNESCO Music subnetwork meetings. The UCCN Annual Conference, a key component of the Network, offers all member cities a unique platform for dialogue and cooperation which has led to the establishment of long-term, impactful international partnerships and initiatives. Attendance at this AGM is a mandatory requirement for creative cities and officials from the Culture Development team will attend this two-day event scheduled on 24th and 25th June at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France.

**3.17 UNESCO monitoring and evaluation**

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

budget for the following four years. Officials are actively working on this report which is due for submission in July 2025.

**3.18 Finance and Resource Implications**

There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2025/26 budget from existing departmental budgets allocated to music development for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy.

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

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

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report and the progress made against areas of the music strategy, “Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast”; and
- ii. agreed the actions for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendix 1, including budget implications to be met from existing departmental budgets.

**Strategic and Operational Issues**

**City Growth and Regeneration  
Final Committee Plan 2025/26**

The Committee considered a report, submitted by the Strategic Director, Place and Economy, which presented the final draft City Growth and Regeneration Committee Plan for 2025/26.

The Committee approved the final draft Committee Plan for 2025/26.

**Notices of Motion Quarterly Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided a quarterly update on the Notices of Motion that it was responsible for, in line with the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that all standing committees receive regular updates.

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The report outlined that there was currently twelve Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which the Committee was responsible for and recommended that the Committee agree to close the following four motions:

**Category 1 Recommended Closures:**

- Retail Business in Sandy Row;
- Impact of Belfast Grand Central Station on Grosvenor Road and Durham Street; and
- Closure of Connswater Shopping Centre - Support for Tenants.

**Category 2 Recommended Closures:**

- Women's Safety in the City

The report also provided status updates for the remaining eight motions which remained open.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that it was responsible for as outlined in Appendix 1; and
- ii. agreed to the closure of four Notices of Motion, as outlined in Appendix 1 and section 3.3 of the report.

**Presentation**

**Belfast City and Region Place  
Partnership (BCRPP) Taskforce**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in May, 2025, the Committee had agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) in order to be provided with an update on the BCRPP programme of work in 2024/25 and the proposed approach in respect of the 2025/26 programme, including priority issues and objectives going forward.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. O'Neill, BCRPP Chair and Chief Executive of Belfast Harbour, and Ms. M. Doyle, Deloitte, to the meeting.

Mr. O'Neill advised the Committee that the BCRPP was a joint public-private initiative to deliver a structured programme of work aimed at attracting inclusive investment for the delivery of regeneration, infrastructure, and a modern built environment for Belfast and the wider city region.

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He outlined for the Committee's information the BCRPP objectives, namely:

- to continue to build collaboration and partnership in the city and wider region;
- to continue to promote and market the Belfast region outside Northern Ireland;
- to increase engagement and advocacy with all key stakeholders, in particular, investors and government;
- to support delivery of the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment by attracting collaborative partners; and
- to support delivery of our shared ambition and drive inclusive, sustainable growth.

He advised the Committee that the BCRPP continued to use a four pillared approach in respect of programming which included, Annual Programme of Activity, Engagement and Advocacy, Media and Communication, and Research.

He highlighted some of the work that had been undertaken to date in relation to Communications and Digital Marketing including the development of a bespoke digital Belfast Region investment guide.

Ms. Doyle provided the Committee with further information on BCRPP's:

- approach to support place-based growth proposition for Belfast;
- support for the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake and The Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC);
- engagement with the Northern Ireland Executive, the UK Government and the Irish Government; and
- engagement with local communities.

Mr. O'Neill reported that the BCRPP had attended MIPIM in March, 2025 and the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in May, 2025, with a focus on highlighting opportunities across the Belfast region in respect of housing-led regeneration, transport-led regeneration and Tourism. It was reported that attendance at both events had generated strong interest in Belfast and the wider region from both national and global investors and developers.

The representatives concluded the presentation by outlining BCRPP's approach for 2025/26, in line with its four pillared approach and associated objectives, to work collaboratively to support place-based growth proposition for Belfast, positively showcase and position the city region as a place for investment through investor focused events, and positively position the city to attract inclusive investment to deliver regeneration and development.

Following the presentation, the representatives answered questions from several Members in relation to community engagement.

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The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation, and they left the meeting.

The Committee noted the information that had been provided within the presentation.

**Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2025/26 Programme**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- Update members on the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) 2024 / 2025 Programme.
- Seek approval to extend Council's involvement in the BCRPP to 2025 / 2026.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to:**

- Note a presentation will be made at Committee from representatives from the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP).
- Note alignment of the BCRPP programme with the draft International Relations Framework which is also being brought to this Committee for approval.
- Approve that officers continue to support the delivery of the BCRPP 2025 / 2026 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes.
- Approve Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private sector partnership contribution towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2025 / 2026 programme.
- Approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2026 as part of the BCRPP 2025 / 2026 programme (which includes attendance by other partners), noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget.

**3.0     Background**

- 3.1     The Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) is a joint public-private initiative that is delivering a structured programme of work aimed at attracting inclusive investment for the delivery of regeneration, infrastructure, and a modern built environment for Belfast and the wider City Region. It is supported by public, private and key anchor institution partners, including Belfast City Council, all Belfast City Region Deal partner Councils, Belfast Harbour, Translink, Queens University Belfast, and representatives from the local development and regeneration community.**
- 3.2     Members will recall that this Committee agreed in May 2025 to receive a presentation from representatives of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) to this June Committee. The purpose of the presentation is to update Members on the 2024 / 2025 programme of work and proposed approach to the 2025 / 2026 programme, including priority issues and objectives for the Partnership moving forward.**
- 3.3     Members may also recall that representatives of the BCRPP previously presented to this Committee in June 2024 and approval was given to Council participation in the 2024 / 2025 Programme of work as part of a wider public-private sector approach.**
- 3.4     In terms of context setting, Belfast City Council has been working with public and private sector organisations for the past ten years to proactively promote Belfast to local, national and international audiences to attract capital investment to support realising the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda. Over this same period there has been significant development and regeneration in the city, as reported to Committee via the annual Regeneration Tracker update reports and the recent Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy 10 year Stocktake Review, as noted below.**
- 3.5     This approach aligns to Council's agreed strategic priority to promote and position the city to compete globally to attract inclusive and sustainable investment. Members will be aware that Positioning the City to Compete is a key deliverable within the 2025 / 2026 City Growth & Regeneration Committee Plan, as agreed at CGR Committee Meeting in May 2025. A separate report is also being brought to this Committee on the Draft International Relations Framework 2025-2028 and the work of the BCRPP aligns with the Framework, which recognises the**



role Council plays as a civic leader and a convening role to exploit existing relationships and connections to generate investment; enhance Belfast's global visibility in key markets and communicate its unique assets and offer; coordinate and amplify messaging to maximise return on investment and support our partner organisations to deliver their organisational targets with a focus on inclusive economic growth.

- 3.6 Council has an important role as a civic leader to act as convener and facilitator, bringing together public and private sector partners to collectively promote and position the city to compete globally to attract inclusive and sustainable investment, notably in the context of attracting national and international capital investment to support regeneration and development activity across the city and recognising that delivering our collective growth ambitions requires both public and private sector funding.
- 3.7 Members will recall that in 2024, Council undertook a 10-year review stocktake of progress on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS), which had been published in 2015, with a number of priority policies and proposed projects. The stocktake found that Belfast has exceeded expectations across many BCCRIS regeneration policy areas and delivery by both private and public sectors of significant development across a range of asset classes. It did however also highlight that many challenges remain, including the need for investment, innovative ways of funding and joined up working to unlock regeneration priorities and ensure continued growth. It identified catalytic areas of focus including city centre living; green and climate resilient public realm, sustainable travel and infrastructure related projects; unlocking stalled major regeneration schemes, addressing dereliction and vacancy and taking a multi-agency approach to place keeping and city management.
- 3.8 The Stocktake highlighted that continued partnership working across public, private and third sectors is required to leverage the ambition and further potential of the city. This collaborative and joined up approach is particularly critical given the disparate governance landscape in the city and constrained public finances. It noted that delivering on the Belfast Agenda ambitions, with the city centre identified as a priority, will require investment of c£7.5bn, which will require significant private sector funding alongside public / third sector. It also recognised that innovative approaches to funding and unlocking investment are required to address the

institutional, physical and market issues that act as barriers to inclusive growth and development.

**4.0 Main Report**

**4.1** The 2024 / 2025 BCRPP programme commenced in September 2024 and is delivering a structured programme of work aimed at attracting inclusive investment for the delivery of regeneration, infrastructure and a modern built environment for Belfast and the wider City Region. The presentation being made to this Committee by representatives from the BCRPP will provide an overview of the 2024 / 2025 programme and highlights from the annual programme of activity which is delivering a structured programme of activity to help ensure that Belfast and the wider region are positioned to continue attracting investment and delivering sustainable, inclusive growth.

**4.2 Key areas of focus include:**

- *Communications* -proactive media engagement throughout the year to reinforce positive messaging around the Belfast region's investment proposition, targeted at the local, national and international real estate and development media.
- *Investment focused events* - The 2024 / 2025 programme included engagement at a local, national and international level and a presence at national and international investment conferences, UKREiIF 2025 and MIPIM 2025 which showcased Belfast and the wider city region proposition to a global investment and development audience. Previous activity also included engagement and attendance at events at a local, national and international level, with specific events including a Dublin Showcase and London based events.
- *Engagement and advocacy* – an increasingly important strand of work of the BCRPP is advocacy and engagement activity to facilitate two-way conversations with policymakers, funders and the public sector and real estate community with a key aim to positively position the Belfast region as a place that is open for business and investment and to support development and regeneration activity. This has included, supporting BCC in relation to the ongoing work on a Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast (with an update report also being brought to this Committee) by supporting engagement with the NI Executive, Irish and

**Westminster government, and collaborative initiatives including the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor, the Core Cities Group and Shared Island.**

- 4.3 From a Council perspective, participation in the BCRPP programme has delivered a number of benefits aligned to achieving corporate and city level strategic priorities. It is recognised that the joint, collaborative public private partnership working approach used by the BCRPP is an important mechanism to support our agreed priority to 'Position the City to Compete' under the Belfast Agenda. In addition, it complements other city region partnerships including Belfast Region City Deal and Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor; and is an important mechanism to deliver on key regeneration and development priorities, notably accelerating city centre living; and aligned to wider council priorities around innovation, net zero and economic development.**
- 4.4 Members will be aware of the strategic focus on housing-led regeneration, including on-going work with our appointed Private Sector Partner, GRAHAM to bring forward a housing-led regeneration programme to support our ambition to substantially grow the number of new homes in the city by 2035. Members are aware of the challenges faced in delivery of housing-led regeneration and Council's participation in the BCRPP, including attendance at UKREiiF and MIPIM, has facilitated introductions and joint meetings, involving GRAHAM, to engage with a number of institutional investment and pension funds who have the relevant experience in partnering with local authorities.**
- 4.5 Members will note the separate agenda item for this Committee on the Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast and on-going work with city, regional and national government partners to seek to secure place based and regeneration investment funding for Belfast. Council's participation in the BCRPP has assisted in the strategic engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, the Northern Ireland Executive and Irish Government to seek to advance this proposition. This has included a meeting of the BCRPP representatives, including Council, with the Minister for the Department of Finance in April 2025 and at his request, a follow up joint Ministerial meeting with the Ministers for Finance, Infrastructure, Economy and Communities is being convened.**

- 4.6 Furthermore, attendance at UKREiIF conference provided a valuable opportunity for Officers to lobby and engage with UK Government representatives, including the NI Secretary for State and senior officials from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) and Homes England who have been instrumental in unlocking housing schemes across the UK. Follow up meetings have been arranged with Homes England and MHCLG. In addition, attendance at MIPIM facilitated positive engagement with the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) who were in attendance alongside wide representation from the Irish investment community and government officials. Discussions with ISIF included the potential for a joint funding approach with Belfast and a focus also on the opportunities arising from the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor. A further follow up meeting is planned with ISIF, and there has also been recent meetings with Department of the Taoiseach on joint opportunities. ISIF facilitated the first ever Irish presence at MIPIM through the inaugural Irish Real Estate Investment Pavilion Ireland, which sought to attract foreign investment in Irish property and development market, recognising the important role that international investment must play in delivering the €18 billion annually in investment capital from the private sector to meet the existing and future housing needs of its population and to achieve the ambitious housing targets set out in the Irish Government's Programme for Government. Following the success of this inaugural presence, discussions are on-going with event organisers for a formal Irish Pavilion at MIPIM which seeks to replicate the perceived success of Belfast's presence and other UK cities at MIPIM since 2016.
- 4.7 BCRPP attendance at UKREiIF and MIPIM has generated strong interest in Belfast and the wider region from both national and global investors and developers. Following positive engagement at these showcase events previously including in 2024 and more recently in 2025, there has been continued engagement by Council and BCRPP partners with a range of institutional investors, developers and end occupiers. This has included pension funds, housing developers, end users from life sciences, logistics, green technology sectors, and leisure, retail and hotel operators. Regeneration and development schemes at scale can take a considerable period of time to come to fruition and this is particularly so in Belfast where there are specific challenges that other UK cities may not have, including the lack of specific regeneration-based funding pots and the disparate nature of powers and decision making. Notwithstanding this,

development and regeneration in the city has continued over the past few years and the BCRPP are strongly of the view that a continued partnership approach to marketing and promotion of the city including attendance at international real estate showcase events and focused follow ups with interested parties does result in positive outcomes in terms of the positioning the city to attract external capital investment, and in development and regeneration coming forward.

- 4.8** In recent years there have been a number of new funds, including institutional funds, occupiers, developers and first to market brands which have entered the Belfast market, many of which followed engagement at events such as UKREiiF and MIPIM. Whilst it is not always straightforward to make a direct link from attendance at a particular event to new developments or market entrants given that relationships /engagement often take place over a period of time, there is a strong consensus amongst the BCRPP that the consistent joined up approach, marketing and a visible Belfast City Region presence at such events all contribute to success. Partners in BCRPP from the professional and services sector have also highlighted that attendance at UKREiiF and MIPIM has resulted in additional supply chain work for their local companies, supporting local employment and economic growth.
- 4.9** Following recent UKREiiF and MIPIM events there has been on-going follow up by officers (and other BCRPP partners) to include meetings and facilitation of inward visits to Belfast from investors, developers, occupiers and government departments and policymakers including:
- Major housing / residential developers who have not to date delivered projects in Belfast / NI.
  - Institutional investors with a strong interest in housing-led, mixed use and infrastructure projects.
  - End-use occupiers including FDI companies, commercial / leisure operators, innovation hub operators and global hotel operators.
  - Homes England; Westminster Government Departments including Office for Investment, Department for Business and Trade, and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; Ireland Strategic Investment Fund.
- 4.10** Many UK cities successes in recent years has been through collaborative private and public sector working, with local government taking a lead role in facilitating a collaborative approach to seeking this external investment

required to deliver their growth ambitions. They recognise the important role that national and international showcase events such as MIPIM and UKREiF play in raising awareness of their city / region's investment proposition and attract global sources of capital. Other UK cities and regions that attend MIPIM and UKREiF include the Liverpool City Region, Cardiff Capital Region; London; Greater Manchester; Newcastle; and Scottish City Alliance, with delegations comprising of political leaders and private sector partners. Steve Rotherham, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region; Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester; Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London alongside senior officers from the Office for Investment and Department for Business and Trade attended MIPIM 2025. In addition, senior officers from Irish Government's Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage; elected representatives and officers from Dublin City Council also attended MIPIM 2025 as part of the inaugural Irish delegation.

**4.11 Proposed approach to 2025 / 2026**

The Partnership is governed via a Taskforce comprised of representatives of the public and private sector. The Taskforce has endorsed continuing the Partnership into 2025 / 2026 and continuing to deliver the pillared programme of activity. The presentation to be made at Committee from representatives of the BCRPP will set out the core objectives and proposed programme of activity for 2025 / 2026.

**4.12 From a Council perspective, the key aims and objectives of continued participation in the BCRPP Partnership and contributing to the programme include:**

- Supporting the Draft International Relations Framework 2025-28.
- Securing investment required to assist with delivery of our shared city ambitions and growth ambitions as outlined in the Belfast Agenda, the Local Development Plan and BCCRIS and noting the wider economic benefits this investment delivers to the city, as well as increased rates generation and delivery on corporate priorities.
- Strengthening additional support and advocacy for the Place Based Growth Proposition for Belfast.
- Maximising the benefits of the Belfast Region City Deal investments and Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor initiative.
- Securing investment in the built environment on a city-wide basis to maximise opportunities to create jobs,

support inclusive economic growth alongside enhancing physical and social infrastructure across the city.

- Securing investment in key city infrastructure schemes including waterfront regeneration, connectivity, net-zero and innovation related projects.

4.13 Council plays a key role in both the strategic and operational management of BCRPP including the development, management and delivery of the Programme of Activity. Members are asked to approve Council continuing to take on this role, with officers supporting the 2025 / 2026 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes.

4.14 The BCRPP Partnership is supported and funded by public, private and key anchor institution partners, with external funding forming the majority of the overall programme delivery budget. Members are asked to note the proposed approach to the 2025 / 2026 Programme and approve the Council investment (from existing and approved City Regeneration & Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership contribution towards the delivery of the 2025 / 2026 Programme.

4.15 Council has facilitated and supported a 'Team Belfast' attendance at MIPIM since 2016. Following positive feedback from MIPIM 2025 the Taskforce has endorsed a Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM 2026 in line with the approach taken by other UK Cities, and its inclusion within the wider BCRPP Programme of activity for 2025 / 2026. The Taskforce feel that in order to successfully showcase Belfast and the wider City Region, it requires the civic leadership and attendance by Belfast City Council. Members are asked to approve attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2026, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM will be funded from the wider public private BCRPP Partnership budget.

## 5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

5.1 The BCRPP Partnership is delivered as a public private sector sponsorship fund and is supported by a range of public, private and key anchor institutions who contribute financially towards the 2024 / 2025 programme, with external and private sector funding forming the majority of the overall programme budget. It is anticipated that the majority of the 2025 / 2026

programme budget will again be funded through external funding.

- 5.2 Council has previously agreed to contribute of £80,000 towards the 2024 / 2025 Programme, and subject to Members agreement it is proposed that Council contribute £80,000 (from existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget) as part of the wider public private partnership investment towards the delivery of the 2025 / 2026 programme. To note that this sum is a contribution to the entire 2025 / 2026 programme and not directed towards a particular event.
- 5.3 Approval is sought for attendance of senior officers at MIPIM 2026. Travel costs for Council attendance at MIPIM 2026 to be met from within existing and approved departmental budgets. All other costs related to the Belfast City Region presence at MIPIM would be met from the 2025 / 2026 BCRPP Partnership programme budget.

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

**None associated with this report.”**

During discussion, a Member highlighted that, at its meeting in June, 2024, the Committee had agreed to request that BCRPP consider the establishment of a sub-group for community engagement with a focus on social value. The Member raised concern at the lack of progress in respect of this request.

In response, the Director of City Regeneration and Development highlighted the partnership's commitment to community engagement and the continued engagement with Queen's Communities and Place (QCAP), an initiative based on engagement and partnership between communities, policymakers and academics.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved that officers continue to support the delivery of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme including governance processes, administering programme funded expenditure and entering into associated contracts on behalf of and with oversight from the Taskforce, and in line with Council's procurement processes;
- ii. approved attendance by senior officers at MIPIM 2026 as part of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme, noting that the BCRPP presence at MIPIM would be funded from the wider public-private sector BCRPP programme budget; and



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- iii. agreed to defer consideration of the Council's investment towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme to a special meeting of the Committee in June, 2025, to enable further detail to be provided in respect of community engagement.

Chairperson

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# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 25th June, 2025

## SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;  
Alderman Lawlor; and  
Councillors Black, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Duffy,  
Harvey, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin, McKay,  
R. McLaughlin, Murray, Nelson and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Bunting and Groogan.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to item 3 'Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP)' in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

### **Restricted Item**

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

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

Members were also reminded that the content of the 'restricted' report and any discussion which took place during the closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 25th June, 2025**

**York Street Interchange Placemaking  
and Active Travel Review (PATR) –  
Committee Response**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 4th June, 2025, it had agreed to defer consideration of the Council's response to the outcome of the York Street Interchange Placemaking and Active Travel Review (PATR), as presented to the Committee by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), to a special meeting in June, 2025.

The Director submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which summarised the main issues raised by Members following DfI's presentation to the Committee on 28th May, 2025, and during discussion at its meeting on 4th June, 2025.

The Director highlighted that the report outlined recommended key points for inclusion in a Council response to the Minister for Infrastructure.

During discussion, the Director advised that additional issues raised by the Members would be included as part of a formal response from the Council.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed the Council's position in relation to the outcome of the Department for Infrastructure's York Street Interchange Placemaking and Active Travel Review, as outlined within section 4 of the report; and
- ii. agreed that the Council's position be formally issued to the Minister for Infrastructure.

**Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP)**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 4th June, 2025, it had received a presentation from representatives of the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) which provided Members with an update on the BCRPP programme of work for 2024/25 and the proposed approach for 2025/26. Following the presentation, the Committee had agreed to defer consideration of the Council's investment towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme of work, to a special meeting in June, 2025, to enable further detail to be provided in respect of community engagement.

The Director submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the work of the BCRPP in relation to community engagement and recommended, as set out in the report, that the BCRPP consider the establishment of a Community Forum/Reference Group to provide a mechanism for representatives from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sectoral Advisory Panel for Community Planning to engage with members of the BCRPP.

**Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
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During discussion, several Members welcomed the update which had been provided and the recommendation, as outlined within the report, to the BCRPP that a Community Forum/Reference Group be established.

In response to a Member's query, the Director advised the Committee that there had been positive engagement between officers and representatives of the BCRPP in respect of the potential establishment of a Community Forum/Reference Group.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed to recommend to the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) that a Community Forum/Reference Group be established to provide a mechanism for representatives from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sectoral Advisory Panel for Community Planning to engage with members of the BCRPP as outlined within the report;
- ii. noted that this recommendation would be considered by members of the BRCPP; that the geographic remit of the BCRPP was the Belfast City region; and that the BRCPP public and private membership included Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partner councils; and
- iii. approved Council investment, from the existing and approved City Regeneration and Development Budget, as part of the wider public and private sector partnership contribution towards the delivery of the BCRPP 2025/26 programme.

**Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes**

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed that, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 1st July, 2025, for ratification.

Chairperson

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## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 18th June, 2025

### MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Doran (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer);  
Alderman McCullough and Rodgers, and  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,  
T. Brooks, Bunting, Carson, M. Donnelly,  
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, McCann, McDowell,  
McKay, McKeown and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mr. K. Bloomfield, NIHMO Manager;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Whyte.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Delegated Matters**

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

### **Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

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

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

The Committee noted a list of applications which had been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation during May, 2025.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 18th June, 2025**

**Application for the Provisional Grant of an  
Amusement Permit for Players Amusements,  
Shaftesbury Square**

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented the details of the application to the Committee.

She outlined that an existing amusement arcade, Players, on the ground floor of 22 Shaftesbury Square, had been operated by the applicant company since 2018. The amusement permit for it was renewed on 1st June, 2025.

The applicant company now wished to extend the existing amusement arcade into the rear ground floor of the neighbouring unit at 23 Shaftesbury Square, which had been vacant for some years, but had recently been provided with a shop frontage sign for 'Great Expectations, Regenerating Great Victoria Street'.

As there was no mechanism within the Order to allow for a variation of an existing Amusement Permit to cater for the extension of an existing premises, an application had to be made for the Grant or Provisional Grant of an Amusement Permit for the proposed extended amusement arcade.

The Members were advised that the applicant had requested to operate the proposed premises 7 days per week, Monday to Sunday, 00:00 to 24:00hrs. The applicant had confirmed that the requested hours were those that the current premises operated. The application was for a total of 69 gaming machines, giving an increase of 15 machines over the existing arcade; all of which were to pay out a maximum all cash prize of £500 in accordance with the Gaming (Variation of Monetary Limits) Order (NI) 2025 which came into force on 29th January, 2025. Admission to the arcade was restricted to persons aged 18 or over.

In regards to health and safety, officers from the Service had met with the applicant to discuss the application and status of the premises. The applicant had confirmed that a Building Regulations application would be made to the Service for building work that would be required to create the new arcade layout. The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service had been consulted and it had confirmed that it had no objections to the application.

The PSNI had been consulted and had confirmed that it had no objections to the application. No objections had been received as a result of the public notices placed in the three local newspapers.

The Director outlined that planning permission for a change of use of the ground floor of 23 Shaftesbury Square, to an amusement arcade, was granted on 20th April, 2023.

The Amusement Permit application involved the extension of the existing amusement arcade into the rear half of the adjoining property, with the front portion being retained as a retail unit.



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The proposal therefore constituted a partial implementation of the related planning permission which allowed for the entire unit to be converted into an amusement arcade, which the Planning Service had confirmed was lawful from a planning perspective.

In an important Court of Appeal decision in June 1999, it was confirmed that the Council, in determining applications for Amusement Permits, may take into account planning considerations but should be slow to differ from the views of the Planning Authority. The Court had also confirmed that the Council could take into account matters such as location, structure, character and impact on neighbours and the surrounding area.

The Committee was advised that, in considering the application for the Provisional Grant or Grant of an Amusement Permit, it should have regard to the Order and to the Council's Amusement Permit Policy, as follows:

- a) The fitness of the applicant to hold a Permit having regard to her character, reputation and financial standing, and
- b) The fitness of any other person by whom the business is to be carried on under the Permit would be managed, or for whose benefit that business would be carried on,
- c) In considering the fitness of a body corporate to hold an amusement permit, the Council shall also have regard to the character, reputation and financial standing of the directors of the body corporate and any other persons who have executive control of it and who have a financial interest in it, as if the permit were, or were proposed to be, held by them jointly
- d) Representation, if any, from the sub-divisional commander of the Police Service of Northern Ireland in whose sub-division the premises are situated, and
- e) Representation, if any, as a result of the public notices of advertisement.

The Director also highlighted that the Council's Amusement Permit Policy had been ratified on 1st May, 2013. The policy outlined those matters which may be taken into account in determining any amusement permit application and indicated that each application must be assessed on its own merits.

All applications for the grant of an amusement permit were assessed against the Amusement Permit Policy. The key objectives of the policy were to:-

- 1. Promote the retail vibrancy and regeneration of Belfast;
- 2. Enhance the tourism and cultural appeal of Belfast by protecting its image and built heritage;
- 3. Support and safeguard residential communities in Belfast;
- 4. Protect children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling;
- 5. Respect the need to prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder.

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The Committee was advised that there were five criteria set out in the Policy which should typically be considered when assessing the suitability of a location for an amusement arcade.

- a) Impact on the retail and viability of Belfast City
- b) Cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in a particular location
- c) Impact on the image and profile of Belfast
- d) Proximity to residential use; and
- e) Proximity to schools, youth centres, and residential institutions for vulnerable people.

In considering criterion b, the cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in a particular location, in addition to the existing arcade at no. 22 Shaftesbury Square, which the application sought to extend, there was another property on the commercial frontage assigned to amusement arcade use, Oasis at 14 Shaftesbury Square and 1-7 Donegall Road. Furthermore, there were two other amusement arcades operating nearby within approximately 200m walking distance of the application premises, namely, Onassis Amusements, Second floor, 25-41 Botanic Avenue, and Playland, 24-28 Bradbury Place.

The Director explained that, in the desire to promote retailing and regeneration in the City Centre, as per the first key objective of the Amusement Permit Policy, the Council was keen to avoid a clustering of Amusement Centres at any given location. One means by which to avoid clustering was a permit policy restriction on ground floor extensions/mergers of existing establishments into adjoining units.

The application sought a permit for the rear half of the adjoining property and proposed to retain the front half as a retail unit. While that technically constituted a partial merger, and therefore contrary to that aspect of the permit policy, consideration must be given to the fact that the extension of the amusement arcade would not affect the street frontage. In so doing, it would contribute to the maintenance of an active street frontage at ground floor level on that part of Shaftesbury Square.

However, the Committee was advised that it might wish to consider that there might be an issue in relation to the cumulative build-up of arcades and an increase in the number of gaming machines at the location which might impact upon the character and amenity of the area.

The Director reminded the Committee that it had refused an application, from a different applicant, to extend the amusement permit for the premises at 22 Shaftesbury Square into the adjoining vacant building at its meeting on 21st September, 2016. She explained that it was refused on the basis that the application failed to comply with two of the five criteria set out within the Council's Amusement Permit Policy in terms of criteria (b) the cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in a particular location and (c) the impact of the arcade upon the image and profile of Belfast.

However, the current application was different in that it was proposed to extend only to the rear of the adjoining unit for use as an amusement arcade. Accordingly, it might be considered to comply with all the permit policy criteria with the possible

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exception of the cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in a particular location. The Committee might wish to consider whether there was an issue in relation to the cumulative build-up of arcades and increase in the number of gaming machines at the location, which might impact upon the character and amenity of the area.

The Committee was reminded that the Council could not impose a restriction on the number of gaming machines under amusement permit legislation.

The Committee was reminded also that, on 19th October, 2022, it had approved the Provisional Grant of an Amusement Permit for the nearby Playland, 24-28 Bradbury Place, for the extension of the existing ground floor amusement arcade into the front of the premises to incorporate what was a small coffee shop area.

The Director informed the Committee that, should it be minded to refuse the application for the Provisional Grant of an Amusement Permit, it was required to advise the applicant of its intention to do so and that it must afford the applicant the opportunity to make representations at a specified Licensing Committee meeting on the matter before making a final determination on the application.

She explained that, should the Committee be minded to grant the permit provisionally, it was requested to consider delegating authority to her, in consultation with the City Solicitor to issue the permit once all necessary technical requirements relating to health, safety, welfare and amenity were completed to the satisfaction of the Building Control Service.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. R. Daly, Barrister for the applicant, Mr. S. Nicholson, Architect, and Ms. L. McGivern, Applicant, to the meeting.

Mr. Daly advised the Committee that the application was for a small rear extension to the existing premises, expanding into what was essentially derelict property, only increasing the number of gaming machines by 15 (from 49 to 64). He stated that there would be no change to the street frontage and that the application sought to improve the space and access routes, improve already complaint fire safety, health and safety, LED lighting and modernise the premises in line with modern industry standards. He stated that there was precedent in that the Committee had previously approved a similar rear extension application that went next door for an Oasis gaming centre in Wellington Place and an approval for extension taking in a coffee shop to front of Playland in Bradbury Place.

In response to a Member's question regarding the proposed new layout, Mr. Nicholson confirmed that, as part of the extension plans, the current access to the rear yard for the retained shop unit would be lost.

In response to a further query regarding the plans, officers confirmed that it was not a requirement under an amusement permit that the office within an amusement centre must have to have sight of all the gaming machines within the premises.

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A further Member asked what protections were in place for those who were using the amusement arcade, including if they were prohibited from continuing and what services, if any, they were directed to if they required assistance with gambling addiction. Mr. Daly stated that the applicant took gambling addiction very seriously and that staff were trained and provided leaflets and website information to any such customers. Ms. McGivern, applicant, added that she was very conscious of responsible gambling and that they displayed posters within the premises clearly signposting people towards the gambling charity, GamCare. She added that they offered a self-exclusion policy, whereby a customer could request to be excluded from gambling at the business for a set length of time.

In response to a Member's question as to how many gaming shops were deemed to be too many in one location, the Director explained that that was a question for the Committee to consider, and that the proposed additional gaming machines represented a 4% increase on the total number within the amusement arcades in the vicinity shown on the map within the Committee pack.

A Member stated that he was concerned that there was a proliferation of amusement arcades within the area.

Moved by Councillor Smyth,  
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

That the Committee agrees that it is minded to refuse the application for the Provisional Grant of an Amusement Permit, on the grounds of cumulative build-up of amusement arcades and increase in the number of gaming machines in a particular location, impacting on the character and amenity of the area.

On a vote, nine Members voted for the proposal and nine against. As there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised his second and casting vote for the proposal and it was accordingly declared carried.

Therefore, the applicant would be afforded the opportunity to make representations on the matter, at a specified Licensing Committee meeting, before the Committee would make its final determination on the application.

**Application to provide outdoor musical  
entertainment beyond 11.00 pm at Falls Park -  
Féile an Phobail 2025**

The Committee was advised that the Falls Park had a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence and a 7-Day Annual Indoor Entertainments Licence for a Marquee and both had been used to hold events in the past, primarily for Féile an Phobail. The Licences were held by the City and Neighbourhood Services Department and were transferred to the organisers for the duration of their event. The days and standard hours during which entertainment may be provided were Monday to Sunday, from 11.30 am to 11.00 pm.

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In addition, the following Special Conditions were attached to both the Marquee and Outdoor Entertainments Licences:

- Maximum numbers to be agreed at the discretion of the Building Control Service and will vary depending upon individual concert set up proposals;
- Prior to any event taking place the promoters were required to demonstrate evidence of early consultation and have in place a robust system of dealing with any complaints, to be agreed in advance with the Council.
- Any requests to provide entertainment later than 11.00 pm must be considered by the Licensing Committee and therefore must be made at least 3 months in advance of the proposed event.
- Should an application to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm be granted and the Council then receive a significant number of complaints regarding noise or the complaint is of such significant impact, authority is granted to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to reduce the finishing time for any subsequent nights of the event, in which case the promoter would be required to make contingency arrangements.

The Director highlighted that, as it was a request for the Council's permission to extend the hours under an existing Licence Condition, there was no requirement for public advertisement.

The event organiser had indicated that outdoor music events were scheduled for two sets of three consecutive nights, Friday 1st, Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd August, and on Friday 8th, Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th August, 2025. The request was to provide entertainment beyond 11.00 pm on those six nights.

The Members were advised that the event had been running for over 30 years as a community festival and in recent years organisers had consolidated the music events hosted at Falls Park to six nights. The decision had been motivated by a desire to limit disruption to the community in close proximity to the Falls Park.

The Members were reminded that, in 2024, the Committee had agreed to grant the organisers permission to operate on seven nights of the event beyond the standard hours of 11.00 pm, to 1.00 am, and on all those nights, entertainment did continue beyond 11pm.

The Director outlined that the PSNI had been contacted by the Service in relation to the event, however, a response had not yet been received. She explained that, should the Committee be minded approve the extended hours requested, it should be subject to a satisfactory response from the PSNI on the matter.

The Members were advised that officers had engaged with the event organisers and colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services in relation to the festival and would

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participate in the multi-agency meeting to be held in advance of the event with the event organisers. An Event Management Plan had been received and was being evaluated by the Council.

It was reported that Council officers had carried out during performance inspections at previous events organised by Féile an Phobail and had found that the organisers had adhered to the health, safety and welfare management requirements during that time.

In 2024, 76 noise complaints were received over the period of the festival, a reduction from the approximately 120 noise complaints which had been received in 2023. The complaints received in 2024 were brought to the attention of the event organisers. No formal action was undertaken in respect of the noise complaints received.

The Director reported that the cumulative impact of disturbance resulting from musical entertainment and congregation of large numbers of patrons attending the park had the potential to give rise to community annoyance.

The Committee was advised that the event organisers would again be required to engage with an acoustic consultant and requested to document a noise mitigation strategy for each night of entertainment. The purpose of the strategy would be to demonstrate that noise from the event would not cause unreasonable disturbance to commercial and residential premises.

The Director outlined that the noise mitigation strategy would be discussed at the pre-event multi-agency meeting. Last year, the Committee had requested that a sound consultant would be present on the nights of entertainment to carry out sound testing, and it was suggested that that would be a beneficial mitigation this year.

It was reported that the organisers would also be required to produce a suitable residents pre-notification letter containing a nominated event organiser contact that residents could refer concerns or make complaints to. The extent of the letter's distribution, which would take place prior to the event, would be agreed with the event organiser by the Service in consultation with Environmental Protection Unit officers.

The event organisers were reminded of the standard licence condition that receipt of significant complaints could lead to further late nights being curtailed. However, it could be impracticable during the festival to curtail further nights at short notice, and as complaints were not all received on the nights that were the subject of the complaint a full picture did not emerge until all complaints were collated, by which time the events could be concluded.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. K. Gamble, CEO of Féile an Phobail, to the meeting. He outlined that he had met with the PSNI the previous week and had provided them with the full event plan. He explained that the festival organisers worked closely alongside a number of Council Departments, including City and Neighbourhoods, Licensing, Building Control and Community Safety officers. He outlined that from mid-July they engaged with those residents who lived in close proximity to the event site. The Members were also advised that all of the Féile an Phobail organising

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committees involved people who lived in the local area. He stated that there had been a significant reduction in noise complaints from the previous year and that he would welcome a noise consultant on-site again this year.

In response to a Member's question around ensuring that the events were welcoming to those from across the City, Mr. Gamble stated that they engaged widely with elected representatives and community organisations throughout the City. He stated that there had not been any complaints of a sectarian nature made to Féile an Phobail, nor any of the statutory agencies, and that the PSNI were present at all events.

In response to a further Member's query regarding late night noise on Sunday nights, Mr. Gamble stated that previously he had agreed with the Council that, after 11pm, the noise levels would be reduced.

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that events should be permitted to take place beyond the standard hours of licence, to 1.00 am the following morning, on the following six dates in August, 2025:

- Friday 1st, Saturday 2nd, Sunday 3rd;
- Friday 8th, Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th.

The Committee further agreed that a sound consultant would have a site presence on the nights of entertainment to carry out sound testing.

**Application for the Grant of a 14-Day Occasional  
Outdoor Entertainments Licence for 352-358 Shankill  
Road**

The Director provided the details of the application to the Committee. The applicant had applied to provide entertainment in the form of live music, within an outdoor area. The site was adjacent to the former 1st Shankill NI Supporters Club, part of which had been demolished, creating additional outside space. Planning permission had recently been granted for the refurbishment of the remaining building and a two-storey side and rear extension to provide an upgraded bar, function room and restaurant (LA04/2022/1450/F). Therefore, it was envisaged that use of the site for outdoor entertainment would be for a limited timeframe.

The Committee was advised that the applicant intended to provide local, all age/family one day events, probably on a Saturday, running from approximately 13:00 – 23:00. The day and hours proposed to allow entertainment to be provided were the standard outdoor entertainment hours of:

- Monday to Sunday: 12:00 pm to 11.00pm

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

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The PSNI had been consulted and had confirmed that it had no objection to the application.

The NIFRS had been consulted but had not yet submitted a response. The Director confirmed that, if the Committee did approve the application, it would be subject to a satisfactory response from the NIFRS.

The Committee was advised that the proposed event space had been assessed and inspected by the Service and that it was considered suitable for the event type proposed. An Event Management Plan for the proposed events had been requested and would be evaluated by officers.

The applicant had provided the Service with a noise impact assessment report from an acoustic consultant for the outdoor area which had been evaluated by the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU). As a result, there was a requirement that the applicant would provide advanced notification to residents in the vicinity of the site when entertainment was to be provided. Such neighbourhood notification was a usual requirement for outdoor music events. A Neighbourhood Notification letter had been developed by the applicant and agreement had been reached on the properties to receive the notification.

The Chairperson welcomed the applicant, Mr. W. McAdam and his representative Mr. J. McGuigan, to the meeting. Together they outlined that they had engaged with the PSNI, NIFRS and local representatives about the use of the outdoor site, initially to remove some of the crowds from the street on the days of band parades. However, they explained that they had also spoken with some charities and bands about using the space and that they wanted it to be used for family and all-age events. They highlighted that they wanted the space to be used by R-CITY, a cross-community initiative working with teenagers living in the Ardoyne, Shankill and Clonard areas.

A number of Members stated that it was good to see some initiative having been shown by the owners, in terms of animating that part of the city.

Moved by Alderman McCullough,  
Seconded by Councillor McDowell and

Resolved- that the Committee approves the application for the grant of a 14-Day Occasional Outdoor Entertainments Licence, with the standard hours of Monday to Sunday: 12:00 pm to 11.00pm.

**Non-Delegated Matters**

**Restricted Item**

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

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



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as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Update on the Houses in Multiple Occupation  
(HMO) Register- Verbal update**

The Committee noted an update in respect of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Register.

The Committee agreed to invite the Mears Group to attend a future meeting.

Chairperson

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## Planning Committee

Tuesday, 17th June, 2025

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan,  
T. Brooks, Carson, Doran, S. Douglas,  
Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Magee,  
McCabe and McCann.

Also in attendance: Councillors Collins and McKay.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management),  
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;  
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer;  
Mr. P. O'Reilly, Senior Planning Officer;  
Mr. M. McErlean, Senior Planning Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor Whyte.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June.

### Declarations of Interest

Alderman Rodgers declared an interest in respect of item 10c on the agenda – “LA04/2024/0211/F - Redevelopment of the existing stadium by way of demolition of both existing stands and construction of two new spectator stands with reconfiguration of existing standing terracing at goal ends, new turnstiles and associated siteworks including new floodlighting, additional car parking and improved circulation routes to provide an overall capacity for 6000 spectators on site. - Existing Football Stadium, The Oval, Parkgate Drive” in that he was a Director of Glentoran Football Club.

Councillor Carson declared an interest in relation to item 8c on the agenda - LA04/2023/2890/F - Proposed demolition of existing buildings and erection of a housing development comprising of 43No. social housing units including dwellings and apartments (Cat 1), car parking, landscaping including an equipped children's play area, and all associated site and access works - Christ the Redeemer Parish Hall and lands immediately north and

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west of Christ the Redeemer Church, Lagmore Drive - Use of Financial Developer Contribution, in that he had previously engaged with one of the prospective recipients.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to item 10m on the agenda - LA04/2024/1036/F - Lagan Gateway Phase 2 - Proposed greenway connection extending between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park. Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk (approximately 85m long); landscaping works, new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and all associated works - Lands to the east of the River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club and approximately 120 metres to the east of Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally Ave, in that she had commented on the proposal at various stages of the application process.

**Withdrawn Items**

The Committee noted that the undernoted items had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- LA04/2022/1819/F - Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 32 apartments in 3No. blocks (7@ 1no. bedroom & 25@ 2no. bedrooms) (6no. wheelchair adaptable) and associated site works - 39 Upper Dunmurry Lane; and
- LA04/2025/0242/F - Erection of hotel (164 beds) including ground floor bar / restaurant; proposed heights of 8 storeys (c.26.8m to parapet) at Donegall Pass, reducing to 5 storeys at Botanic Avenue and 4 storeys at Ratcliffe Street; and associated works including demolition of existing building - 2 - 10 Botanic Avenue.

**Deferred Items**

The Committee agreed to defer considerations of the following items in order that site visits be undertaken to the application sites:

- LA04/2024/1654/F - Change of use from a 7-bedroom dwelling house (C1) to a 7 bed/ 9 person House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis) - 432 Falls Road;
- LA04/2024/1865/O - 3no. detached dwellings part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended plans) - Land between No 22 Squires View and Nos 57 & 59 Squires Hill Road; and
- LA04/2025/0122/F - Demolition of 4 no garages and erection of 2 no. semi-detached dwellings, part 2 storey part 3 storey (amended description) (additional plans) - Lands Between 14 and 16 Lancedean Road.

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**Committee Site Visits**

**Note of Committee Site Visits**

The Committee noted the site visits.

**Schedule of Committee Site Visits**

The Committee agreed to the schedule of site visits from June to December, 2025.

**Pre-emptive Committee Site Visits**

The Committee agreed to undertake site visits to the following applications sites:

- LA04/2024/0569/F - Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C3) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C1), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castlevue Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping (amended description and plans). - Stormont hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road;
- LA04/2024/0570/F - Change of use of from hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space. - Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castlevue Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and Summerhill Park (nos. 37 & 39); and
- LA04/2025/0288/F - Change of use from taxi passenger terminal, cafe, office and newsagent to a Homeless Day Centre, Category D1(B). The centre will provide meals, washing and changing facilities and an internal social amenity area for users. The centre will operate Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week from 4:00 pm up until 10:00 pm (Amended Description) - Existing taxi passenger terminal and former retail unit located within 35a King Street.

**Notification of Vesting Order**

**Lands at Woodbourne Crescent**

The Committee noted the Notice of Intention to make a Vesting Order in relation to lands at Woodbourne Crescent.

**Planning Appeals Notified**

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

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**Planning Decisions Issued**

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in May, 2025.

**Live Applications for Major Development**

The Committee noted the list of live applications for major development.

**Committee Decisions that have yet to issue**

The Committee noted the list of Committee decisions which had not yet been issued.

**Miscellaneous Reports**

**LA04/2023/4194/F - 2 Storey side and rear  
extension with single storey flat floor flat roof  
extension to rear and additional site works. –  
2 Lead Hill Park, Belfast, BT6 9RW.**

The Director of Planning and Building Control explained that the application had previously been determined under delegated authority and that, whilst a Member had contacted the Planning Service in order to request that the application be referred to the Planning Committee to determine on the grounds that the application “*would have a negative impact on street scene or on the amenity and privacy of neighbouring properties*”, the request had not been confirmed with the Member and the application had proceeded to determination under delegated authority on 31st March, 2025.

She pointed out that the Member’s request had been made out of time and that the matters raised were considered to have been addressed within the delegated report and conditions attached to the permission. She added that any request by a Member to refer a delegated decision to the Committee was to be considered by the Strategic Director of Planning and Place who would determine whether the reasons given were material planning considerations and of sufficient importance for consideration by the Committee, and did not, therefore, automatically mean that an application was referred to the Committee.

She reported that, in respect of application LA04/2023/4194/F, the issues which had been raised by the Member would have been material, however, the importance of the issues raised might not have warranted consideration by the Committee.

She stated that, given that the request to have the application referred to the Committee was neither confirmed nor refused, the Committee should consider the following three courses of action:

1. *Members may consider that the decision taken under delegated authority is appropriate as all material considerations and representations to the application were considered before the decision was made. This decision would require no further action from the Council and the planning permission would remain;*

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2. *Members may consider that they may have determined the application differently if it had come before Committee. A decision could therefore be made to revoke the permission under S.68 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011. The Council would have to serve Notice on the land owner affected and they would have the opportunity to oppose the revocation. If they choose to oppose the revocation, then a hearing will be scheduled before the Planning Appeals Commission and there are costs implications for the Council and no guarantee that the Order will be granted; or*
3. *Members may consider that the Council has not followed its own procedures and that they may have determined the application differently if it had come before Committee. A decision could therefore be made to apply to the High Court for Judicial Review seeking an order to quash the permission and return the application to the Council for fresh consideration. The Council would have to serve Notice on the applicant affected of the Council's intention to seek to quash the permission and they may seek to challenge the Council's application which would result in a hearing before the Judicial Review Court. There are costs implications and no guarantee that an Order quashing the permission would be granted.*

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that, on foot of the missed request, officers had been considering how to ensure that the process for doing so was robust and were currently revising the internal procedures for Members to have an application referred to the Planning Committee for determination.

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the Case Officer's report for the Committee and she highlighted the side and front elevations that included an enclosed privacy wall and obscured glazed and non-opening windows which had been secured by conditions and would protect views.

She stated that the application had been approved under delegated authority, subject to conditions, as it had been considered that the proposal had met the prevailing policies.

**Proposal**

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,  
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

"That the Committee revokes the permission under S.68 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011."

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor McCabe,

"That the Committee is satisfied with the assessment of the application and the issuing of the permission, and that no further action is required."

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On a vote, thirteen Members voted for the amendment and six against and it was declared carried, the amendment was thereupon put to the Committee as the substantive motion and passed.

**Pre-Determination Hearings - Verbal Report**

The Planning Manager reported that the legislative requirement for councils to hold a mandatory Pre-Determination Hearing (PDH) for certain applications were expected to be removed over the summer, however, as it currently stood, the legislation required the Council to hold a PDH for planning application LA04/2024/0626/F, which sought planning permission for 104 apartments at the site of the former Havelock House, Ormeau Road, where it withdraws its holding direction and returns the application to the Council to determine.

He explained that the application was first approved by the Committee in December 2024, and again in March 2025, however, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) subsequently issued a holding direction to the Council under Article 17 of the Planning (General Development Procedure) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015, which stated that the Council may not grant planning permission until further advised in writing by the Department

He stated that the Planning Service subsequently wrote to DfI to express significant concern with regard to the rationale for the holding direction having been issued and requested that the matter be expedited. He added that further information which had been requested by DfI had been provided promptly, and that the Department had indicated that it hoped to finalise its position on the holding direction in the upcoming weeks.

He explained that the Council was required to hold a PDH on DfI's withdrawal of its holding direction, however, if the applicable legislation changed before this time, that might no longer be the case, depending on the nature of the legislative changes.

The Committee agreed to hold a mandatory pre-determination hearing for Planning application LA04/2024/0626/F Havelock House, Ormeau Road, if required, and noted that legislative changes due to be made over the summer might remove this requirement.

(Councillor Carson left the room while the following item was under consideration.)

**LA04/2023/2890/F - Proposed demolition of existing buildings and erection of a housing development comprising of 43No. social housing units including dwellings and apartments (Cat 1), car parking, landscaping including an equipped children's play area, and all associated site and access works - Christ the Redeemer Parish Hall and lands immediately north and west of Christ the Redeemer Church, Lagmore Drive, Dunmurry, BT17 0TG. - Use of Financial Developer Contribution**

The Planning Manager explained that, at its meeting in March, the Committee had resolved to grant planning permission for 43 social housing units on lands on and adjacent to



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Christ the Redeemer Parish Hall, Lagmore Drive, Dunmurry, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

He stated that the Section 76 planning agreement was required to secure the following:

- 100% social housing;
- Open space management;
- Green travel measures; and
- Financial developer contribution which should be used to mitigate the impacts of the development and shall be flexible in terms of how it was used to mitigate the loss of community facility and/or loss of open space.

He explained that the Committee had delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the Section 76 planning agreement and the use of the financial developer contribution of £27,140 to mitigate either the loss of open space and/or loss of community facility as a result of the development, and that the Developer Contribution had been paid to the Council subsequent to the planning permission having been issued.

He pointed out that, in considering the application, the Committee had concern with regard to the loss of the Parish Hall as a community facility, having had regard to Policy C11, that related to the protection of community infrastructure.

He stated that the Parish Hall had previously been occupied by the Girl Guides and Little Saints Out of School Club, after-school and holiday club and that, since the application was before the Committee, the Girl Guides had made alternative accommodation arrangements.

He reported that officers had been engaging with Little Saints Out of School Club and the Church with regard to the potential use of the Developer Contribution to help finance a mobile unit within the Church grounds, which Little Saints Out of School Club would then occupy. He added that the out of school club had temporarily relocated to a location approximately two miles from its previous location and was keen to return to the locality to serve locally and improve child capacity.

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that using the Developer Contribution towards a mobile unit for the out of school club would be complicated as it would only constitute part funding, with the remainder owned by the occupier, which was a private business. He summarised further foreseen complications that would result from the occupier ceasing business or relocating. He clarified that there was nothing in principle to preclude Developer Contributions being allocated to private businesses.

He informed the Committee that, in discussions with a Member about the potential use of the Developer Contribution, it was suggested that it could be used to help fund a new permanent building for the Lagmore Youth Project which was currently based in temporary marquee accommodation within the grounds of the Church and was seeking a permanent building in the locale.

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He stated that there was an undetermined planning application for the new building, with an expected completion within three years and an estimated cost of £250k with £40k already secured and the remainder of the funding expected from various other sources.

He informed the Committee that, since publication of the report, representation had been received from Little Saints Out of School Club that included the following points:

- The Club was vital for families in the Colin Community, providing safe and structured before and after school care and holiday care (open all year around);
- The Club offered activities for children; support for working parents; enhanced learning opportunities; parental flexibility; structured learning; improved outcomes for disadvantaged children, community support;
- The Parish Hall was used by many local groups over the years and was a great loss to the community. The only halls available to community groups in Lagmore were Lagmore Youth Project Hall and Lagmore Forum Hall, but they had no room to facilitate these groups;
- The two groups that used the Parish Hall were the Out of School Club and Girl Guides;
- The Out of School Club was temporarily sharing a building with another after school club and needed to leave in one year; the Girl Guides were temporarily in a school for one night a week;
- The Out of School Club proposed to put a mobile unit in the church grounds. The cost of the project was £97k, privately financed together with the £27k Developer Contribution. The mobile unit would be available for other community uses in the mornings, weekends and 3 other evenings. The Out of School Club had been approached by other groups about sharing the mobile unit; and
- The Club wished that the Developer Contribution would be used towards the mobile unit and, without that support, the Club stated that it could not move forward and these services would be lost to the community.

He reported late correspondence which had also been received via Little Saints Out of School Club from the Girl Guides which had raised concern that the Developer Contribution might not be allocated for use by multiple community groups as it had understood that there would be community discussions regarding the allocation of the monies and that many local groups could be involved for the benefit of the whole community. He added that Simply Judo had submitted correspondence which indicated that it would be interested to share the proposed mobile unit facilities if there was space to operate community classes.

The Planning Manager stated that, having regard to the assessment of the issues, it was recommended that the £27k Developer Contribution would be used to support the funding of a new permanent building for the Lagmore Youth Project and that appropriate provision would be required for return of the monies to the Council, should it not be committed or spent within a specified timeframe.

The Committee agreed to hear from Councillor Collins who attended the meeting in respect of the application.

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Councillor Collins informed the Committee that the Lagmore Community Forum had flagged up concerns that it was not consulted in how the Developer Contribution could potentially be distributed and stated that he felt the Planning Service should have consulted the forum whilst exploring how the monies would be allocated and that the consultation process had not been thorough enough. He also raised concern in relation to Councillor Duffy, who had made the suggestion to the Planning Service that Lagmore Youth Project should be considered as a recipient of the Developer Contribution, as he was a Board Member of Lagmore Youth Project and stated that it was a conflict of interest for Councillor Duffy having done so.

The Chairperson informed Councillor Collins that Councillor Duffy was not a Member of the Planning Committee and that the Council had delegated authority to the Committee to make the decision and that, therefore, there had been no conflict of interest.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. McCann, Manager, Little Saints Out of School Club, to the meeting.

Ms. McCann stated that she was given a few months in January, 2024 to vacate Lagmore Parish Hall and that she had been in contact with the Planning Service and others and was told that she would be offered a contribution towards placing a mobile unit in the Church grounds.

She stated that a vital service had been lost within the community and that, without the offer from Killeaton Orange Hall, the business would have closed and jobs would have been lost.

She stated that Little Saints Out of School Club had been told the previous week that the full Developer Contribution was being allocated to Lagmore Youth Project and that, whilst it was an important community group, there were other vital community services in need of the funding. She asked the Committee to defer consideration of the report until further community consultation could be undertaken.

In response to a question from a Member as to whether the applicant had any view or authority as to how the Developer Contribution would be allocated, the Planning Manager explained that the decision was to be taken by the Committee and that there had been no input from the applicant.

A number of Members indicated that they would be minded to defer consideration in order to determine whether alternative allocation of funds could be explored, whereby the Developer Contributions would be split between organisations or whether Lagmore Youth Project would be willing to permit the use of the proposed permanent building to other local organisations.

The Director of Planning and Building Control stated that she appreciated the concern from the Committee with regard to the decision, that the situation was unusual and that, going forward, it would be the responsibility of the applicant to engage and consult with communities and to indicate where the Developer Contributions would be allocated within the Section 76 planning agreement, before determination, so that the situation would not arise in the future.

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**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

“That the Committee defers consideration of the application in order to engage with the local community and determine the most feasible use of the monies.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Brennan,

“That the Committee agrees to allocate the developer contribution of £27,140 towards the funding of a permanent building for the Lagmore Youth Project, located within the grounds of Christ the Redeemer Church.”

On a vote, thirteen Members voted for the amendment and five against and it was declared carried. The amendment was thereupon put to the Committee as the substantive motion and passed.

**Local Applications subject to NI Water Objections**

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

(Councillor Carson returned to the meeting.)

**Planning Applications previously considered**

**LA04/2022/1046/F - Proposed demolition of existing building and construction of a residential development consisting of 14 No. units (9 No. apartments within a three storey building and 5 No. two storey terraced dwellings) with associated landscaping and car parking (amended description). - 18 Annadale Avenue**

At the request of Councillor Brennan, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application to allow more time to consider the restricted viability information.

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**LA04/2024/1466/F - Ground floor extension and alterations to provide 1 No. retail unit. Two storey rear extension. Rear dormer. Change of use of first & second floor level & part of ground floor level to 6 bed / 6 person HMO (amended description and plans). - 41 Rosetta Road**

At the request of Councillor Groogan, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application and to request that DfI attend a future meeting of the Committee to answer questions with regards to its consultation response.

(Councillor Harvey left the meeting whilst the undernoted application was being considered.)

**LA04/2024/1584/F - Subdivision of 6No. bed shared dwelling to provide 3No. self contained flats, with demolition of single storey rear return and erection of two storey rear extension to provide 1no self contained flat. - 21 Skegoneill Avenue**

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application for the Committee and highlighted the following key points for consideration:

- Four third party objections had been received and were addressed in the case officer report;
- No objections had been received from consultees;
- There was sufficient provision for bin storage whilst retaining sufficient amenity space;
- The application met internal spaces standards as per the Belfast LDP; and
- No impact on the Glandore Gardens Area of Townscape Character.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. A. M. McGarrity and Ms. J. McCaughey from MindWise and Ms. G. Donnelly, Choice Housing, to the meeting.

Ms. McCaughey explained that the site had been a supported living service for a number of years with a number of clients being supported with regards to their mental health by MindWise.

She stated that the proposal would not change the number of clients that would be supported but would enhance the support provided, therefore, there would be no impact with regard to additional parking in the area and support would continue.

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Ms. Donnelly stated that she had been with Choice Housing for around 18 years, managing Skegoniel for the majority of that time and explained that it operated very well as a supported living service in north Belfast where there was huge unmet demand for mental health services.

She stated the residents had severe enduring mental illness and that the accommodation was not conducive to a therapeutic environment to provide recovery or management of those service users or the support services that they availed of, and that it was necessary to create an environment which supported the residents.

She stated that she had never received any complaints from the local community with regard to the property or residents.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

(Councillor Harvey returned to the meeting.)

**LA04/2024/0267/F - Change of Use from  
Dwelling to 6no bed/6person HMO  
(amended description) - 11 Friendly Way**

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted that the scheme was compliant with Policy HOU10 in that the 10% threshold for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) on Friendly Way had not yet been reached.

He stated that officers considered that the scheme would not be harmful in terms of impact upon traffic and parking or residential amenity.

He informed the Committee that 290 objections had been received which had raised issues with regard to impact on amenity, parking and waste storage.

He stated that, having regard to the Local Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor McKay to the meeting.

Councillor McKay highlighted that the reason the application was before the Committee was because of significant local opposition to the proposal.

He stated that the Local Development Plan provided for the retention and cultivation of social communities and that he believed that the application was contrary to this. He stated that the property had been a family home and would be converted and split up for single people staying in rooms when there were families in the community who had been waiting up to ten years for three-bedroom houses to become available.

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He explained that the proposal did not fit the community that live there and was completely against the character of the Markets area. He stated that it was important for communities to have a say on their areas and, in the Markets area, families were struggling to remain in the area and he urged to Committee to take account of those views.

The Committee agreed to hear from Mr. D. Worthington, Pragma Planning, and Mr. F. Hargey, Market Development Association, who had submitted a late request to make representations to the Committee in objection to the application, and the Chairperson welcomed them to the meeting.

Mr. Hargey stated that the Market Development Association was the overarching community group within the Markets area and he explained that the strength of the community's feeling on the issue was demonstrated by the number of letters of objection submitted with the main concern being that such proposals hollow the community from the inside out.

He reported that there were already several similar properties being used as Airbnb's and that, whilst tourism was welcome in the city, it was socially irresponsible tourism comprising of hen and stag parties that were situated beside family homes. He highlighted recent protests in European cities in relation to socially irresponsible tourism.

Mr. Worthington explained that the principle basis of the objection was the LDP strategy, Policy HOU3, which stated that there was a general presumption in favour of retaining residential stock for permanent occupation.

He informed the Committee that the purpose of Policy HOU3 was expressly to protect existing dwellings and that the proposal was in an established residential area and that HMO's were not considered housing and the policy was therefore engaged by the proposal as it was not complementary to the surrounding residential area and would impact on amenity.

He explained that Friendly Way was exclusively family housing which had been designed in an era where car ownership was much lower and so there was already substantial overparking in the street.

He stated that the proposed HMO did not provide a like for like replacement and did not address local need for housing and would be likely to generate adverse effects on existing residential amenity and it was relevant that the noise impact of the application be considered.

A Member requested that further guidance be made available to the Committee to assist with the intensification of parking provision in relation to HMOs in comparison with family homes, when considering similar applications in the future.

A Member asked if the proposal provided sufficient living space in terms of the kitchen, dining and living space combined into one area. The Senior Planning Officer stated that the proposal met the space standards set out in the Local Development Plan.

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**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson, and

Resolved - "That the Committee refuses the application based on Policy HOU3, in order to protect the residential stock in an established residential community and the quality of living accommodation and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the reasons for refusal."

**LA04/2024/0095/F - Change of use from  
Dwelling to Short term let (retrospective)  
- 3 Broadway Link**

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application for the Committee and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of a change of use to short term let at the location;
- Protection of existing residential accommodation;
- Character, design and appearance;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Impact on established residential area.

He stated that the proposal strengthened and diversified the range of short-stay visitor accommodation in the city, was located in close proximity to Windsor Park that would attract visitors from outside the city on a short-term basis.

The explained that a management plan would be secured via condition and that part of the property would be retained as permanent residential use and therefore protected the existing residential stock.

He pointed out that there had been 61 objections to the proposal and two letters of support and that most of the issues raised in objection had been related to carparking, waste and overall security.

He informed the Committee that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

Several Members raised concerns with regard to the property having been already in use as a short-term let property and expressed doubt that there was, and would be, a permanent resident residing within the property, one Member demonstrated at the meeting that the three-bedroom property was available to book online in its entirety.

Another Member, who had been present at a recent Committee site visit to the property, highlighted that there were a number of key lock boxes attached to the outside of the property which further inferred that there was no permanent resident.



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The Planning Manager highlighted that there had been a number of Planning Appeals Commission decisions where it had supported the use of conditions in relation to management plans and in terms of the retention of the single bedroom as permanent residential use, however, the Committee could impose a condition to provide that one of the larger bedrooms be retained for permanent residential use.

**Proposal**

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,  
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

“That the Committee agrees to refuse the application on the grounds of the protection of residential stock and that the type of accommodation was not in keeping with the local community.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson, and

Resolved – “That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the application to allow officers to carry out an assessment on potential reasons for refusal based on the concerns raised by the Committee.”

The amendment was thereupon put to the Committee as the substantive motion and passed.

**New Planning Applications**

**LA04/2024/1592/F - Residential development comprising the demolition of no. 8 Marlborough Street, partial demolition of existing Marlborough House, and the refurbishment of existing Listed Building (Princes Court) (3 storeys), for the erection of 103 no. apartments (mix of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3 bed units) (8 storeys), with provision of private amenity, and internal and external communal amenity spaces; and associated site and infrastructure works. (amended description) - Marlborough House, (no. 28-32 Victoria Street), and no. 8 Marlborough Street**

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of housing in the location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;

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- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste management;
- Natural heritage;
- Employability and Skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

She reported that two third party objections had been received and that DFI Roads, DFC HED, DFI Rivers Agency, Environmental Health, Shared Environmental Services (SES), BCC Urban Design Team and NIEA Natural Environment Division and Regulation Unit had offered no objection to the proposal. She added that Translink had submitted an objection due to potential impacts on the adjacent Laganside Bus Station as well as concerns regarding noise and that, since the publication of the report, it had requested that a final noise impact assessment be resolved during the application process and a meeting with officers.

She stated that officers considered that the final noise impact assessment would be a routine matter dealt with by condition and that the request for a meeting arrived at a very late stage in the application process and that officers were content that the issues raised had been dealt with within the report.

She reported that the applicant had indicated, since publication of the report, that they were willing to explore a Developer Contribution towards playpark facilities and that there was a Section 76 planning agreement which had been agreed to secure 80% social housing, a green travel fund and to ensure that the listed building was priorities in the overall programme of redevelopment to be completed within two years.

She informed the Committee that the proposal would bring a vacant listed building back into use and was compliant with relevant housing and design policies, climate change, transport, flood risk, archaeology and natural heritage policies.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. T. Stokes, TSA Planning, Mr. M. Martin, Applicant, and Mr. G. McCarney, Project Architect, to the meeting.

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Mr. Stokes stated that the applicant had shown a strong commitment to investment in the city. He explained that Prince's Court had been vacant since 1992 and had been added to the heritage at risk register in 2023.

He stated that the main public façade of the site was the existing vacant six story office building, Marlborough House, which had been vacant since 2022. He informed the Committee that the office building was no longer fit for purpose which had led to the opportunity to repurpose the building and increase the presence of city centre living.

He stated that the relationship between the proposal and the existing Laganside Bus Centre had been carefully considered whereby the apartments had been designed so as not to prejudice the ongoing operations of the bus centre mindful of the potential aspirations of the bus centre to redevelop.

He requested that the Committee approve the application.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, to include exploring the option of securing a Financial Developer Contribution for the funding of an equipped children's play area, and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2024/2044/F - Erection of 895 room  
Purpose Built Managed Student  
Accommodation (PBMSA) across 9-20 storey  
building blocks with communal facilities,  
internal and external communal amenity space  
including landscaped courtyard and roof  
terraces and ancillary accommodation. With  
additional use outside term time (no more than  
50% of the rooms) as short-term let  
accommodation and (no more than 50% of  
the rooms) accommodation for use by further  
or higher education institutions - Lands at  
39 Corporation Street**

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and referred to the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of PBMSA in the location;
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Impact on amenity;
- Climate change;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;

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- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Natural heritage;
- Waste management;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

She informed the Committee that correspondence had been received since publication of the report from the Hotel Federation of Northern Ireland that expressed concern at the impact of the short-term let nature of the proposal on the hotel industry in Northern Ireland.

She reported that the proposed building was considered to be of high-quality design, appropriate to its location, which would regenerate a site which contained a vacant office building. She added that five letters of support had been received and that student need had been demonstrated and was considered to have met the policy requirement.

She stated that the short-term let component would operate in no more than 50% of the rooms during July and August and only subject to Tourism NI certification.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that DfI Rivers, DfI Roads, Belfast City Airport, Historic Environment Division, DAERA: Water Management Unit and DAERA: Regulation Unit had been consulted and had no objections, subject to conditions and that NI Water objected due to capacity issues which was addressed in the report. She added that final responses from NIEA: Natural Environment Division (NED) and Shared Environmental Services (SES) were awaited.

She stated that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. T. Stokes, TSA Planning, Mr. A. Parke, LIKE Architects, Mr. B. Lavery, CBRENI, and Mr. S. English, Elkstone, to the meeting.

Mr. Stokes explained that the proposal was an opportunity to redevelop a long-standing underutilised site. He stated that Elkstone was an established operator of purpose-built student accommodation and its developments were market leading with best in class sustainability credentials and provide meaningful and positive social value creation.

He stated that the proposal would generate footfall, active frontages and would support the regeneration of the surrounding area providing an identified need for student accommodation in the city.

He highlighted that the scheme had received letters of support from the Northern Ireland Chamber, Belfast Chamber of Commerce, Retail NI and Hospitality Ulster.

He concluded by stating that the scheme represented a significant investment in the city and would become a beacon for the regeneration of Corporation Street.

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A Member enquired as to whether provision was made for those students who required year-round accommodation, Mr. Stokes responded by informing the Committee that 50% of the accommodation would be retained exclusively for student use.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the proposals potential impact on local tourism, Mr. Lavery stated that the proposal was not considered competitive with the established hotel market in Belfast. He stated that the proposal was targeting an alternative market for backpackers and students as there was a lack of hostel accommodation, and to compete with Airbnb, that was impacting on the current hosing stock in the city.

The Committee agreed to hear from Ms. J. Gault, Director of Northern Ireland Hotels Federation (NIHF), who had submitted a late request to make representation to the Committee.

Ms. Gault informed the Committee that the NIHF had a number of issues with regard to the proposal. She outlined the current levels of student accommodation in the city and questioned the proposed need.

She stated that the NIHF's main objection was the short-term letting of student accommodation during the summer months and felt it didn't compete in a fair way with the general hotel industry.

She informed the Committee that the NIHF had requested engagement during the application process but it hadn't happened and she appealed to the Committee to refuse the application as the scale, size and inability to apply enforcement presented considerable issues for the city's tourism economy.

A Member highlighted that there was a misconception that the Committee approved any application for Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) and asked the officers to confirm that the Committee was taking decisions within the threshold of unmet need. The Principal Planning Officer explained that, should all planning permissions which had been granted for PBMSAs be delivered in full, the likely ratio of PBMSA bed spaces to student places would remain broadly comparable to similar university cities.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and to deal with any other issues that arise, including resolving final responses from Environmental Health, NIEA: NED and SES, provided that the issues were not substantive.

(Alderman Rodgers left the meeting whilst the following item was under consideration.)

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**LA04/2024/0211/F - Redevelopment of the existing stadium by way of demolition of both existing stands and construction of two new spectator stands with reconfiguration of existing standing terracing at goal ends, new turnstiles and associated siteworks including new floodlighting, additional car parking and improved circulation routes to provide an overall capacity for 6000 spectators on site. - Existing Football Stadium, The Oval, Parkgate Drive**

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and outlined the following key points for consideration:

- Principle of development at the location;
- Design, placemaking and impact on amenity;
- Access and transport;
- Healthy communities;
- Built heritage;
- Natural heritage;
- Climate change;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Environmental protection;
- Waste management;
- Employability and skills; and
- Pre-application community consultation.

He reported that there had been no objection in principle from any consultees, subject to conditions, there was no increase in capacity and that the Grandstand and North Stand would be 5 metres and 4 meters lower, respectively, than the existing stands.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to resolve final consultation responses, finalise the wording of conditions, and to deal with any other matters that might arise provided that they were not substantive.

(Alderman Rodgers returned to the meeting.)

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**LA04/2025/0535/F - Variation of conditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F to facilitate removal of 31 previously approved dwellings and retaining structure along northern boundary of site adjacent to Upper Springfield Road. Retention of existing sloping ground levels and landscaping at this location. - Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane, Glanaulin, 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School**

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application and referred to the proposed housing density, revised road layout and open space management.

He stated that, having regard to the Local Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable.

The Committee approved the application to vary conditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 36 and 41 of approval LA04/2023/2390/F and LA04/2020/0804/F and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 77 planning agreement, to deal with the outstanding DFI Roads response and any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2023/4543/F - Proposed new changing pavilion, enhancing grounds entrances including turnstiles, ancillary facilities and upgrade to existing car park. Proposed 3G surfacing to existing grass pitch with flood lighting - 885 Shore Road**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and reported that there had been no representations from third parties. DfI Roads, DfC HED, DfI Rivers Agency had offered no objection to the proposal and NI Water had objected on the grounds of capacity, which had been addressed within the report.

She reported that the NIEA Natural Environment Division Environmental Health, Shared Environmental Services (SES) consultation responses were outstanding and were expected within the upcoming weeks.

She stated that all materials to be used in the pitch were to be biodegradable and that the proposal was compliant with the relevant policies.

She recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

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The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to resolve final consultation responses, finalise the wording of conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2024/1761/RM - Application for approval of reserved matters application for a medical facility in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details - Land forming Plot 9 of the Kings Hall development as approved by LA04/2020/0845/O**

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application which sought approval of the following reserved matters for Plot 9:

- Siting;
- Design: including height, scale, massing, form of buildings and floor plans;
- External appearance;
- Means of access; and
- Landscaping.

She stated that the design of the building complied with the approved Design Code and was in keeping with the character and appearance of the area.

She reported that there had been no objections from statutory or non-statutory consultees and that nine objections had been received and all concerns raised had been addressed within the report.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee approved the reserved matters, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any issues arising from the outstanding consultee response from DFI Roads, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2025/0399/F - Additional 3 car parking spaces and additional landscaping to serve Plot 4 of Kings Hall development (planning permission ref: LA04/2022/0311/F) - Lands at Plot 4 of Kings Hall Healthcare Village, west of 25 Harberton Park and north of 27 Harberton Crescent**

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application and stated that the principle of development had been established by the previous planning permission and only the proposal for the additional car parking spaces was considered in the assessment of the application.



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She reported that DfI Roads had offered no objection to the proposal and that there would be no loss of landscaping related to the application.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and it was recommended that the application be approved.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

(Councillor Groogan retired from the meeting.)

**LA04/2024/1036/F - Lagan Gateway Phase 2 -  
Proposed greenway connection extending  
between Lagan Gateway Phase 1 at Annadale  
Embankment to Belvoir Forest Park.  
Comprising compacted gravel paths; a new  
elevated (4-5 meter high) timber boardwalk  
(approximately 85m long); landscaping works,  
new cycle stands, bollards, seats and bins; and  
all associated works - Lands to the east of the  
River Lagan located between Lagan Gateway  
Phase 1 and Belvoir Park Forest, running  
adjacent to the west of Belvoir Park Golf Club  
and approximately 120 metres to the east of  
Newtownbreda Water Treatment Plant, Galwally  
Ave, Belfast BT8 7YA**

The Principal Planning Officer provided an overview of the application to the Committee and stated that the site was located outside the development limits and within Lagan Valley Regional Park as designated within the most recent version of draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015 (v2004).

She informed the Committee that the proposal was considered acceptable, in principle, in that it was sympathetic to the rural character of the surrounding area and the proposed greenway would improve connectivity in the area and contribute to enhancing the character of the area.

She explained that the proposal was not considered to have significant impacts on the Lagan Valley Regional Park or the area of outstanding beauty designation.

She reported that Shared Environmental Services and the Council's Tree Officer had offered no objection to the proposal and there was one outstanding consultation response from NIEA Natural Environment Division which had requested further information which has since been submitted.

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She stated that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and resolve the outstanding NIEA consultation response and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**Restricted Items**

**Building Control Outstanding Accounts**

The Director of Planning and Building Control requested that the Committee authorise the writing off of outstanding accounts of two companies due to the administration of both.

The Committee agreed to write off the outstanding accounts in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations.

Chairperson

## **Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**

Monday, 16th June, 2025

### **MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE**

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Bell, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,  
Canavan, Flynn, Maghie, McCabe, McCann,  
McDowell, McKay, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;  
Mr. R. McConnell, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast  
Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.);  
Mr. C. McCloskey, Director of Events and Customer  
Experience, ICC Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.  
(BWUH Ltd.); and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Copeland and Councillors S. Douglas, McCormick and Walsh.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 10th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson) and Councillor O'Neill declared an interest in relation to the item 2(c) 'Ratification of Non-Executive Directors' in that they were Council appointees on the board of Visit Belfast.

#### **Restricted Items**

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

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

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**  
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information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

**Q4 Performance Report 2024/25**

Mr. McConnell, Chief Executive, BWUH Ltd., provided the Committee with an overview of BWUH Ltd.'s performance during quarter four year-to-date, covering the period 1st April, 2024 to 31st March, 2025.

It was reported that quarter four of 2024/25 had been much quieter than quarter three, as expected, with occupancy in January and February low before a very busy March when occupancy reached 53%.

Mr. McConnell provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the company's business performance and an analysis of actual performance against the budget for the year-to-date 31st March, 2025, including:

- Overall income;
- Overall expenditure;
- Management fee and net position; and
- Occupancy rates.

He provided the Committee with an update on the company's continued work in respect of Corporate Social Responsibility which included:

- **Apprenticeships and Placements** - continued partnership with Mitchell House School, a co-educational special school for children with physical disabilities, which provided unique work experience opportunities to students;
- **Charity Partner** – hosted a 65th Anniversary celebration for their charity partner for 2024, Inspire and advised the Committee that BWUH Ltd. was currently in the process of selecting its charity partner for 2025;
- **Diversity and Inclusion** - commitment to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) continued to be a central focus. BWUH Ltd. retained its Diversity Accreditation following reassessment, which demonstrated the company's consistent efforts to create an inclusive workplace; and
- **Sustainability** – highlighted the success of the Re-usable Cup Scheme, which had demonstrated its value in reducing single use plastic, reducing carbon emissions and fostering a collaborative

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approach across different venues and advised that the ICC Belfast was set to host the 2025 All-Ireland Sustainability Summit in June.

During discussion, Mr. McConnell answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to ticket pricing and events.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update which had been provided.

**Annual Business Plan**

The Committee was reminded that following the recruitment of Mr. McConnell as the new Chief Executive to BWUH Ltd. in February, 2025, it was agreed that Mr. McConnell would review the BWUH Ltd. five-year business plan, approved by the Committee in March, 2025, before submitting a revised plan for the Committee's consideration.

Mr. McConnell advised that this process was now complete and presented for the Committee's consideration the BWUH Ltd. five-year business plan 2025-30 for the financial year 2025/26.

The Committee was informed that the BWUH Ltd. Business Plan covered two distinct commercial business offerings which operated under the brand 'ICC Belfast':

- Live Entertainment (Waterfront Hall, Waterfront Studio, Ulster Hall); and
- Business Conferences, Events and Exhibitions (ICC Belfast).

Mr. McConnell outlined the ICC Belfast priorities as set out in the plan and highlighted the primary objectives and targets that had been set to help support those priorities.

He provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the key elements of the revised business plan including:

- Business Events Ecosystem Overview;
- Live Entertainment Events Ecosystem Overview;
- Market Opportunity and Competitor Analysis;
- Product Offering Strategy;
- Business Development and Sales Strategy;
- Marketing and Communication;
- Financial and Economic Targets;
- Our People and Culture;
- Digital Transformation and IT Roadmap; and
- Strategic Pillars – Innovation, Sustainability, Community and Governance.

In response to a Member's query in relation to international engagement and the company's relationship with local universities, Mr. McConnell highlighted the Belfast Ambassador Circle initiative which brought together business and academic leaders to

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target and significantly grow the number of international business events hosted in Northern Ireland.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report; and
- ii. approved the BWUH Ltd. Business Plan.

**Ratification of Non-Executive Directors**

The Committee approved the appointment of two new Non-Executive Directors to BWUH Ltd. for a three-year term.

Chairperson

## Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th June, 2025

### MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M. Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey;  
Councillors Anglin, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,  
P. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Groogan,  
Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McCann and Murray.

Also attended: Councillor Flynn.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;  
and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Walsh.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 8th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

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

#### **Notice of Motion - Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

(Councillor Flynn attended in connection with this item)

The Committee was advised that the following motion had been referred to it by the Standards and Business Committee:

“Recognising Northern Ireland’s commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, (and Belfast City Council’s previous motion recognising a climate emergency), Belfast City Council will endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, an initiative to secure an international and legally binding treaty to phase out fossil fuels, and will write to the Northern Ireland Executive as well as the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero urging them to support this initiative.”

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,  
Thursday, 12th June, 2025**

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Smyth.

Councillor Flynn was invited by the Chairperson to address the Committee. He outlined that the motion had been endorsed by Trócaire and that it called upon the Council to endorse the Treaty to phase out fossil fuels.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy explained that, if the Committee was content, officers would submit a report back to the Committee as quickly as possible, having considered the Motion and any potential cost implications.

The Committee agreed to that course of action.

**Presentation on the Blackstaff Greenway Feasibility Study (Sustrans)**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. C. Pollock and Ms. P. Mansour, Sustrans, to the meeting. Ms. Mansour explained that the Council had engaged Sustrans to prepare a study on the creation of a Blackstaff Greenway, from the Stockman's Way roundabout through Boucher Road Playing Fields and continuing through the Boucher Estate to the 'Rise' sculpture.

She provided the Members with an overview of various factors which they had taken into consideration, including relevant plans and guidance, flood risk, contamination, air pollution, topography, ecology and the current and future transport network. She highlighted that the site was industrial and car-dominated.

The Committee was apprised of a number of options which had been considered and was advised that the highest scoring route was a shared walking, wheeling and cycling path which followed the route of the Blackstaff River. The plans included riverbed flood alleviation, biodiversity enhancement, an extension of the bog meadows and water filtration and contamination treatment.

The representatives from Sustrans reported that they were engaging with DfI Active Travel on the development of the greenway and that the project would ideally be cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary. A number of potential funding streams had also been identified to help deliver the project.

During discussion, a number of Members suggested that it was great to see development of the plans and that there was also real potential for the greenway to extend further in future.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for the presentation and they left the meeting.

Noted.



**Shared Island Civic Society Fund**

(Mr. M. Mulholland, External Funding Coordinator, attended in connection with this item.)

The External Funding Coordinator presented the Committee with the following report:

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in relation to the current open funding call under the Shared Island Civic Society Fund being managed by the Irish Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs (DfA), and potential advice sessions of Belfast organisations for future funding opportunities.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:**

- the update provided in relation to the current round of the Shared Island Civic Society Fund and the commitment of future founding rounds until 2027;
- that an online information session has been organised for local organisations on Thursday 12 June 2025 on the requirements of the current funding call, details of this session has been shared with all elected members and relevant officers to share across their local networks; and
- that following engagement between officers and DfA officials, plans are being developed to run a future in-person session in late summer with Belfast organisations as to potential opportunities for successful applications under future rounds of this fund.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Shared Island Civic Society Fund**

- 3.1 The Shared Island Civic Society Fund is an initiative to promote practical North South cooperation and engagement across a range of sectors and themes, consistent with the objectives and commitments of the Good Friday Agreement.**
- 3.2 The Shared Island initiative is a whole-of-government priority which aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday**

Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection, and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future.

- 3.3 The Civic Society Fund is intended to provide project funding to complement work supported through the Reconciliation Fund and other Government resources; and to promote practical North South cooperation between civic society actors, deepening such relationships on an all-island basis.
- 3.4 A total of €6 million will be available from 2025 to 2027, it is anticipated that a total of up to €2 million will be made available in this round to support successful projects. The maximum grant awarded to any project is €50,000. The average grant awarded in previous rounds was just under €30,000. Applications will be strengthened by the inclusion of funding contributions from the participating partner organisations.

The Fund will prioritise applications relating to, but not limited to, the following areas, including applications from regional or national representative bodies:

- Climate and environment.
  - Women
  - Youth
  - Migrants
  - Social Enterprise, charity and voluntary sector.
- 3.5 All applications must have a clear North South dimension and only applications from civic society organisations based in the South engaging in new project/programme work with a partner(s) in the North or civic society organisations in the North engaging in new project/programme work with a partner(s) in the South will be considered. East/West dimensions and partners to such projects will also be welcomed.
- 3.6 The following areas are not eligible for funding:
- Standalone activities that are not part of a wider project/programme.
  - Operational costs, such as core salaries and overheads
  - Capital costs.
- 3.7 The deadline for applications is 27 June 2025, guidance notes and the application form are available from [the Department of Foreign Affairs website](#).

- 3.8 Considering the tight timeframes for this current funding round. The Council has requested that DfA hold an online information session, taking place on Thursday 12 June, to provide information to prospective applicant organisations based in Belfast. As there will also be future rounds under this Fund the Council will work with DfA officials to facilitate an in-person session to provide guidance and support for local organisations on project requirements and tips for future opportunities.**

**Financial and Resource Implications**

**None associated with this report.**

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

**None associated with this report.”**

The External Funding Coordinator outlined that he had participated in the online information session earlier that day, along with four organisations.

It was highlighted that there were capacity issues across the City and that submitting applications before the end of June would be a challenge.

A Member highlighted the importance of the Council participating and supporting events involving local organisations funded under the initiatives.

The External Funding Coordinator confirmed that representatives from the Shared Island Unit would present to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

**District Electoral Area Profiles - Local Area Energy Plan Dataset**

The Monitoring, Reporting and Learning Officer advised the Committee that one of the main outputs of the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) was a detailed dataset which highlighted key characteristics of homes across Belfast relating to energy efficiency. She explained that Council data analysts had expanded the dataset to link more indicators relating to household characteristics, such as tenure, acorn categories and descriptions.

She demonstrated the District Electoral Area Profiles on the Data Platform, created using the modelled data outputs from the LAEP. The profiles allowed users to explore different indicators in areas across the city, including current EPC, potential EPC, tenure, main fuel type, property type, insulation type and window type.

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The Committee was advised that the variables listed could be broken down further into smaller areas of around 300 households, namely “Datazones”, with approximately 800 households in a “Super Datazone”. Both of those geographies had been designed to analyse data for the 2021 Census and it was also possible to amalgamate the data up into quadrants, North, South, East and West.

In regard to further opportunities with the data, the Members were advised that Council data analysts had created a retrofit index that amalgamated different variables into one index that would help indicate areas in most need of retrofit. There were also other opportunities to link general population demographics to the profiles that were currently being explored.

The Committee was advised that the profiles would be accessible for Members to investigate through the Climate Data Platform test site on the Council’s internal website.

Noted.

**Climate Training for Elected Members and Corporate Management Team**

The Climate Commissioner presented the following report:

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

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an outline of an Elected Member climate change training programme which is being developed for NI councils.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- I. Note that the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations process is likely to require capacity building for Elected Members and staff across the organisation to support them as they scrutinise and report on the climate impacts of the Council’s activities, policies and assets;**
- II. Note that the Council’s membership of Sustainable NI provides access to a new comprehensive sustainability and climate change training programme for Elected Members and staff, with preferential rates of up to 50% discount;**
- III. Note that a training course has been developed for Elected Members that will help them to understand climate change, how that aligns with the Council’s work and how they can influence and take action;**
- IV. Note that Sustainable NI has offered to design and deliver a climate and sustainability training course**

- tailored to the needs of the Corporate Management Team and other senior managers; and
- V. Give approval to arrange these courses for Elected Members and CMT.

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

Belfast City Council has committed to ambitious action to address climate change across all areas of Council work and relies on the support and engagement of all staff and Elected Members.

The Council has recently been tasked with reporting on climate change adaptation and mitigation as mandated by the new Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations, with an initial deadline of 31st of October 2025 for the first comprehensive report on climate mitigation efforts. This process is likely to require capacity building for Elected Members and staff across the organisation to support them as they scrutinise and report on the climate impacts of the Council's activities, policies and assets.

**3.2 Climate Change and Sustainability Training Programme**

Belfast City Council is a partner in the NI Sustainable Development Forum. Sustainable NI (SNI) facilitates the group as well as providing councils with education, advocacy and support services. In response to requests from NI councils, SNI has developed a series of sustainability and climate change training programmes tailored to the needs of NI councils including training strands tailored specifically to the needs of Elected Members and senior managers. Course development and delivery can involve Council staff and could be delivered in person on Council premises.

Similar training programmes have been rolled out across councils in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Great Britain. The RoI scheme in particular is regarded as an exemplar, with training co-ordinators advocating that programmes focus initially on Elected Members and senior managers. Delivery of training courses is likely to commence in September 2025 and courses will include:

- Climate Change Training for Elected Members
- Climate Change and Sustainability for Senior Managers
- Sustainability and Net Zero Introduction
- Sustainable Capital Projects

- Sustainable Procurement
- Sustainability Reporting in the Supply Chain
- Screening Decisions for Sustainability

### **3.3 Climate Change Training for Elected Members**

This will equip NI councillors with the skills and information that they need to mobilise change within their constituency and to communicate climate change effectively to hard-to-reach groups. The course is typically run over a full-day or as two half-days. An initial two hour condensed course is proposed. By the end of the training, councillors will be able to:

- Explain the basic science of climate change and how climate change will affect us both globally and locally;
- Explain why local authorities are vital to tackling climate change;
- Explain how local authorities can tackle climate change (through direct control, procurement, place-shaping, showcasing, partnerships and community engagement)
- Explain the risks of flooding and temperature rise and the role of nature and biodiversity in building resilience;
- Articulate the risks and opportunities associated with the energy transition and explain the wider benefits of action to their communities (eg health, jobs traffic congestion, supporting local businesses etc);
- Communicate, engage and consult with local communities on the climate agenda; and
- Consider the overall costs and benefits (including co-benefits) of action to cut carbon.

### **3.4 Climate Change and Sustainability Training for Senior Managers**

Sustainable NI has also offered to design and deliver a climate and sustainability training course tailored to the needs of the Corporate Management Team and other senior managers. The course would be delivered on Belfast City Council premises, with an expected duration of around 2 hours and would be based on a training needs analysis which would be carried out in advance.

**3.5 Central and Local Government Climate Change Working Group**

A Local & Central Government Working Group has been established by DAERA and SOLACE to strengthen local and central government collaboration to address the climate and ecological crisis. The Working Group recently agreed to explore expanding the provision of online, self-directed Climate Smart Level 1 (2.5 hours) and 2 (3 hours) training to local government over the next 18 months. So far, this training has been completed by 1,000 central government staff, has been well received and can be delivered for approximately £9,000 pa with a CPD certificate included. The training is delivered through an e-learning platform. If this goes ahead, it would build initial awareness, understanding and capacity across BCC staff at scale. Likely costs would be c£750 per Council per year to have access to 2 courses each month. Further updates will follow through the regular SOLACE meetings.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1** The cost for up to 15 Elected Members attending the training is covered within Belfast City Council's subscription as a partner to SNI for 2025/26. If additional places are required the cost would be £150 per delegate (a 50% reduction on the regular charge £295) and would be funded via existing City and Organisational Strategy budget.

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

- 5.1** None identified. Engagement with Equality & Rural Needs team is ongoing across the Programme."

During discussion, a Member stated that she felt that the best arrangement for Members' training was outside of a Committee format.

A further Member stated that perhaps the training could take place after a Committee meeting.

Further Members stated that they were keen to develop a Forward Work Plan for the Committee, as well as to consider its remit in light of the upcoming governance review.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report and approved the courses for Elected Members and CMT, and additionally:

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- a) agreeing that officers would report back to the Committee, based on the Members' feedback, with suggestions for the most appropriate format and time for the Members training to take place; and
- b) noting that officers were seeking three Members to participate in a Training Needs Assessment to gauge the level of training required, and that an email would be circulated seeking volunteers in the first instance.

Chairperson



## Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 24th June, 2025

### MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer);  
Aldermen Lawlor and McCullough; and  
Councillors Bower, Bradley, Carson,  
de Faoite, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas,  
Long, Magee, McCormick, McDonough-Brown,  
McDowell, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and Murphy.

In attendance: Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance  
Manager; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apology**

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor McCallin.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Motions**

The Committee considered the following motions which had been received in advance of the Council's meeting on 1st July:

### **National City Parks**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks, be referred, in the first instance, to the Climate and City Resilience Committee.

### **Nitrates Action Plan**

### **Proposal**

Moved by Councillor McCormick,  
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin,

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That the Committee agrees that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Alderman Lawlor, be adopted.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

That the Committee agrees to refer the motion for consideration by the Council at its meeting on 1st July, with no restriction on the number of speakers.

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

The original proposal was put to the meeting whereupon twelve Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee adopted the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McCormick and seconded by Alderman Lawlor:

“Belfast City Council notes the recent launch of a public consultation by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on a new Nutrients Action Plan. The Council expresses deep concern that the consultation has been issued without adequate prior engagement with stakeholders, including local councils, environmental organisations, the farming community, and the public, particularly in light of the significant environmental, economic and social implications of such a plan. The measures currently proposed could devastate agriculture, reduce livestock numbers, and undermine food security. We call on the Minister to immediately withdraw the current public consultation on the Nutrients Action Programme and to bring forward a policy based on genuine partnership rather than punitive policies which risk the viability of our agricultural industry.”

**Safeguarding Belfast’s Playparks**

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Alderman McCullough and seconded by Councillor McCormick, be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee.

**Supreme Court Ruling –  
Biological Definition of a Woman or Girl**

The Committee noted that the above-mentioned motion had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Chairperson