Public Document Pack

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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 Monday, 3rd November, 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 - 6)

5. Official Announcements

6. Change of Membership on Outside Bodies

7. Request(s) to Address the Council

    (a) Representatives from the Greyhound Racing Constituents Northern Ireland (in opposition of the Motion):

    - Mr Kieran Connolly
    - Ms Stephanie English; and
    - Mrs Lynda Bonner OBE

    Speaking in support of the Motion:

    - Mr Daniel Barclay

    (b) Belfast IPSC (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign) re: Barclays Bank

    - Sue Pentel
    - Rossa Coyle

8. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 7 - 58)

9. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 59 - 80)

10. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 81 - 100)

11. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 101 - 110)

12. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 111 - 122)

13. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 123 - 124)

14. Notice of Motion

   a) Ban on Greyhound Racing in Northern Ireland (Pages 125 - 126)

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

John Walsh

Chief Executive

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Wednesday, 1st October, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty;
The High Sheriff, 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, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive read the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

There were no apologies received.

Declarations of Interest

Regarding the item 'Social Supermarket Fund' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes of 19th September, Councillors P. Donnelly, Canavan, Duffy, Beattie, M. Doherty and Groogan declared interests in that they were associated with groups or organisations which had applied for within the terms of the fund.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in the item 'Planning Information' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in that he was member of the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillor Long declared an interest in the item 'Night Mover Service' within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th September, in that the service was funded by the Department of Justice, in respect of which his wife was the Justice Minister. Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in this matter also as his partner was a Junior Minister within the Executive.

In respect of the item 'Shared City Partnership' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th September. Councillor Groogan declared an interest in the PEACEPLUS Programme item within the Partnership's minutes of 8th September in that her employer was in receipt of funding under the terms of the fund.

Since none of the aforementioned matters became the subject of discussion or debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly),
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 1st September, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, welcomed Councillor Luke Meenehan to his first meeting of the Council since his co-option as the replacement for the former Councillor Maskey. In addition, the Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, expressed condolences to Mr. Eunan McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing & External Affairs, on the passing of his mother. Finally, the Lord Mayor expressed condolences to the Royal Family on the death of The Duchess of Kent on 5th September.

The Lord Mayor congratulated the boxer Lewis Crocker on his winning of the International Boxing Federation's World Welterweight Title, when he defeated Paddy Donovan at Windsor Park on 13th September. The Council agreed that a civic reception be held to mark the achievement of Mr. Crocker.

Alderman McCoubrey paid tribute to Berlin Swifts F.C. on their winning of the McDonald's Irish FA Grassroots Football Awards Regional Club of the Year 2025, particularly the community-led work and dedication of the club's chairman, Mr. Jonathan McClelland. He paid tribute also to Mr. Brian Kirker who had been shortlisted for the People's Award at the aforementioned event for his long-standing work with the 22nd Old Boys F.C., particularly his work in community outreach, mental health awareness and cross-community initiatives. At Alderman McCoubrey's request, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to Mr. McClelland and Mr. Kirker to congratulate them on their achievements.

Alderman McCullough referred to the assassination in Utah on 10th September of the American political activist Mr. Charlie Kirk. At the request of Alderman McCullough, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to the wife and children of Mr. Kirk to express condolences on behalf of the City of Belfast.

Alderman Lawlor referred to the recent events which had taken place in the City to mark the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Royal Irish Guards, particularly a Remembrance event which had taken place at the City Hall Cenotaph on 5th September, and the laying-up of the Regiment's Colours in St Mark's, Dundela, on 7th September. He expressed thanks to the Regiment for 125 years of service and commitment.

Alderman D. Douglas congratulated Council employee Mr. Kyle Smith on his winning debut on the undercard of the Lewis Crocker vs. Paddy Donovan contest at Windsor Park in September. He wished Mr. Smith every success in his career. In addition, Councillor M. Doherty paid tribute to Mr. S. McComb on his winning of the IBF European super-lightweight title in Sheffield when he had defeated the Welshman, Ben Crocker.

Councillor M. Donnelly referred to Bláthnaid Ní Mhaoilmheanna, a four-year-old child from West Belfast who was battling an aggressive brain tumour. He referred to the significant fundraising effort which was underway to enable her to travel to Germany for specialist immunotherapy treatment and wished Bláthnaid every success as she battled the illness.

Councillor de Faoite welcomed the expansion of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to Belfast, whereby the first 75 new-born children registered at the City Hall from 1st October would have the opportunity to avail of the book gifting scheme.

Councillor R. Brooks referred to the recent retirement of Mr. John McConnell, the former City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) and thanked Mr. McConnell for his service to the Council and valuable assistance to Members over the past number of years. In addition, Councillor Brooks congratulated staff member Mr. Philip Purdie on his achievements with the Irish Senior Golf Team, which had recently won the European Senior Men's Team Championship and the Men’s and Women’s Senior Home International tournament.

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 19th and 26th September, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

Amendment

Draft Irish Language Policy

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Committee of 26th September under the heading ‘Draft Irish Language Policy’ be amended to provide that this Council excludes staff uniforms from the Policy in terms of branding and corporate logo.”

On a vote, seventeen Members voted in favour of the amendment and forty-two against and it was declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

The Lord Mayor put the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Committee of the 19th and 26th September to the Council for adoption. As there was no consensus, the adoption of the minutes became subject to a vote.

On that vote, seventeen Members voted against the adoption of the minutes and forty-two for and, accordingly, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Committee of the 19th and 26th September were adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

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

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 9th September, 2025, be approved and adopted."

Amendment

Surveys for Dual Language Street Signs

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

"That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 9th September, under the heading 'Surveys for Dual Language Street Signs', be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees that the period of time permitted to allow for the receipt of responses for dual language surveys be extended to 28 days."

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted in favour of the amendment and thirty against and it was declared lost.

Deputations – Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association

At the request of the Councillor McKeown, the Council agreed that the aforementioned minute be amended to reflect that, in addition to an invitation being extended to the Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association, an invitation to attend be extended also to the Friends of Botanic Gardens and the Rugby Road Residents' Association to attend the meeting 7th October to outline their views in relation to the Proposed Pilot Opening Hours Scheme.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 9th September were approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 10th September, 2025, be approved and adopted."

Vacant to Vibrant Programme

At the request of the Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that the aforementioned minute under the heading 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme' be amended to reflect that correspondence be forwarded to the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for Communities seeking additional funding to support the scheme.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 10th September were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 17th September, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted."

Amendment

Notices of Motion – Update

Moved by Councillor McKeown
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite and

Resolved - That the decision of the Licensing Committee of 17th September, under the heading "Notices of Motion – Update", insofar as it relates to the closure of the 'Airbnb Accommodation' motion, be amended to reflect the addition of the following after: "the Committee noted that the issues still remained and that the Committee would continue to receive regular updates in respect of the regulation of such accommodation" … *"and that officers would undertake to arrange an all-Members' ad hoc meeting/workshop to which appropriate officials from the Department for Infrastructure, Department for Communities, Department for the Economy and Tourism NI would be invited, to brief Members on their plans to address the issue and to enable Members to discuss such plans with them."*

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 17th September were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 16th September, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor D. Douglas and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 15th September, 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 de Faoite and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 11th September be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 23rd September, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th October, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE
STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, 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;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director (Belfast Stories)
Ms. E. Henry, Creative and Strategic Lead (Belfast Stories)
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. L-A O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance Coordinator.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor de Faoite.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th and 26th September 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 October, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Rois-Marie Donnelly declared an interest under item 7. (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that she worked for an organisation which was funded under the Programme. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 2. (c) Update of Hardship Programme and 4. (b) Additional Budget Social Supermarket Fund 25/26, Councillor Beattie declared an interest associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Councillor Smyth declared an interest regarding 7. (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership in so far as his child was a member of the Rosario Youth Football Club. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 2. (c) Update of Hardship Programme, Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in that his partner worked for one of the organisations which had received funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Long declared an interest under item 9. (a) Levels of criminality and violence in the City Centre in that his wife was the Justice Minister and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councill I. McLaughlin declared an interest under item 6. (b) Requests for Funding in that he was associated with the Greater Shankill Partnership and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Request to Present - Northern Ireland Water

The Committee agreed to the receive a presentation from Northern Ireland Water at its meeting on 21st November.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following twelve 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 twelve 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.

<u>Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and Medium-Term Financial Planning</u>

The Committee considered an update on the key issues influencing the rate setting process for 2026/27 and the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 - 2029/30.

The Committee:

- noted the challenges since the last update to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting; and
- agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2026.

<u>Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann</u>

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy and Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism provided an update on the planning to support the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026.

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised that the membership of the Executive Committee could be extended to a representative of the Irish Language organisations and that information regarding the Community Sessions would be shared with the Committee.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the proposed approach to programming;

- Noted the update and in relation to approach to engagement;

- Noted the update in regard to emerging additional medical support requirements and associated refences to procurement; and

- Approved attendance of the Lord Mayor and senior officials at the 2026 US Comhaltas Convention and the early release of budget to Ards CCE to allow early booking of flights and accommodation.

<u>Update on Hardship Programme</u>

The Committee was provided with an update on the implementation of the £1.1m 2024-25 Hardship Programme, which sought to help alleviate the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living on vulnerable people across the city, together with an update on the current budget position.

The Committee:

i. Noted the contents of this report, including the update on the implementation and impact of the 2024/25 Hardship Programme;

ii. Noted the vastly reduced budget position of £75,000 for the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26 and agreed to the proposed allocations as set out 3.10 of the report;

iii. Noted the publication of a ‘Cost-of-Living Support Guide’, attached at appendix 2, and that digital and hard copies would be made available to members; and

iv. Agreed that the Council write to the Minster for Communities to outline the concerns of the Committee for future support for the Hardship Programme and requested that funding was provided.

City Centre Regeneration Scheme
(Assembly Rooms)

The Committee considered a report in relation to various matters associated with the acquisition of the Assembly Rooms and adjacent properties following a number of Council decisions, and an update in relation to the wider site.

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that a tour of the site could be arranged in the future.

The Committee noted the following in relation to the acquisition of the Assembly Rooms Cluster and the emerging proposals in respect of the wider site:

I. the update on the acquisition of the Assembly Rooms Cluster;

II. the emerging work on the Visioning and Future Use Strategy and agreed that a workshop was convened with Members to input into this and commence the process for consideration of the future uses for the Assembly Rooms Cluster; and

III. the ongoing work with World Monuments Fund, including potential for assistance with a Conservation Management Plan in partnership with the Council and funding to assist with essential weather proofing works.

Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts
and Agency Workers - Quarter Two

The Director of Human Resources provided an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts, secondments and the number of agency assignees.

During discussion, in response to Members’ questions in relation to the provision of Agency Resources, the Director of Human Resources advised that multi-year agreement options could be considered for the tenders which had been outlined in the report, together with a re-examination of an in-house agency model and a detailed Workforce Supply Strategy.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

Additional Item - Display of materials in all council assets

Councillor Beattie raised concern regarding the UNISON Annual Conference which was currently being held at the ICC. He raised questions in relation to the request by UNISON to display graphics on directional screens located in corridors and reception areas of the venue at their event, which had been declined by the ICC.

Proposal

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

That the Committee agrees to adjourn the meeting for one hour to allow the Chief Executive to request further information on the matter and report back to Committee.

On a vote, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared caried.

(The Committee stood adjourned from 11.05 a.m. – 12.33 p.m.)

The Chief Executive provided an update on the matter.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that a review and development of the policy framework be undertaken to clarify guidance on any future display of materials in all Council assets, including community centres, and submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee considered an update for the Organisational Reviews and Change Portfolio projects, together with the requests for additional posts.

The Committee:

- Noted the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change Portfolio and timescales going forward;

- Approved an increase to the Corporate Services Business Support establishment headcount; and

- Approved an increase to the Culture Unit establishment headcount.

Belfast Stories Update

The Programme Director (Belfast Stories) and Creative and Strategic Lead (Belfast Stories) presented an update on the design development and progress of the Belfast Stories Project, together with key programme milestones.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin,

That the Committee approve the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined in the report and agrees not to proceed with the following recommendations (points 8 – 9), namely:

- to undertake design development to include enhanced studio provision (Media Production Studio) in the planning application for the Belfast Stories scheme and to complete an addendum to the Outline Business Case to include the Media Production Studio; and

- to the financing of the additional capital costs associated with the Media Production Studio as set out at 3.31, subject to legal agreements and the approval by Council and the Department for Economy of an addendum to the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the Committee approve the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined in the report and agrees:

- to undertake design development to include enhanced studio provision (Media Production Studio) in the planning application for the Belfast Stories scheme and to complete an addendum to the Outline Business Case to include the Media Production Studio, **subject to future consideration by the Committee**; and

- Defer consideration of the recommendation ‘to the financing of the additional capital costs associated with the Media Production Studio as set out at 3.31, subject to legal agreements and the approval by Council and the Department for Economy of an addendum to the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case’ so that a report on

Community Consultation can be submitted to the Committee in December.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal and eight against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote against the proposal and it was subsequently declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin was put to the meeting when eight Members voted for it and eight against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote for the proposal and it was subsequently declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Noted the progress made to complete RIBA stage 2;

2. Noted the key programme milestones in RIBA stage 3, including the development of an Inclusive Growth Plan by January 2026 and the submission of the planning application in February 2026;

3. Agreed to Party Briefings during the consultation period to include updated designs and inclusive growth proposals;

4. Agreed to proceed with the programme of work, including obtaining specialist legal and financial advice to support the further assessment of options for the operator model for Belfast Stories;

5. Agreed to progress the setting up of a charitable entity focussed on the collection and preservation of stories with an update and detailed recommendations to be brought back to a future meeting following further legal advice;

6. Approved the Ethical Framework as set out in Appendix 2 and agreed to proceed with the Stories Initiatives as part of the Stories Development Programme as outlined in Section 3.19 – 3.21 and Appendix 3; and

7. Agreed to convene an advisory Stories Panel in line with the terms of reference set out at Appendix 4, subject to approval by Committee of membership following an Expression of Interest process.

Supporting Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on a proposed way forward to design, develop and resource area-based community planning alongside enabling communities to bring forward proposals to transform local places through demonstrator projects and community wealth building initiatives.

The Committee:

Community Ownership

i. noted the positive feedback received from the recent Party Group briefings.

ii. Agreed the detailed proposals relating to the creation of the £1.5million 'Community Ownership Fund' as set out at in 3.5 to 3.13 of the report. The proposals related to:

- Purpose and scope of the fund.
- Guiding principles which would underpin the fund, including, for example, that it was an 'open call' process and would not result in any ongoing revenue costs for the council.
- Funding allocation model - proportionate allocation across the city (North, South, East, West, Greater Shankill) based on deprivation and population.
- Whether a 10% of any area allocation be made available to support feasibility studies as agreed through the Area Working Groups and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- The types of projects that could be supported through the fund.
- Who was eligible and who was not eligible to apply to the fund.

The process for consideration and approval – including the role of the Members Area Working Group making recommendations to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and final approval.

Area-based community planning

iii. noted the work currently underway across the city in relation to the development of Area-Based Plans and the different stages of maturity which existed;

iv. In relation to existing area-based plans (including the 'Made in North Belfast' plan and 'Greater Shankill: A Plan to Grow' plan), it was agreed that the Council indicate that it continued to be supportive of the ambition and approach adopted to developing the plan, however, would not be in a position to endorse the plans in totality as many of the proposals had possible financial and resources implications for the Council that would remain subject to established governance and decision-making processes;

v. agreed that officer representation on any emerging oversight structures linked to community-led area-based plans be agreed on the basis of the principles set out at para 3.24;

vi. agreed the proposed approach to supporting area-based community planning, as set out at paras. 3.34 -3.40, which would enable the council to effectively manage its role in supporting the development of such plans as well as delivery of demonstrator projects;

vii. agreed the funding allocation model as set out at para. 3.39 (e.g. proportionate allocation based on population and levels of deprivation), noting that this was applicable for this current funding allocation and was subject to review if there was additional future funding;

viii. agreed proposed governance and assurance arrangements as set out at para. 3.41;

ix. noted the importance and evolving nature of the city centre in terms of residential development and new communities alongside existing communities, and agreed that consideration be given to how an area-based planning approach could be brought forward and the role of elected members and council in facilitating this process;

x. noted the work underway to start to collate and map existing and/or emerging investments and initiatives by council delivered on an area basis across the city;

xi. noted continued work of officers engaging with NICS depts, including, but not limited to, DFC and TEO, to actively explore opportunities to leverage additional funding into supporting this process; and

xii. agreed that engagement takes place with members through Party Group briefings in relation to the possible development of a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework. This engagement would be based on the further development of the draft framework considered by the Social Policy Working Group.

<u>FIFA Women's World Cup</u>

The Committee:

- noted the update regarding the UK bid to host the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2035, including legal consultation and development of budget projections; and

- approved the formal commitment to the Host City legal obligations (should the Bid be successful and Belfast is confirmed as a host city for 2035).

<u>EV Update - EV Charging Network on Council sites and Depot Charging Scheme</u>

The Director of Property and Projects updated the Committee on the progress towards an EV Charging Network on Council sites, specifically the implementation Land Assets Assessment (Council sites) and Commercial Agreements. She also sought approval to submit an application for funding to the Government's Depot Charging Scheme.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the tender process so that a wider list of proposed Phase One sites across the city could be submitted to the Committee.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

That the Committee agrees that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model as outlined in the report and defer consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal and eight against it. There being an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote against the amendment and it was subsequently declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin was put to the meeting and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee:

EV Charging Network on Council Sites

- Noted progress to date; and
- Agreed to defer consideration of the tender process so that a wider list of proposed Phase One sites across the city could be submitted to the Committee.

Depot Charging Scheme

- Approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government's Depot Charging System.

North Foreshore - Giant's Park Belfast Limited: Leisure Led Development Update

The Committee considered an update on the leisure led commercial brief by Giant's Park Belfast Limited at the North Foreshore.

The Committee approved the amendments to the leisure led development proposal at North Foreshore to extend the distribution and logistics offering and to relocate pitstop proposals into the Welcome Hub, subject to detailed terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and Head of Legal Services.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion Update - National Famine Commemoration Day

The Committee was advised that a response had been received in relation to a motion regarding Belfast's hosting of the National Famine Commemoration in 2027, which provided further detail on the application process.

The Committee noted the response on behalf of the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Correspondence - Translink – Belfast Grand Central Station Update

It was reported that responses had been received from both the Minister for Infrastructure and Translink in relation to the Council's correspondence which had requested consideration of a scheme that would reduce fares to encourage the use of public transport and reduce traffic congestion during the Christmas period in 2025.

The Committee welcomed the update on the public realm works and intended traffic measures which had been outlined.

The Committee noted the correspondence as set out in the report and agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request a reduction of transport fares for the Christmas period in 2026.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress

The Committee was provided with an update on the Community Planning Partnership's (CPP) development and forthcoming publication of a Belfast Agenda Statement of Progress and accompanying Data Insights Report for the period November 2023-November 2025, which was a legislative requirement for the Council and its community planning partners.

The Committee:

1. noted the statutory requirement for the Community Planning Partnership to publish a Statement of Progress (SoP) for the period November 2023- November 2025;

2. noted the engagement undertaken with and input from community planning partners in developing the draft SoP (Appendix 1);

3. noted the inclusion and contents of the Population Indicator Data Insight Report and the intention to include this with the SoP and all Statements going forward (available via CLICK HERE); and

4. agreed that the final SoP, taking account of feedback received from Members and community planning partners, be submitted to the Department of Communities.

Additional Budget Social Supermarket Fund 2025/26

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 **The purpose of this report is to seek members approval on the allocation of an additional budget of £100,000 to increase the funding allocation to projects supported through the 25/26 Social Supermarket Fund (SSF).**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 **Members are asked to;**

- **approve the allocation of an additional budget of £100,000 to increase the funding allocation to projects supported through the 25/26 Social Supermarket Fund (SSF).**
- **Approve that this will be allocated on an equal basis to each funded organisation**
- **Grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to make awards on the basis of the approvals above.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 **At September SP&R meeting members approved the approach for the delivery of the 26/27 Social Supermarket Fund grant programme.**

3.2 **During the meeting, it was recognised that social supermarket projects make a significant contribution to addressing issues of poverty and supporting families and individuals in need. The committee recommended that officers should explore if an additional budget of £100,000 could be made available to support current projects in the 25/26 year.**

3.3 The finance director has confirmed that this budget is available from in year underspends.

Members will be aware that funding in 25/26 is being provided to 19 projects who were supported in 24/25. It is recommended that given the relatively low level of additional budget that this will provide for individual projects, the increase should be allocated on an equal basis to all 19 projects. This would provide £5,263 for each project.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.4 All activity outlined in this report can be delivered through existing staff resources. Current funding of £777,811 is available for 25/26 projects through 100% funding from DfC.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.5 None identified at present, delivery of the 24/25 scheme has been screened and rural needs assessed.”

The Committee approved the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Site Visit to an Operational Heat Network - Leeds City Council

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy provided an overview of an opportunity for Members to visit an operational heat network and learn about the development process, hurdles and benefits.

He advised that Leeds PIPES was a heat network led by Leeds City Council and was considered the most suitable for a Heat Network site visit at this time. The Heat network delivered heat from a Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility to both residential homes and public buildings via underground insulated pipes.

He reminded the Committee that the Belfast City Centre Heat Network project had recently completed the initial high-level technical, legal and commercial feasibility stages. As part of the process, the Climate Team had been in contact with a number of local authorities to better understand the different delivery models for a heat network.

He highlighted that this visit would provide an opportunity for Members and Directors to visit an operational heat network to better understand the land use policy context and support provided by the Council, the delivery model, the technology and operation of the network as well as to understand how it had affected local businesses and communities. Participants would also be able to speak to some of the users and operators of the heat network to develop an understanding of the challenges and benefits of delivering a heat network project. These insights would help to inform decision makers on whether the Belfast Heat Network is to progress to a more detailed stage of feasibility.

He pointed out that Leeds PIPES was considered the most appropriate network to visit, as the initial market engagement had suggested that the price of heat would be a key determinant securing off-takers, and hence the Leeds delivery model would be of interest to the Council. He advised that proposed attendees would comprise: Party Group Leaders or their nominees, Committee Chairpersons, Directors and Senior officers (12-15 confirmed attendees) with a view to securing a date in Q1 2026. He advised that costs for the site visits would be met via the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget, in the region of £250 per attendee.

The Committee:

I. Noted the potential costs and outline itinerary;

II. Approved travel for Elected Members to begin preparations for a site visit to Leeds City Council; and

III. Noted that dates for a Quarter 1 2026 visit would be confirmed subject to approval of this proposed visit.

Paternity Pay Provisions

The Director of Human Resources submitted the following report for consideration:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 At the SP&R committee on 20 June 2025, the Committee requested that a further report on the NJC terms and conditions (for maternity pay) and a benchmarking report on Paternity Pay provisions be submitted to a future meeting.

1.2 This report informs Committee of the Council's paternity pay provisions and comparisons with a selection of both private and public organisations as outlined at Appendix 1.

2.0 Recommendations

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

3.0 Main report

3.1 NJC Maternity Scheme

At SP&R committee on 20 June 2025 a report was presented detailing Belfast City Council's maternity leave and pay scheme.

The report noted that the Council applies the maternity scheme as set out in Part 2 of the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service for Local Government Authorities (Green Book). Part 2 of the Green Book consists of the Key National

Provisions applicable for all local authorities to all employees covered by NJC and are basic provisions which constitute a standard throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Part 3 of the Green Book meanwhile provides other national provisions which may be modified by local agreement.

On seeking advice from the Northern Ireland Local Government Authority (NILGA), it was confirmed that the provisions provided in Part 2 of the Green Book should only be modified by national agreements. This would include the NJC pay spine, entitlement to sick pay, minimum leave entitlements, the standard working week, the maternity scheme (as reported) among other provisions. However, it should be noted that most local councils have reached local agreements to have a more generous minimum annual leave entitlement than the 23 days, as set out in Part 2 of the Green Book. NILGA aren't aware of any local authorities that have moved away from the GB maternity scheme.

3.2 Paternity Leave and Pay

Unlike its Maternity Scheme, the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book) does not provide for a contractual Paternity Leave Scheme. It does, however, provide an entitlement to Maternity Support leave as below:

Maternity support leave of 5 days with pay shall be granted to the child's father or the partner or nominated carer of an expectant mother at or around the time of birth. A nominated carer is the person nominated by the mother to assist in the care of the child and to provide support to the mother at or around the time of the birth.

Those organisations governed by Green Book terms and conditions will be contractually obliged to provide this to its employees and it has been found through the benchmarking that most will offset this against the statutory paternity leave entitlements and include this within the paternity leave entitlement.

3.3 Statutory Paternity Leave and Pay

Paternity Leave and pay is a statutory entitlement which will apply to employees if they meet the following criteria:

- **they are biological fathers**
- **the husband or partner of the mother who have or expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing (this includes same sex partners)**
- **the child's adopter**

- **the intended parent (if having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement)**
- **has, or expects to have, responsibility for the child's upbringing**

Employees are entitled to two weeks leave paid at the rate of Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) provided that they have at least 26 weeks continuous service with the employer ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) - the qualifying week.

The rate of SSP is set each year by government and is currently £187.18 per week or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is the lower).

3.4 <u>Belfast City Council Paternity Leave and Pay Provisions</u>

Belfast City Council's Paternity Leave scheme provides for the statutory two weeks' leave, however the payments are enhanced above the rate of SSP as per below:

- **Week 1: Full Pay**
- **Week 2: SPP or 90% of average weekly earnings (whichever is the lower).**

This will apply to those employees who meet the criteria as set out above in the statutory requirements, ie they must have 26 weeks continuous service by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of confinement (EWC)

As referred to at 3.2 above the maternity support leave of five days on full pay is included in the paternity leave entitlement.

3.5 <u>Comparisons with Other Organisations</u>

Benchmarking was undertaken against a number of other organisations' paternity leave and pay provisions to include public and private sector. A summary of these is included in Appendix 1.

Many of the organisations benchmarked offer paternity leave and pay provisions which enhance the statutory entitlements. All other local council's that provided their paternity pay scheme offer the same amount of paternity leave pay entitlements as the Council and most of these provided the same enhanced rates of paternity pay. None of these provided greater enhancements than the Council.

Of the other local government organisations the Education Authority, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and Translink provide the same entitlements as the Council.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service provides two weeks paternity leave on full pay provided the employee meets the statutory qualifying criteria.

The benchmarking showed that Queen's University Belfast offer enhanced leave and pay, providing employees with up to three weeks leave on full pay, while the Ulster University offer the same entitlement as Council (however it will only apply to employees who have a full year continuous service at the qualifying week, otherwise the statutory provisions apply).

A number of private sector organisations were included as part of the benchmarking exercise. These were a selection of organisations that published their paternity leave and pay schemes. It was found that many provide enhanced paternity leave and pay provisions, over and above the statutory entitlement. There are also variations to the criteria required to be entitled to the leave and pay among the organisations benchmarked (see appendix 1).

The benchmarking indicates that most private sector organisations provide an enhanced rate of paternity leave and pay above the statutory requirement, while local government organisations generally provide for the statutory two weeks leave with an enhancement to full pay for the first week. This generally incorporates the Maternity Support Leave provisions as set out in Part 2 of the Green Book.

Financial & Resource Implications

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

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.7 There are no equality or good relations implications relating to this report."

During discussion it was:

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that officers investigate increasing the level of the Council's Paternity Provision in line with the Civil Service provision as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Accordingly, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that officers investigate increasing the level of the Council's Paternity Provision in line with the Civil Service provision as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Apprenticeship Programme Update

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 the Committee on a joint initiative with a number of councils to recruit a Higher-Level Apprentice.

2.0 Recommendation

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

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Through SOLACE, several councils agreed to develop a co - ordinated recruitment campaign for Planning Apprentices.

3.2 Engagement was undertaken with Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutes, and a Higher-Level Apprenticeship (HLA) course was identified as the best vehicle to provide opportunities for students to study a Planning related course while gaining valuable work experience in a Local Authority to better understand the role of a professional Planner and to experience how the entire planning system operates.

3.3 The HLA will involve an apprentice working within a Council planning team for 2.5 years while studying at Belfast Met, on day release for a Level 5 HLA in Property, Housing and Planning. The Course content has been reviewed by RTPI and Planning professionals and provides the essential skills for a planner while providing a pathway to study level 6 and above courses at university.

3.4 While there can be no commitment by Council to retain students beyond the HLA course duration, Local Government acknowledges there will be plenty of opportunities for full time jobs given the demand for planners in Local and Central Government.

3.5 The Committee is aware that funding for an annual apprenticeship programme was secured via the annual estimating process and ratified at the March 2025

meeting of the Council. The costs for the HLA Planning Apprentice will be met from the corporate budget and once appointed will bring the number of apprentices in the rolling programme to 9.

3.6 It is envisaged that the marketing of this opportunity will be carried out jointly between the participating councils and will commence in November with interviews in early December, with each council undertaking out their own recruitment as per their agreed procedures.

3.7 It is anticipated Apprentices would commence their employment in January with the course commencing in January at Belfast Met.

3.8 A full induction plan and programme of support is being developed to ensure that the HLA apprentice is properly inducted into their new role.

2026/27 apprenticeship programme

3.9 Departments will be asked to submit their bids for the 2026/27 apprenticeship programme in Quarter 3. Departments must ensure that a relevant course is identified, and a commitment from line managers to provide the extra supervision and support required to make the apprenticeship a success. Directors, or their nominees will be required to engage with CHR, Development Team to identify suitable courses before a bid can be submitted.

3.10 Areas of the business already supported through the programme are unlikely to succeed in future bids whilst the current apprenticeship is ongoing. CMT will be required to make the final decision on which apprenticeship bids are successful for 2026/27.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.11 To date funding of £256,000 has been agreed for this programme in the 2025/26 rate setting process and future investment will need to be considered to enhance the programme.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.12 Recruitment for apprenticeship programmes is carried out in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection."

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

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.

Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation for Planning

The Director of Planning and Place submitted the following report for consideration:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The Council must prepare a Scheme of Delegation for planning which sets out which decisions on Local and minor applications are delegated to officers. The current Scheme of Delegation was implemented in December 2022. In accordance with legislation, the Council is required to review its Scheme of Delegation every 3 years, i.e. it is next due to be renewed by 31st December 2025.

1.2 The recommendation is to renew the existing Scheme of Delegation subject to several small changes.

1.3 The proposed amendments to the Scheme of Delegation have been noted by the Planning Committee and are to be agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Under the legislation, the Scheme of Delegation must be approved by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the proposed minor changes to the Scheme of Delegation ahead of referral to the Department for Infrastructure.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Section 31 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires a Council to prepare a Scheme of Delegation which enables a person appointed by the Council to determine applications for Local development, consents, agreements or approvals required by condition. All Major applications must by law be considered by the Planning Committee.

3.2 **Article 9 of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 states that a council must not adopt a Scheme of Delegation until it has been approved by the Department for Infrastructure. Article 11 states that a council must prepare a Scheme of Delegation at intervals of no greater than three years.**

3.3 **Development Management Practice Note 15: Councils Schemes of Delegation provides Departmental guidance. It advises that the main benefits of delegation are:**

- **to enable the Planning Committee to devote its finite time to determining applications that present issues that the Committee are best served to determine;**
- **delegation of planning applications to officers is critical to affecting the overall performance of the development management process as it helps to ensure that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, costs are minimised and members have more time to concentrate on the most complex cases.**

3.4 **The Council first published a Scheme of Delegation in March 2015 ahead of becoming a Planning Authority in April that year. It was then amended in June 2017 following a review (and updated in March 2019 to take account of the Council's new departmental structure). Further amendments were made in January 2020 and December 2022.**

3.5 **The Scheme of Delegation sets out a range of planning functions which are delegated to officers. These include:**

- **Decisions on certain types of Local application;**
- **Decisions on other forms of consent and approval;**
- **Preservation of trees;**
- **Determinations under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations;**
- **Enforcing planning regulations;**
- **Temporary listing of buildings;**
- **Responding to € and planning application consultations from neighbouring Planning Authorities;**
- **Conducting of appeals and public examinations;**
- **Responding to planning related consultations from other agencies;**
- **Negotiating financial developer contributions of less than £30k.**

Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation

3.6 **The Scheme of Delegation was last amended in December 2022 and was essentially a refinement of the Scheme adopted in 2017.**

3.7 **The current Scheme is considered to be working well, and it is not proposed to make any significant changes.**

3.8 **Delegation rates since 2020/21 are set out in Table 1, below. Historically, the rate of delegated decisions in Belfast comparable with the regional average.**

Table 1: % delegated decisions by year

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Belfast Delegation Rate (%)	92.5%	93.2%	94.5%	96.7%	94.7%
Regional Delegation Rate (%)	92.8%	93.1%	Unavailable	Unavailable	Unavailable

3.9 **The proportion of officer recommendations overturned by the Planning Committee has also been historically substantially lower than the regional average as shown in Table 2, below. This is positive indicator of Elected Members' confidence in officer decisions in Belfast.**

Table 2: % officer recommendations overturned by Committee

Year	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Belfast Overturn Rate (%)	3.8%	9.9%	3.5%	5.7%	2.8%
Regional Overturn Rate (%)	13.9%	15.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Proposed adjustments to the Scheme of Delegation

3.10 **It is recommended that the current Scheme of Delegation is renewed subject to the following relatively minor alterations.**

1. **Paragraph 3.8 – removal of sub-delegation by the Strategic Director of Place and Economy to the Operational Directors for Economic Development and City, Regeneration and Development. This recognises that planning functions should only be**

sub-delegated to the Operational Director of Planning and Building Control (the Strategic Director may also sub-delegate below that within the Planning Service).

2. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.1 – confirmation that the 28-day period for an Elected Member to request that an application is referred to the Committee is also from the date that an application is re-advertised or re-notified to neighbours</u>. This change is intended to provide further clarity to the referral process and provides a larger window for Members to request that an application is referred to the Committee.**

3. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.1 – parts of the administration of the referral process is proposed to be dealt with by the Planning Service rather than Democratic Services to reduce 'hand-offs</u>'. This change is intended to improve efficiency and handling of referral requests.**

4. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.1 – change to the definition of City Centre to include as defined by the draft Belfast Local Development Plan: Local Policies Plan 2035 once published</u>. Any Elected Member may request that an application in the City Centre is referred to the Committee. The boundary of the City Centre is currently defined by the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2025; the proposed change reflects that this is to be replaced by the new draft Policies Plan once published.**

5. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.2 – incorporation of the provision under paragraph 3.8.2 (f) of the current Scheme of Delegation that gives officers delegated authority to refuse applications (other those for Major development) where all the necessary supporting documentation has been reasonably requested but not provided within 28 days of the request</u>. It is proposed to move this provision from paragraph 3.8.2 (f) to paragraph 3.8.2 because in its current position, this provision potentially conflicts with the other provisions of paragraph 3.8.2. The intention of this provision has always been that the decision on the application is delegated if reasonably requested supported documentation is not provided within 28 days, irrespective of whether other provisions of the Scheme of Delegation under paragraph 3.8.2 require the application to be referred to the Committee. The objective is to ensure the quality of applications and that they are supported by the right information.**

For this provision to be effective, it should be moved to paragraph 3.8.2.

6. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.2 (a) ii. and v. – increasing the threshold for delegated decisions on applications for retail and community relates uses from up to 500 sqm to below 1,000 sqm</u>. The proposed increase to the threshold reflects the adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035 and Policy RET2 that requires a retail impact assessment to be submitted for town centre uses of 1,000 sqm gross or above.**

7. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.2 (i) – removal of 'partial' demolition so that only applications for full demolition of a Listed Building are required to be determined by the Committee</u>. The proposed removal of 'partial' reflects the fact that many relatively minor proposals technically involve 'demolition', such as the removal of the small area of roofing to make way for a rooflight or creation of a new internal doorway. The change would avoid applications for minor demolition proposal having to be referred to the Committee. Elected Members have the reassurance that the provisions of paragraph 3.8.5 require an application to be referred to the Committee where the officer recommendation is to approve and there is an objection from DfC Historic Environment Division.**

8. **Paragraph 3.8.2 (i) – correction of terminology to 'Proposal of Application Notice'. The proposed change corrects the terminology in the current Scheme of Delegation which incorrectly refers to 'Pre-application Notice'.**

9. **<u>Paragraph 3.8.4 (i) – clarification that this provision concerning the delegation of Developer Contributions of a value not exceeding £30k relates to 'Financial' Developer Contributions</u>. The proposed change is to avoid any ambiguity that this provision also relates to the value of 'in-kind' Developer Contributions, which is not the intention of this provision.**

10. **Paragraph 3.8.5 – re-ordering of the sub provisions; change to the grading definition in paragraph 3.8.5 (d); clarification that the provisions only relate to applications for full or outline planning permission (and not other forms of consent); and clarification**

that paragraph 3.8.5 that requires applications for Major development to be determined by the Committee does not apply to associated applications such as a Non-Material Change to a Major permission or Discharge of Condition. The proposed changes are intended to generally tidy up the provisions, reflecting legislation that states the types of application that cannot be delegated and must be determined by a Committee, as well as clarification of some of the other provisions.

3.11 These changes are shown are shown as 'track changes' in the proposed amended Scheme of Delegation at Appendix 1, highlighted yellow for ease of reference. The current adopted Scheme of Delegation is provided at Appendix 2 for comparison.

3.12 By way of context, the report to the 18th November 2022 Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, which set out the proposed changes to the previous Scheme of Delegation can be viewed at this link (item 19).

Other Schemes of Delegation

3.13 Members previously requested examples of other Schemes of Delegation. Hyperlinks to other examples are provided again below.

Derry and Strabane Council (bottom of webpage):
https://www.derrystrabane.com/getmedia/de1c6642-ab21-481d-b7a6-ae058a567f82/Approved-Delegated-Scheme.pdf

Newry, Mourne and Down Council:
https://www.newrymournedown.org/media/uploads/planningscheme_of_delegation.pdf

Horsham District Council (pages 37 and 38 of the Council's Constitution):
Horsham District Council : Document Constitution of Horsham District Council (moderngov.co.uk)

Administration of the Elected Member application referral process

3.14 Changes are proposed to the process for Members to refer an application to Committee given that current practices resulted in a referral request being missed.

3.15 Where Members would like to request that an application is referred to Committee, they should email the Director of Planning and Building Control and the Planning mailbox setting out:

- **The reference number of the application**
- **Site address and proposal**
- **Planning grounds for referral to Committee.**

3.16 On receipt of the request, the Planning Portal will be updated to ensure that the decision is changed to a Committee decision pending consideration of the referral request. This should ensure that no decisions are issued when a referral request has been made.

3.17 The Director of Planning and Building Control will consider the request in consultation with the City Solicitor (where necessary) and will confirm the decision on the request to the Elected Member. Where the referral request is agreed, the Committee report will detail that the application is before the Committee as a result of a Member request and it will detail the Member who made the request and the reasons why.

3.18 Following ratification of the Scheme of Delegation, new guidance will be issued to all Elected Members setting out the detail of the new application referral process.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.19 The renewal of the current Scheme of Delegation, subject to minor modifications, will enable the Council to continue to determine planning functions in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

3.20 No adverse impacts have been identified."

The Committee agreed the proposed minor changes to the Scheme of Delegation ahead of its referral to the Department for Infrastructure.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 <u>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</u>

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 the Half Year Update, requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.

2.0 <u>Recommendations</u>

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- **<u>Physical Programme Half Year Update</u> - Note the overall update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently under construction at 3.3 to 3.5 below and in Appendix 1; and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.**
- **<u>Awards and Recognition</u> – note that Shankill Shared Women's Centre project was recently awarded with the prestigious 2025 REGIOSTARS Awards in the '*A Europe Closer to the Citizens'* category and also the City Cemetery project was a finalist in the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) Restoration Project of the Year 2025.**
- **<u>Capital Programme Movements</u> –**

    - **Basketball Courts – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £550,000.**
    - **Musgrave Park Sensory Garden - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £100,000 to provide a greater range of equipment and improve the play value and accessibility of the facility.**
    - **Girdwood Hub H&S Works - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £310,000.**
    - **EV Charging Network Phase 1 - 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.

- **2 Royal Avenue Landlord Capital Works – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.**
- **City Hall Security Improvements – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.**
- **Staff Cycle Racks Installation – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.**

- **Section 76 Planning Agreement Developer Contribution - Belfast Bike Station Queen's Island – to agree that the S76 Agreement developer contribution be utilised for the installation of Belfast Bike station in the Queen's Island area.**
- **Capital Letters of Offer – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer.**
- **Contracts awarded in Q2 2025/26 – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Physical Programme Half Year Update

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. The Half Year Update below is a brief summary of projects completed as well as a sample of projects currently underway.

3.2 Awards and Recognition

Members are asked to note that two of the Council's completed capital projects have been successful in gaining awards and recognition. The Shankill Shared Women's Centre won at the prestigious 2025 REGIOSTARS Awards in the '*A Europe Closer to the Citizens*' category held in Brussels. The centre has been

recognised as a dedicated shared space with a vision for a prosperous, more peaceful and cohesive future for women and their families. Also, the City Cemetery project was shortlisted in the CEF Restoration Project of the Year 2025 category. The CEF Construction Excellence Awards are the most prestigious awards in the Northern Irish Construction Industry.

3.3 Recently completed projects:

- **City Cemetery Visitor Centre - Heritage Fund project - project to protect and enhance the existing history and heritage of the cemetery. The final elements of the project including the Victorian Fountain and central steps have been completed.**
- **Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25 – improvement works to pitches at Falls Park, Mallusk Playing Fields and Strangford Avenue Playing Fields have completed.**
- **Playground Improvement Programme 24/25 – improvements have been completed at Michelle Baird Playground.**
- **Innovation Factory — Access Control – replacement of the access control system providing flexible access to the centre for businesses.**
- **Beacon Programme - provision of beacons as an alternative to traditional bonfires.**
- **City Hall – Installation of Stained Glass Window – LGBT and NHS – completion of window celebrating Belfast's LGBTQ+ community.**
- **Enhancements to a range of Council assets including - IT projects via Digital Services such as Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS); Grazing Lands - Fencing Replacement; OSS and Bereavement Services Machinery Phase 1; Cherryvale Gate; HWRCs Service Bay Works - Palmerston and Ormeau; and Resources & Fleet Portacabin Facilities.**
- **Castlereagh Presbyterian Church Hall – Belfast Investment Fund (BIF) – refurbishment of Church Hall to include new heating system, toilets, windows, lighting, minor paint works and new lighting. Improvements have made the building more energy efficient to improve its sustainability and increase community usage.**
- **Mercy Primary, Crumlin Road – Local Investment Fund (LIF) - purchase and installation of new playground equipment.**
- **Finaghy Bridge (LIF) – floral mural installation and improvements at Finaghy Bridge to cover graffiti.**
- **Nettlefield Multi-sports storage facility (LIF) - installation of storage facility at Nettlefield Primary school.**

- **<u>Parklands - Knocknagoney Dale</u> – environmental improvements to Knocknagoney Park under Section 76 Agreement developer contributions for open space.**

3.4 ***<u>Physical projects underway</u>:***

- **<u>Ballysillan Playing Fields (Urban Villages</u>) - Work continues on site at this £8.4m partnership project with DfI's Living with Water Programme, DfC and Urban Villages. Completion anticipated by Autumn 2026.**
- **<u>Lagan Gateway Greenway (BIF</u>) – major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections. Phase 2 procurement exercise is nearing completion for works on the Annadale side, linking the pathway to Belvoir Forest Park. Completion anticipated by Autumn 2026.**
- **<u>North Foreshore Development Sites Infrastructure Works</u> – Work has started on site for the gas extraction system. Contractor is due to start foul pumping station fitout in January 26. NIE is progressing civil works to bring increased capacity from Whitla Street to North Foreshore.**
- **<u>Strand Arts Centre (BIF</u>) – work continues on the £6.4m major refurbishment of the art deco cinema building. Completion anticipated by Summer 2026.**
- **<u>Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre (NRF</u>) – work is progressing well on the new build community and heritage centre at Davitt's GAC.**
- **<u>Belfast Orange Hall (NRF</u>) – work has recently commenced on site. The project comprises repairs to roof and refurbishment of facades, external walls, windows and external doors.**
- **<u>ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (Urban Villages</u>) – Phase 2 of the project is on site and due to complete in Autumn 2025. This comprises a community café, boxing club, minor halls, community gym and office space. The final phase, installation of the sports hall is due to be completed by Autumn/ Winter 2025.**
- **<u>Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub (BIF and Urban Villages</u>) – work is progressing on the new build development for creative and digital arts entrepreneurs, and it is due to complete in Autumn 2025.**
- **<u>Titanic People Exhibition (Urban Villages</u>) – redevelopment of the courtyard/ frontage of the existing building at Westbourne Presbyterian Church. Planned completion is anticipated in Winter/ Spring 2026.**
- **<u>Corporate projects</u> – a range of capital IT projects via Digital Services to ensure business continuity; Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme, HWRC**

and Civic Amenity Sites Containers, Historic Cemeteries – Clifton Street, Strangford Avenue Playing Fields Enabling Works, and ongoing delivery of Fleet Replacement Programme 25/26 via City & Neighbourhoods Services.

- **Developer Contributions – progressing open space projects via CNS.**
- **Playground Improvement Programme 25/26 – projects on the Programme this year are White Rise, Ohio Street, Roddens Crescent, Finvoy Street and Belmont and should be complete by Spring/Summer 2026. Work is underway.**
- **Alleygating Phase 5 – project progressing with 115 gates to be installed and works to be completed by February 2026.**
- **Floral Hall Health & Safety Works – works are underway and project is nearing completion.**

3.4 *Physical projects in development:*

The remainder of the Physical Programme covers projects where activity is at earlier stages i.e. tender preparation or before. This includes schemes at the start of procurement at *Stage 3 – Committed* as well as those at *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* and *Stage 1 – Emerging* or equivalent:

Capital Programme: The Capital Programme comprises a vast range of projects including Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, Belfast Stories, Reservoir Safety Programme, LTP Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Waste Plan projects, St George's Market – New Stalls, Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery, Access to the Hills – Black Mountain/Upper Whiterock Pathway, Glencairn Park/Ligoniel Park Greenway, City Hall – External Christmas Tree, Wilmont House, Fernhill House and Courtyard, Historic Cemeteries and Historic Tiled Street Signs, City Hall Preservation, 2 Royal Avenue, 35-39 Royal Avenue, Woodvale Park Sensory Garden, Communication Boards, Bridges Improvement Programme, and a range of health and safety projects.

A range of other schemes are also in development including the remaining LIF, BIF, SOF NRF and UV projects.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

3.5 As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the

opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
Basketball Courts	Creation and upgrade of basketball courts at five Council park sites	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £550,000**
Musgrave Park Sensory Garden	Upgrade to sensory garden	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £100,000**
Girdwood Hub H&S Works	Urgent works to the roof of the Girdwood Community Hub building	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £310,000**
EV Charging Network Phase 1	A publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets	**Move to *Stage 3 – Committed***
2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works	Capital works to the ground and first floor to meet its obligations to prospective occupiers and ensure the building is fully fit for purpose.	**Add as *Stage 1 – Emerging***
City Hall Security Improvements	Capital works put forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members.	**Add as *Stage 1 – Emerging***
Staff Cycle Racks Installation	Installation of new cycle racks in CWB, City Hall and other premises to improve provision.	**Add as *Stage 1 – Emerging***

3.6 ***Basketball Courts***

In August 2025, this project was moved to Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted. The project was part of the additional local schemes as a consequence of UKSPF. The work includes creation or upgrades of basketball courts at five Council park sites including Victoria Park, Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, Ormeau Park, Blacks Road Park and Páirc Nua Chollann. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage with the consultation of local key stakeholders. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £550,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.7 ***Musgrave Park Sensory Garden***

This project was moved to Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in August 2025 as part of the additional schemes concerning the recoup of capital funding from UKSPF.

The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £100,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.8 ***Girdwood Hub Health & Safety Works***

In March 2025, Members agreed that Girdwood H&S Works was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 - Emerging as a programme of health and safety works. A condition survey has identified works that are required in terms of strengthening works to parapet walls, to flat roofs and pitched roof over the main hall and to fix leaks in the roof which have necessitated closure of specific areas including access lifts and therefore causing disruption of activities. The estimated cost for these works will be up to £310k. The project team is liaising with Legal Services and the Insurance team regarding legal recourse and next steps. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £310,000, subject to legal recourse. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.9 ***EV Charging Network***

This project was moved to Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in April 2025 in line with the LEV Strategy. It will deliver a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets, working with a commercial partner. Members are asked to note that a detailed report on this is also on the agenda for consideration by Members today. Members are asked to agree that 'EV Charging Network' is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.10 ***2 Royal Avenue – Landlord Capital works***

Potential capital works to the ground and first floor beyond routine maintenance will be required at 2 Royal Avenue to enable the Council, as landlord, to meet its obligations to prospective occupiers and to ensure the building is fully fit for purpose. Members are asked to agree that the project is

added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.11 ***<u>City Hall Security Improvements</u>***

The TRIO Solutions Group have completed a survey audit report regarding security arrangements for City Hall and made several recommendations. The proposed project will take these recommendations/ capital works forward to make City Hall a safer place for visitors, employees and elected Members. <u>Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed. Further detail on this will be brought back to Members and will be brought to the City Hall Installations Working Group.</u>

3.12 ***<u>Staff Cycle Racks Installation</u>***

The proposed project is for the installation of new cycle racks in Cecil Ward Building and City Hall to include signage, and to review racks in in 9 Adelaide and Duncrue with the view to replacing and upgrading to provide adequate facilities. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.13 ***<u>Section 76 Planning Agreement - Belfast Bike Station</u>***

In line with the agreed Section 76 Planning Agreements internal procedures, it is proposed that the S76 Developer Contribution in relation to Planning Application No. LA04/2021/2280/F at Olympic Way, Queen's Road, Queen's Island, Belfast be utilised for the installation of Belfast Bike station in the area. The proposal is for the design, mobilisation, installation and commissioning of a new Belfast Bikes docking station including 12 new e-bikes. The total cost of £47,000 is the financial contribution from S76 Agreement. The project will be delivered as soon as the landscaping of the development is complete, anticipated by December 2025. Members will note that expansion of Belfast Bikes is an existing project in the Physical Programme. <u>Members are asked to agree that the S76 Agreement Developer Contribution be utilised for the installation of Belfast Bike station in the Queen's Island area.</u>

3.14 **<u>Capital Letters of Offer</u>**

Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q2 2025/26 at Appendix 2.

3.15 <u>Contracts Awarded</u>

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q2 2025/26 at Appendix 3.

3.16 <u>Financial & Resource Implications</u>

***Financial Implications* –**

<u>Basketball Courts</u> – capital allocation of up to £550,000

Musgrave Park Sensory Garden – capital allocation of up to £100,000

<u>Girdwood Hub H&S Works</u> – capital allocation of up to £310,000

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

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

3.17 <u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment</u>

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as outlined in the report.

<u>Asset Management</u>

The Committee:

The Waterworks Community Garden – Licence Renewal to Grow NI

- approved the Licence renewal for a 5-year term to Grow NI; and
- approved entering into a management agreement with GROW NI for the items secured under the Shared Island Fund.

Shaftesbury Avenue / Ormeau Road – New Licence

- approved a new 10-year licence agreement for the use of a portion of land at Shaftesbury Avenue/Ormeau Road for the relocation of an air quality monitoring station (AQMS).

Parkgate Gardens Open Space – Acquisition of adjoining strip of land

- approved the acquisition of a strip of land of c. 0.0426 acres from Northern Ireland Housing Executive adjoining Parkgate Gardens Open Space.

Deed of Conveyance – Queens Bridge Wastewater Pumping Station Site

- approved the Council and Northern Ireland Water entering into a Deed of Conveyance to regularise the ownership of the Queens Bridge Wastewater Pumping Station Site.

Licence Agreement - Cregagh Youth and Community Centre / Cregagh Green and Playground

- approved a licence agreement between the Council and Teamdot Presents for the siting and use of a storage container at Cregagh Youth and Community Centre / Cregagh Green and Playground for the storage of food, toys and clothes for distribution to vulnerable people and families.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

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 STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 2**); and
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (**Table 3**).

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
Hardware and software warranty and support on Aruba servers and controllers for wired and wireless Network	Up to 3 years	£144,699	S McNicholl	This is to ensure maintenance and support is in place for our Aruba wired and WiFi networks and controllers with associated security measures.	N
Analysis, evaluation and financial assurance services of	Up to 7 years	£2,450,000	D Martin	To appoint a suitably qualified professional consultancy providing services to undertake	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
real estate proposals				analysis, evaluation and provide financial and technical assurances to the Council in respect of real estate proposals, across a range of residential led mixed use regeneration projects, particularly with respect to Council's recently appointed Private Sector Partner, and any other commercial opportunities where BCC is a stakeholder. Members at meeting of Sept '25 CGR Committee *agreed that the key appointment of a specialist financial and commercial property services provider would be noted in a Contract Report to be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee* Specialist nature of advice will be required to provide assurance to Members when making high value decisions to effectively transfer	

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
				land assets to facilitate residential led development that may also require some sort of support from Council to bring forward delivery through subvention. It is essential that any decisions made by Council are based on sound and well informed advice. This is essentially a ‘call-off’ appointment and actual spend will be vouched on the time spent charged at hourly rates procured through a Crown Commercial Services Framework.	
Provision of reusable period products scheme	Up to 3 years	£105,000	D Sales	Supply and deliver reusable period products to individuals on request through landing page maintained by supplier	Y
Provision of energy management services for the Council	Up to 5 years	£250,000	S McNicholl	Service required to support Council’s aims and objectives regarding energy supply including securing VFM, budget and risk management and carbon reduction	Y

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
Telephony Service Provision	Up to 1 year	£210,225	S McNicholl	BCC requires telephony service provision for its sites and services to include calling ability, line rental and various broadband connections	N
Supply, delivery and off-loading of rubber crumb for 3g and 4g pitches.	Up to 36 months	£130,000	D Sales	To top up rubber crumb for 3g and 4g pitches as part of scheduled pitch maintenance to ensure operational life span of pitch carpet and ensure H&S considerations for use.	N
Legal and commercial support in submitting a bid for funding from Innovate UK.	Up to 4 months	£41,000	J Tully	To assist in delivering several aspects of the work packages, including the procurement road map, legal review of portfolio PPA, and attendance, preparation and delivery of several workshops and disseminations events.	N
Technical support in submitting a bid for funding from Innovate UK.	Up to 4 months	£40,390	J Tully	To assist in delivering several aspects of the work packages, including the economic appraisal of a thermal store element of the proposed heat network project, production of an economic appraisal	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
				report, coordination with other partners and attendance, preparation and delivery of disseminations events.	
Dynamic Market or Open Framework (TBC) for delivery of various Employability & Skills ‘E&S’ Requirements	Up to 5 years	£6,000,000	D Martin	The current DPS is reaching its financial ceiling and is due to complete in 2026. A successive DPS must be established to ensure continued delivery of E&S solutions in an agile and flexible way, responding to challenges and opportunities within the labour market	Y
Supply and delivery of play equipment	Up to 5 years	£1,250,000	D Sales	Establish a call off framework to purchase new/replacement play equipment to support the delivery of the annual Playground Improvement Programme.	N
Provision of temporary agency workers (neutral vendor model)	Up to 3 years	£19,000,000	C Sheridan	The provision of temporary agency workers to cover short term vacancies in Departments whilst recruitment exercises are undertaken. Current contract expires 31 March 2026.	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
Provision of temporary agency workers using call-off framework (where neutral vendor cannot provide a suitable candidate in a timely manner).	Up to 3 years	£1,500,000	C Sheridan	To support the above neutral vendor model. From time to time the neutral vendor is unable to source suitable temporary agency workers within timeframes set. The CCS framework is used in these instances in line with the framework guidelines. This typically applies to more specialist roles in the Council	N
Programme Curation to support the Fringe Programme of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.	Up to 1 year	£400,000	D Martin	To appoint a curator(s) to support the delivery of the Fringe Programme of the Fleadh which will complement the Comhaltas core programme of competitions, concerts and the Scoil Éigse, animating the city with inclusive, creative, and celebratory events.	N
Supply of bedding plants, bulbs and maintenance of floral displays	Up to 5 years	£1,000,000	D Sales	To support the display of plants and flowers across the City and Parks. Requirement will be split into 3 lots to maximise levels of competition and support SMEs:	Y

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
				Lot 1 – Supply and delivery of high-quality bedding plants (£480k) Lot 2 – Maintenance, removal and emptying of floral displays service (£340k) Lot 3 - Supply and delivery of forcing and bedding bulbs – (£180k)	
Medical Services to support the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.	TBC	TBC	K Forster	Further to the STA request below for medical planning services there is an urgent need to commence work on a new tender for medical services to support the Fleadh delivery. An Expression of Interest 'EOI' will be advertised in the coming weeks to determine market interest and capability which will then help to scope the requirement. Further information provided at Nov SP&R.	N
Provision of research & development activity to inform Belfast City Deal advanced wireless investments	Up to 6 months	£70,000	S McNicholl	This is a technical and commercial R&D piece to inform Belfast Region City Deal partners on investment opportunities for advanced	N

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)
Fully funding from City Deal.				wireless. It is funded by BRCD. Procurement is via NEPRO3 local govt procurement framework	
Belfast Stories Specialist Legal and Financial Support	Up to 2 years	£200,000	D Martin	Specialist Legal and Financial advice to inform the operator model options in order to support a decision on the operating model by Council by Q3 2025 in advance of the submission of the Belfast Stories Full Business Case by the end of 2026. Belfast Stories update Paper refers.	N

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
The provision of a robust medical plan to cover all medical eventualities that may occur at Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 and 2027	Up to 2 years	£80,000	K Forster	Urgent need to appoint a service provider to provide a robust and comprehensive medical plan to support Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 and 2027.	Dr Aisling Diamond	5

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
				The NI Ambulance Service are reviewing the level of support the offer to major events which has created the urgent need for this support. The supplier has unique experience combining both emergency medicine and major events and the only known supplier who can provide the services.		
Supply of plastic and paper sacks for waste collection/ management	Up to 6 months	£75,000	S Grimes	Urgent need to source stock of plastic and paper sacks to support waste management operations. The replacement tender is taking longer evaluate due to a number of suppliers failing the testing/ sampling process. It is hoped that this process will be completed in the coming weeks and a new supplier	Brow Packaging Ltd	5

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
				appointed; however, current stock is due to run out before end of November. Through engagement with local suppliers, we have been able secure available stock of our plastic sack types needed with Brow packaging who are a local supplier who can supply within 4 weeks of order placement Orders need to be placed asap to secure required stock and in case of any delays in delivery. Any delays put continued service provision at risk i.e. the Council run out of stock of service critical products.		

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Duration	Modification Required – Time & Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Provision of dog kennelling facilities and related services (T2161)	Up to 3 years	Additional 1 month and £32,000	S Toland	There has been a general increase in costs associated with the contract and specifically with the unforeseen introduction of new legislation making XL Bully type dogs an illegal breed. Contract to be extended by a period of one month to allow for completion of procurement and tender process, if required. This is a statutory service. Continuity of service is essential.	Nutts Corner Boarding Kennels
Security Guarding services Lot 1 – Manned Guarding Services (T1974)	Up 4 years and 4 months	Additional 1 month and £50,000	N Largey	Due to delays in the planned award of replacement contract (T2537) an additional 1-month extension of contract required for Lot 1 Manned Guarding Services to help facilitate the implementation of the new contract and time for TUPE	Cobra Security Services

				consultations and transfer of approx. 20 guards.	
A Bolder Vision for Belfast Strategy and Implementation Framework T2538	Up to 1 year	Additional 6 months and no increase in value	C Reynolds	Since the Call-off Contract was initiated, there has been extensive pause and prolongation linked to the emerging Eastern Transport Plan (Belfast city centre chapter). A contract modification is therefore required to extend the call-off expiry date to enable the project to be completed.	Jacobs UK Limited
Provision of Building Management and Operations at 2 Royal Avenue T2583	Up to 1 year	Additional 6 months and £130,068	D Martin	To avoid disruption or cessation to the current operation of the venue, an extension to the current 'meanwhile use' contract is requested. This will allow the venue to continue to operate while the current Expression of Interest exercise is concluded, followed by the progression of next steps.	MayWe

Requests for Funding

The Committee considered the following two requests for funding:

1. Greater Shankill Partnerships Greater Shankill Winter Festival - Unfortunately, the Partnership was unable to secure funding from NIHE for this annual event and was seeking funding from the Council of £17,000.

2. Cancer Lifeline - To fund the shortfall in counselling service delivery costs up to the end of the financial year. The amount requested was for £16,920 to deliver 564 sessions of counselling up to March 2026.

The Committee was reminded that there was no established budget for these requests, however, an amount of £354k was available in the Discretionary Funding Reserve for this year.

During discussion, Members raised concern in relation to the receipt of ad-hoc funding requests.

During further discussion, in relation to the Greater Shankill Partnerships Greater Shankill Winter Festival request, one Member suggested the need for funding for Winter Festival's in each of the other areas of the city.

One Member also reminded the Committee of the Street Tree Planting motion which had previously been agreed, which included the proposal for living Christmas trees in each quarter of the city and requested that an update be provided on the motion.

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to the funding request from Cancer Lifeline to provide funding of £16,920 to support the provision of critical community-based counselling services for people affected by cancer.

Proposal 2

Moved by Alderman McCoubrey,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to the funding request from Greater Shankill Partnership for funding of approximately £17,000 to support the Greater Shankill Winter Festival, and that an additional £17,000 be allocated to other Winter Festival's in each of the other areas of the city and that a report be submitted to the Party Group Leaders Forum to consider how it could be allocated.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed to the request from Greater Shankill Partnership for funding of approximately £17,000 to support the Greater Shankill Winter Festival;

2. Agreed that an additional £17,000 be allocated to other Winter Festival's in each of the other areas of the city and that a report be submitted to the Party Group Leaders Forum to consider how it could be allocated;

3. Agreed that an update on Street Tree Planting motion, which included the proposal for living Christmas trees in each quarter of the city, be provided to Members; and

4. Agreed to the request from Cancer Lifeline to provide funding of £16,920 to support the provision of critical community-based counselling services for people affected by cancer.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting, 6th October

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 6th October, including:

Presentation on Girdwood Community Hub

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Committee that it noted the presentation.

Good Relations Action Plan Quarter Two Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommended to the Committee that it also agreed and noted the contents of the report.

TEO Additional Funding Application and Allocation

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and approved the application. It also approved the allocation of an additional £27,000 in TEO funding to the next two eligible applications received following the Community Recovery Fund – Open Call and recommended that the Committee noted the report and approved both the application and the funding allocation as detailed in the report.

Community Recovery Fund Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommended to the Committee that it also agreed and noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Local Community Action Plan (LCAP) Mobilisation Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and confirmed agreement of the administrative extension to 30th September, 2028 and recommended that the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed the administrative extension to 30th September, 2028.

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Committee noted the contents of the report

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed flexibility on the split of the 24 mentors/mentees for CCD5 Lot 2 up to 75% for mentors and recommended that the Committee agreed the recommendation and noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Processes Update

- The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommended to the Committee that it also agreed and noted the contents of the report.

Update from Partnership Members

- The updates were noted from the East Belfast Community Development Association and the PSNI and were included in the minutes.

Any Other Business

- The Good Relations Manager advised that, following input at the recent Partnership workshop, future Updates from Shared City Partnership Members would be moved to the start of the agenda and that the notes of that workshop would be presented to the Partnership at its meeting in November.

Operational Issues

Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum, 16th October

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 16th October, 2025.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Blackie River Centre	17 January 2026	**Level 5 Student Graduation** to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements of adult learners. Award ceremony followed by lunch. Numbers attending – 30	D	Current rate free as charity
European Youth Parliament United Kingdom	3 March 2026	**2026 Northern Ireland Regional Forum of European Youth Parliament UK** sees teams of schools debate pre-written Resolutions providing a platform to express their opinions whilst building new skills Numbers attending – 80	B & D	Current rate free as charity
Memory Stones of Love in partnership with Cruse Bereavement Care NI	8 March 2026	An afternoon of commemoration with stories, poems and music as main regional event for **COVID-19 National Day of Reflection** Numbers attending – 200	D	Current rate free as charity
Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees	2 May 2026	**75TH Annual Dinner for USRFR** provides an opportunity to invite senior representatives from their fellow associations in Leinster, Munster and Connaught to join with the Ulster Society in celebrating the season and their significant anniversary with dinner, speeches and awards. Numbers attending – 120	C & D	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*
Belfast Pride	17 July 2026	**Belfast Pride 2026 Launch and Awards** annual event with drinks reception, dinner and awards to celebrate the launch of the annual pride festival in Belfast Numbers attending – 320	B & D	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*
European Regions Airline Association Ltd	7 October 2026	**ERA Gala Awards Dinner 2026** brings together the members of the European Regions Airline Association to celebrate the achievements of Regional Airlines operating in Europe with drinks reception, dinner and award ceremony	A & B	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
		Numbers attending – 375		
2027				
Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship	10 November 2027	**Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship Conference 2027 Welcome Reception** begins their conference which is being staged at the Europa Hotel Numbers attending - 100	A & B	*Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC*

Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests

The Committee approved the flying of the Human Rights Day flag and the United Nations flag from the City Hall on 10th December, 2025.

Minutes of the Cost of Living Working Group, 14th October

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Cost of Living Working Group of 14th October, 2025.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Levels of criminality and violence in the City Centre (Councillor Beattie to raise)

Councillor Beattie outlined his concerns regarding the ongoing levels of criminality and violence in the City Centre.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a multi-agency meeting be convened to address the levels of criminality and violence in the City Centre and to consider the short-term actions and long-term strategy to alleviate the issues across the city.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 7th October, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE
AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Alderman 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 9th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October, subject to the amendment of the minute under the heading ‘Deputations - Pilot Opening Hours Scheme at Botanic Gardens’ to reflect that invitations would be extended to both the Friends of Botanic Gardens and the Rugby Road Residents’ Association to present at the meeting on 7th October.

Declarations of Interest

In respect of the agenda item 4 (c) ‘Ending Violence Against Women and Girls – Additional Funding’, Councillors Murray, R-M Donnelly and Doran declared an interest in that their employers had applied for support under the terms of the project.

Councillor M. Donnelly declared an interest in item 6 (d) ‘Integrated Advice Partnership Fund - Additional Funding’ and item 6 (e) ‘Neighbourhood Renewal Advice Services Funding’ in that his employer had applied for support under the terms of both projects.

Since the aforementioned items did not become the subject of discussion or debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

Deputations – Pilot Opening Hours Scheme at Botanic Gardens

In accordance with its decision of 9th September - and the amendment by the Council on 1st October - the Committee received the following deputations regarding the Pilot Opening Hours Scheme at Botanic Gardens.

Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association

Mr. J. Harris, chairperson of the above-mentioned association, reminded the Committee that the Council's survey in the matter had indicated that 236 of the 652 responses received had been in favour of the 24-hour opening of the gardens, which equated to 36 percent. He indicated that the association was of the view that the only amendment that should be considered would be an extension of the gardens' opening hours to 6.30pm during winter months, which would benefit local residents and the business community together with those who worked or studied at The Queen's University of Belfast.

Friends of Botanic Gardens

Mr. A. Walsh of Friends of Botanic Gardens outlined the unique and historical nature of the park and stated that any extension to the current opening hours would be, in his view, inappropriate. He added that the current 'dawn to dusk' opening hours helped to protect the historical buildings and protect biodiversity within the wider gardens. The use of artificial light to facilitate extended opening hours would, he suggested, have a detrimental impact on the natural growth cycle of certain plants.

Rugby Road Residents' Association

Ms. B. Hinds of the Rugby Road Residents' Association indicated that the association was supportive of the view expressed by the Friends of Botanic Gardens in that it agreed that 'dawn to dusk' opening hours were the most appropriate. Such an arrangement, she stated, would help protect the environment and amenity of the gardens and its unique place in Belfast's history. She referred to the consultation exercise which had been undertaken on the proposals and stated that the survey, in her view, had not taken account of the distinctive nature of the gardens when compared to other parks across the City.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and noted further that the views expressed would be considered within the overall context of the consultation exercise on the pilot scheme.

Notice of Motion – Community Orchards

The Committee considered the following notice of motion, which had been moved by Councillor Bower and seconded by the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) and which the Standards and Business Committee had referred to the Committee at its meeting on 23rd September:

> "This Council recognises the wide-ranging social, environmental, and economic benefits of community orchards, including increased access to fresh fruit, the promotion of local food resilience, the enhancement of green spaces, improved mental and physical wellbeing, and stronger community cohesion. It acknowledges that community orchards contribute to climate resilience through increased biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and natural cooling effects in urban areas. It also notes that community orchards offer valuable opportunities for intergenerational learning, volunteering, and environmental education, particularly in areas where green space and access to nature are limited.
>
> This motion is requesting that this council commits to supporting the creation and maintenance of community orchards across the city through partnerships with residents, schools, and local organisations. Council will take part in identifying underused or neglected public land that could be repurposed for community orchard use. This would require commitment to some expenditure for planting, equipment, and training necessary to establish new orchards in identified areas. Council would also encourage and support community-led management of orchards and provide resources and guidance to support their long-term sustainability."

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion and agreed that it would be considered also within the context of existing motions and Council initiatives – such as the 'One Million Trees' – and that a report would be submitted in due course.

Notice of Motion – Feasibility of a Dedicated Scrambler Site and Programme

(The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd September, had referred the undernoted notice of motion, which had been proposed by The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, to the Committee for its consideration:

> "This Council recognises the serious risks and community concerns associated with illegal and reckless scrambler use across Belfast, where incidents have endangered lives, damaged public spaces, and affected community wellbeing. Accordingly, this Council agrees that officers prepare a report for Committee which will:
>
> - explore the feasibility of identifying a dedicated site for a scrambler programme in Belfast which aims will be to divert young people away from offending behaviour, rehabilitate those caught up in crime, provide vocational training and learning opportunities and create a safe, managed environment that works to remove scramblers from our streets and parks;

- undertake a land audit of Council-owned sites to assess their potential suitability; and

- identify potential stakeholders and collaborators, including relevant Stormont departments, the PSNI, youth and community organisations, and training providers;

- outline preparatory requirements, indicative timelines, and opportunities for partnership to inform Members of the potential for taking such a project forward."

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report, which would examine also a range of comments and suggestions made by Members in this regard, be submitted to a future meeting.

Notice of Motion - Safeguarding Belfast's Playparks

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th August, it had deferred consideration of the above-mentioned motion to allow for clarity to be provided by the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum on the process to be followed, should the motion be adopted, in respect of the development of a policy and the undertaking of a consultation exercise. Accordingly, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services updated the Committee and indicated that he had been advised that, should the motion be adopted, it would be necessary, firstly, to format the draft policy and that a consultation exercise on the policy be undertaken thereafter.

The Committee noted the comments of the Strategic Director and reconsidered the following motion, which had been moved by Alderman McCullough and seconded by Councillor McCormick:

> "Belfast City Council, hereinafter "this Council", expresses its deep concern at the growing number of reports relating to indecent, threatening, and predatory behaviour in Council-owned playparks across Belfast. These spaces, intended for the happiness and well-being of children, are increasingly being compromised by individuals loitering without lawful purpose, in a manner that alarms parents and communities.
>
> This Council believes that every child has the right to play safely, and every parent has the right to peace of mind when bringing their children to a local park. Public spaces must reflect public values – including the protection of childhood innocence, the upholding of decency, and the moral duty to safeguard the vulnerable.
>
> Accordingly, this Council commits to the creation of a comprehensive Safeguarding Belfast's Playparks Policy – including, but not limited to, the following objectives:
>
> 1. to prohibit loitering in and around children's playparks by any adult not accompanying a child, or without a legitimate purpose;

2. to conduct a full public consultation, both online and in person, to hear the views of residents, parents/guardians, and community organisations in directly shaping this policy; and

3. to work with statutory bodies – including the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Home Office, and community organisations – to combat predatory sexual crime and anti-social behaviour in our public spaces."

Proposal

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

That the Committee agrees, given the inability of Members to reach a consensus on the specific wording for the motion, that it be rejected and, accordingly, closed.

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

Sally Gardens Playing Fields

Pitch Bookings

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 8th October, 2024, it had agreed that officers would liaise with service users at the Sally Gardens Playing Fields to ascertain the reasons for recurring pitch cancellations with a view to addressing the matter to ensure the maximising of the use of the facility in the event of such cancellations.

The Operational Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that the principal reasons for the recurring cancellations had been identified and the matter had been raised with the Council's partners in the management of the venue, that is, the County Antrim Board of the Gaelic Athletic Association. It was reported that all clubs using the pitch had been reminded of their obligations to fulfil bookings and the negative impact which such cancellations had on the use of the overall use of the facility.

The Committee noted the work which had been undertaken to reduce cancellations to a minimum and to maximise the utilisation of the pitch at the Sally Gardens site.

Partnership Agreements

The Committee was advised that the Ulster Council of the Gaelic Athletic Association had requested a one-year extension to the current partnership agreements for the management of pitches at Cherryvale Playing Fields, Cliftonville Road Playing Fields, Woodlands Playing Fields and the Sally Gardens Playing Fields. The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services advised the Committee that, should it accede to the request, such an extension would permit the current booking and prioritisation model to continue until a revised model had been considered and agreed through the Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy and a new Pitches Strategy.

The Committee agreed to extend, until 16th October, 2026, the aforementioned partnership agreements between the Council and the Ulster Council of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

Arising from discussion in the above-mentioned matter, the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services confirmed, in response to a Member, that the introduction of an independent stand-alone pitch booking system would be one of the recommendations contained within a new Pitches Strategy to be presented for consideration in due course.

Provision of Alley Gates

Installation Update

Further to the Committee's meeting of 5th August, when concerns had been raised in relation to the delays which had been encountered in the installation of alley gates under Phase 5 of the programme, the Committee considered a report in the matter.

The Committee was advised that, since its meeting in August, additional funding had been secured and the delivery of Phase 5 had commenced, with the gates associated with 'tranche one' of the programme having been installed. It was reported that Council officers were liaising with the current contractor to agree a schedule for the delivery of the rest of the programme. In this regard, it was anticipated that 'tranche two' would commence during October, 2025, with installation estimated to be completed by February, 2026.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Belfast City Council (Holylands) Traffic Regulation Order 2025

The Committee agreed to the enactment of the Belfast City Council (Holylands) Traffic Regulation Order 2025, which was a pre-requisite requirement for the undertaking of work within that area under Phase 5b of the above-mentioned programme.

Replacement Keys for Alley Gates

Further to a Member's request which had been made at the Committee's meeting on 9th September, the Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the costs incurred in providing replacement alley gate keys to local residents.

Arising from discussion, the Committee agreed that information be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the number of replacement keys which had been issued, the origin of their manufacture, together with income received in charging for keys by the Council over the past 24 months.

Consultation on the Renaming of Balfour Avenue Playpark

Further to the request which had been made at the meeting on 9th September in relation to the above-mentioned matter, the Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the criteria and the corporate processes that would be followed in considering a request to rename parks, playparks, playing fields or open spaces under the management of the Council.

DAERA Funding and Urban Meadows Update

The Director informed the Committee that, in September, the Council had been awarded £472,000 from within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEARA) Challenge Fund. The key priorities for that scheme was to enhance nature and climate recovery and to connect people with the environment by developing Conservation Management Plans and a Nature Recovery Network across Belfast. The total cost of the scheme would be £522,500, of which the Council would contribute a pre-budgeted sum of £50,500, with the remaining amount being met from within the aforementioned DEARA funding of £472,000.

The Director further reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 12th September, 2023, it had adopted a motion under the heading 'Urban Wildflower Meadows' which, amongst other things, had agreed 'to identify a suitable site for wildflower cultivation in each quadrant of Belfast'. The Committee was informed that four sites in each area of the City had been identified, after a workshop and consultation exercise, that being, Glencairn Park, Ormeau Park, Belmont Park and Brook Leisure Centre, as the preferred options for the development of urban meadows. The indicative site costs for the Council-led interventions were just under the £50,000 budget which had been allocated within the 2025/2026 budget.

After discussion, during which the Director clarified the criteria which had been used in the short-listing of the sites, the Committee agreed that the project would proceed at the four sites identified.

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.

Lagan Valley Regional Park

Further to its decision of 7th October, the Committee received Ms. S. McClintock, Chief Executive, and Dr. A. Bridge, Park Manager, representing the Lagan Valley Regional

Park, and they proceeded to deliver a presentation on matters relating to that organisation's future governance and sustainability.

After discussion, the Committee noted the several funding models which had been presented and agreed to defer consideration of the matter to enable a report to be submitted that would provide further information and analysis on the financial status of LVRP; together with further detail on the several options proposed and additional information on the level of engagement with - and the funding intentions of - the Department for Infrastructure, DEARA and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) – Proposed Annual Schedule of Charges 2026/27

The Committee considered the proposed Annual Schedule of Charges for 2026/27 which had been prepared by GLL in relation to the Council's leisure centres.

The Committee noted the schedule of charges for 2026/27 and the rationale used in support of the price revisions. However, the Committee agreed that it be recorded that it was opposed, in principle, to the overall percentage increase applied by GLL, which was in excess of the Consumer Price Index. In addition, it was agreed that GLL be requested to re-examine specifically the proposed increase to the family membership package with a view that it be reduced to 5% for 2026/27.

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) – Annual User Survey Outcomes 2024

The Committee noted the information which had been provided within the above-mentioned survey and welcomed the level of qualitative data included and the user-friendly manner in which the information had been presented.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls – Additional Funding

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that correspondence had been received from The Executive Office indicating that additional in-year funding had become available to support the Strategic Framework for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. He outlined a proposed course of action that would be undertaken in applying for additional funds and answered a range of Members' questions in this regard.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the process and timeframe outlined for the submission of an application for additional in-year programme support;

- approved the draft Council Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - 2025/26 Momentum Programme as outlined;

- noted that the previously agreed approach to the allocation of additional in-year funding to Local Change Fund grant applications; and

- noted the invitation to Regional Change Fund grant recipients to bid for a potential uplift to their current funding allocation for 2025/26, and the officer involvement and Council commitment to administer the related letters of offers.

2026 European City of Sport

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 5th November, 2024, it had agreed that Belfast would submit a bid to be designated as the 2026 European City of Sport by the Brussels-based ACES organisation. The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided an update on the progress of the bid to date and the next stages in the process.

Noted.

Draft Support Framework for Independent Advice and Debt Service - Consultation

The Committee endorsed a **draft response** to the above-mentioned consultation and agreed that, in order to meet the closing deadline for submissions, it be forwarded to the Department for Communities (DfC), subject to its adoption or amendment by the Council on 3rd November. It was agreed also that the following points would be emphasised to DfC as part of the Council's response:

- that the responsibility remained with DfC - and not local councils - to provide adequate funding for Advice and Debt Services, particularly as the need for such services was growing year-on-year and that inflationary increases were essential to address increasing need; and

- that the views of service providers and those with lived experience of such services should be fundamental to any review and/or recommendations arising for the future delivery of advice and debt services.

Fly-tipping and Littering

(Ms. C. McGeown, Senior Policy Performance and Improvement Officer, attended in connection with this item.)

At its meeting on 5th August, the Committee had requested that a report be submitted in relation to the above-mentioned matter which would provide data on enforcement activity, prosecutions and a geographical breakdown of the main areas for fly-tipping and house clearances across Belfast. Accordingly, the Committee considered a report and appendices which provided an overview of data recorded by the Council as of August 2025, and which focussed on several issues, together with enforcement and corporate communication, education and awareness relating to fly-tipping.

It was reported that, over the past five-years, there had been 854 court prosecutions brought by the Council for littering, fly-tipping and for failing to respond to an 'Article 20 Notice' for littering. Regarding the fixed penalty notices issued City-wide for littering and fly-tipping, the following data had been recorded:

- South Belfast - 364 fixed penalty notices had been issued in 2022/23; 426 in 2023/24; and 288 in 2024/25;
- East Belfast - 137 fixed penalty notices had been issued in 2022/23; 127 in 2023/24; and 148 in 2024/25;
- North Belfast - 61 fixed penalty notices had been issued in 2022/23; 137 in 2023/24; and 134 in 2024/25;
- West Belfast - 27 fixed penalty notices had been issued in 2022/23; 104 in 2023/24; and 108 in 2024/25;

Regarding the number of reports of fly-tipping recorded by the Council's Customer Hub, it was reported that, in 2021 and 2022, South Belfast had the recorded the highest levels; North Belfast had recorded the highest levels in 2023 and 2024; whilst East Belfast had recorded the highest levels thus far in 2025. The streets which had recorded the highest number of reports for littering and fly-tipping in each area of the city were Tamery Pass in East Belfast, Crimea Close in the North Belfast, the Donegall Road in South Belfast, and Cavendish Street in West Belfast.

Several Members expressed frustration at the number of recorded instances of fly-tipping, particularly in open spaces and alleyways, and its prevalence and persistence across the City. Further Members reported that the number of constituents contacting them with issues relating to fly-tipping and littering had grown significantly in recent years. It was suggested that the Council should seek to become more proactive in publicising, particularly within the most affected areas, the penalties and consequences of fly-tipping and littering. As such, additional leafleting and articles within *City Matters* might be used in this regard to raise awareness of the penalties for those who violated the byelaws in this manner.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed to note the information which had been provided and officers undertook to examine the suggestions made by Members. The full report and appendices relating to the item can be accessed in the **attached link.**

Litter Bin Improvement Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update members on the various elements of our litter bin improvement programme, and to seek approval for its proposed next steps.

1.2 Recommendations

a) to note the update on the SMART compactor litter bin pilot, and approve the recommended next steps;

b) to note and approve the proposed streets to be considered for additional litter bins as part of the coordinated approach to tackling dog fouling; and

c) to note the outworkings of the litter bin audit and condition survey, and ongoing work to upgrade litter bin stock.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 In November 2024, 24 of our standard litter bins were replaced with 10 SMART compactor litter bins within the grounds of the City Hall, as part of a pilot. We subsequently extended the pilot to cover the busy summer months, when usage of the grounds at lunchtime, and throughout the day, is much higher. Therefore, putting a greater demand on the litter bin provision and collections.

3.2 Table one below demonstrates the estimated labour time saved on servicing litter bins at City Hall, by installing SMART compactor bins. By reviewing bin fullness reports within the software, our operational team can adapt to reduce the number of collections required throughout the day and attend other priority cleansing operations.

Table One

Belfast City Hall		
	Previous Standard Bins	**Big Belly Bin Locations**
No. of bins	24	10
Av. empties per day per bin	3	1
Total empties per day	72	10
Emptying time (no of mins)	2	2
Total mins attending bins	2 hrs 24 mins	20 mins

3.4 In addition to the labour time savings, the SMART bins technology provides useful insight into individual bin collection volumes over a six-month period. This provides the team with data that can be used to inform better bin placement. Making better use of our litter bin stock and operative time overall.

3.5 Our operational teams have noted that on occasion the compactor mechanism jammed, usually due to large pizza boxes, meaning the bin is not usable until this is remedied. In these instances, the software will notify area teams when this occurs. There is also the option of installing a 'pizza belly' bin, which is designed to dispose of all sizes of pizza boxes specifically.

3.6 Officers are seeking approval from members to extend the SMART litter bin provision further into the City Centre and propose to install an additional 26 bins at various locations around Donegal Square, Donegal Avenue and Royal Avenue. This extension will also include locations within the BID areas, as agreed with partners.

3.7 In addition to this, officers are exploring the option of installing SMART litter bins at various 'hard to reach' locations within the neighbourhoods, as well within our parks and our playparks. For example, Cavehill car park, Upper Hightown road. And hopefully reducing unnecessary down time and fuel costs, when these bins are not approaching the required level of fullness to be emptied. This would be particularly helpful in the winter months when our playpark inspection programme reduces. Table two below provides an indication of the impact on the service in terms of a reduction in daily litter bin emptying time. This reduction means that operatives can be redeployed to other tasks including litter collection and bin maintenance etc.

Table Two

Belfast City Hall & Donegal Place/Sq to Royal Ave.		
	Standard Bins	**Big Belly Bin Locations**
No of bin	**50**	**26**
Average empties per day per bin	2	1
Total empties per day	100	26
Emptying time (no of mins)	2	2
Total mins per day attending bins	3 hrs 20 mins	52 mins

<u>Dog Fouling Hot Spots – Enhanced Litter Bin Provision</u>

3.8 Since January 2025 officers have been conducting a dog fouling reduction pilot within OSS North. A report will be brought back to members on the full outworkings of that pilot. Alongside this work an officer's coordination group, aimed at tackling incidents of dog fouling across the City, has been established. As part of the action plan this group has extracted information from the customer hub on the streets with the highest number of dog fouling complaints during the period 01 April 2021 - 01 July 2025. Using this information together with data from our quality monitoring returns and OSS management insight, the streets listed at Appendix B would be the focus for the next phase of targeted interventions, including increased

patrols by dog wardens as well as a review of litter bin provision, to include consideration of a mix of post mounted and standard litter bins, with dog fouling stickers affixed to the sides. All locations are subject to location suitability assessment. Members may have anecdotal information on other streets / areas to be considered, and officers are happy to engage on those areas to consider how provision could be improved.

Litter Bin Condition Survey Update

3.9 The following information is provided by way of update on the standard litter bin upgrade programme:

- **Since the litter bin provision contract has been put in place a total of 200 bins have been replaced across the Council area. Members are reminded that those bins that required replacement or installation due to a health and safety issue have been prioritised. Following that litter bins in a poor state of repair are replaced.**

- **We have a total of 725 bins requiring replacement across the city. These are bins which have a significant amount of rust, have been damaged irreparably and been removed or individual mechanisms have been broken (ash trays/locks etc). We are working with property maintenance unit on a programme of replacement.**

- **We have 680 litter bins which require general maintenance. This includes painting / graffiti removal. Operational teams are using this information to inform a regular programme of maintenance, which will work in tandem with the new sharps and bin maintenance team.**

- **Our ability to replace litter bins is dependent upon regular supply and capacity within the property maintenance unit to conduct replacements and or installations. There have been delays with supply due to an issue within the supply chain. This has now been resolved. Replacement and installation are carried out by the property maintenance unit and is dependent upon capacity.**

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications within this report. All actions to date, and proposed actions regarding the

SMART bin can be covered within existing service revenue budgets.

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

There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessments associated with this report.

The Committee noted the update provided on the SMART compactor litter bin pilot and approved the recommended next steps; approved the proposed streets to be considered for additional litter bins as part of the coordinated approach to tackling dog fouling; and noted the outworkings of the litter bin audit and condition survey, and ongoing work to upgrade litter bin stock.

Requests to Host an Events in Parks and Open Space

The Committee approved a request submitted by the Orangegrove Athletics Club for the hosting of the CIYMS Boxing Day Fun Run in Belmont Park, subject to the club meeting with and adhering to all of the stipulations outlined within the report.

Neighbourhood Renewal Advice Services Funding

The Committee considered the following report:

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

1.1 **To advise members that the Department of Communities has contacted Council to seek their views on the potential to administer existing Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for Advice Services through the Community Support Plan (CSP) LoO in 2025/26 and 2026/27.**

2.0 **Recommendation**

2.1 **Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and advise whether they wish to accept the DfC proposal to administer existing Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for Advice Services through the Community Support Plan (CSP) LoO in 2025/26 and 2026/27.**

3.0 **Background information**

3.1 **The Council receives funding from the Department for Communities Voluntary and Community Division (VCD) through the Community Support Plan (CSP). This funding is used to fund community support activity and also to fund a range of advice services.**

3.2 **DfC has contacted council officials to advise that DfC also funds some community-based advice projects through DfC Community Empowerment Division (CED) / Neighbourhood Renewal (NR). The projects were initially identified through Neighbourhood Renewal action plans and have received core funding from Neighbourhood Renewal for more than ten years.**

3.3 **The Department is keen to establish if there is potential to transition the NR funded projects to within the existing council-delivered programmes. This would mean that funding for these projects would be administered by Council through an allocation from the CSP.**

3.4 **DfC has indicated there will not be significant changes to the NR funding in 2025/26 with 2026/27 likely to be a transitionary period within the programme. DfC propose that projects transitioned into the CSP programme would continue to be funded in line with NR funding until 2026/27.**

3.5 **DfC would engage with the impacted organisations during this period to ensure each is aware of the impact on it in respect of funding, how the council-delivered programme operates, and how to engage with the funding mechanisms in place through the existing programme.**

3.6 **Neighbourhood Renewal funding in 2024/25 for projects delivering advice services totalled £286k. DfC would provide this additional amount to be allocated to the affected organisations. Funding is provided to the following organisations through the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme.**

Organisation	**Project Title**	**Constituency**	**2023/24 Amount**	**2024/25 Amount**
North Belfast Advice Partnership Vine Centre, BCF, Ligoniel.	Welfare & Benefit Support	North Belfast	£116,846.88	£124,335.82
Upper Springfield Development Company Limited	Advice Services	West Belfast	£107,907.20	£113,302.56
CCRF - North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum	Advice Services	North Belfast	£11,077.04	£11,077.04
Springfield Charitable Association	Social Environment	West Belfast	£35,301.90	£37,732.14
Total			**£271,133.02**	**£286,477.56**

3.7 Members should note that DfC have advised that they will only provide the additional allocation through the CSP Letter of Offer until 26/27 to the organisations listed above. After that time, there will be no allocation from the DfC NR Team as it is expected that new arrangements for Neighbourhood Renewal will be in place by that time.

3.8 Members should consider that the provision of funding for these organisations may create an expectation that this support will be provided by Council after 26/27, however, since this funding is 100% funded by the DfC NR team there would be no budget to do this. Officers would highlight the risk associated to council of this increased expectation and also the value of implementing a new funding arrangement for such a short period of time.

Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 The administration of this fund would have to be carried out by existing staff, there is no immediate financial impact for council as 100% funding is being provided by DfC. However, there is a risk that an expectation to maintain this funding would be created.

The Committee agreed, given the anticipated volume of work associated with the administration of the fund; together with the fact that a consultation exercise was ongoing in the matter; and the lack of clarity on the level of funding to be provided after 2026/27, to reject the Department for Communities' proposal that the Council administer the existing Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for Advice Services through the Community Support Plan Letter of Offer in 2025/26 and 2026/27.

Applications for Dual Language Street Signs with Potential for an Adverse Impact

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider if a street survey of occupiers will be carried out for eight applications for the erection of dual language street signs in Irish within the City where potential adverse impacts have been identified by the initial assessments and/or elected member objections

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to consider the report and matters raised in relation to the applications for dual language street signs in Irish received for Knock Eden Crescent, Willowfield Gardens, Wynchurch Road, Sicily Park, Upper Knockbreda Road,

Annandale Crecent, Kingsberry Park, Ardenlee Court and either:

a) agree that surveys of occupiers of these streets be carried out; or

b) agree that no surveys will be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and that these applications are closed.

3.1 <u>Key Issues</u>

The power for the Council to consider applications to erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

<u>Initial Assessments</u>

3.2 The Dual Language Street Sign policy states that "*each application will be subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs and where any adverse impacts are identified that information will be brought to Committee*."

3.3 The initial assessments were carried out for all the streets listed and potential adverse impacts were identified in relation to the following streets: -

- **Knock Eden Crescent**
- **Willowfield Gardens**
- **Sicily Park**
- **Upper Knockbreda Road**
- **Annandale Crecent**

3.4 Draft equality screenings were therefore carried out, assessing the request for dual language street signs in Irish for Knock Eden Crescent, Willowfield Gardens, Sicily Park, Upper Knockbreda Road and Annandale Crecent for equality and good relations issues.

3.5 The screenings have identified that the carrying out of surveys and the erection of Irish language street signs in these areas has the potential to give rise to community tension. Conversely the screenings also identified that the process could assist in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity. The findings are outlined in the equality and good relation section below.

Objections from Elected Members

3.7 Details of the objections are as follows: -

Wynchurch Road - Councillor Davy Douglas, member for Lisnasharragh raised an objection stating: -

"Wynchurch is a mixed area close to the Cregagh estate and Flush Park, both traditional unionist areas. It is an area where people of both denominations live side by side without issue. I feel that the adoption of Irish street signage could be seen as divisive and have an adverse impact on good relations within the community, creating division where none currently exists. This has already been seen recently in Wynchurch Avenue where the street was surveyed twice, resulting in an increasing majority rejecting the proposal each time. Despite this, the views of the people who live in the street were ignored and dual language street signage was imposed against their wishes, damaging community relations in the process".

3.8 Annandale Crecent, Kingsberry Park and Ardenlee Court – Councillor Bradley Ferguson member for Lisnasharragh raised an objection stating: -

"While I fully respect the cultural traditions and identities of all communities in Northern Ireland, I believe the introduction of bilingual signage in Lisnasharragh is divisive, unnecessary, and does not reflect the wishes of the majority of residents in the area. Lisnasharragh is a diverse and shared space and introducing street signs that are strongly associated with one particular political and cultural identity risks undermining community cohesion and alienating those from a different background.

Public consultation should play a central role in decisions of this nature. However, I have serious concerns about the consultation process, particularly around the weighting of responses, the level of local engagement, and whether it genuinely reflects the majority opinion in each affected street. The interests of the whole community must be considered – not just those of activists or lobby groups.

The Irish language is, for some, a deeply valued part of their cultural heritage. However, for others, it is seen – fairly or not – as a political symbol. As such, I strongly believe that street signage should remain

> ***neutral and inclusive to foster a shared future for everyone in Belfast.***
>
> ***I urge the council to prioritise policies that promote inclusivity and mutual respect rather than those that risk increasing division"***

3.9 These applications are therefore being brought to Committee to determine if surveys of residents of these streets will take place, considering this information.

<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

3.10 If it is decided to carry out surveys, the resulting tasks are included within existing resources and budgets for the process.

<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u>

3.11 An EQIA was carried out on the main Dual Language Street Signs policy in 2021-22. This confirmed the initial assessment process to be carried out, which may indicate the requirement for equality screening.

3.12 The applications for dual language street signs (with the second language in Irish) at Knock Eden Crescent, Willowfield Gardens, Sicily Park, Upper Knockbreda Road and Annandale Crecent were assessed for equality of opportunity and good relations issues through the initial assessment process. This process identified that the potential for adverse impact existed and recommended further screening prior to referral to committee for authority to proceed to survey.

3.13 The draft screenings have identified that the carrying out of a survey in itself in these areas has the potential to give rise to community tension, as could the erection of the street signs and therefore has the potential to give rise to adverse impact on the grounds of good relations. It is acknowledged; however, the process could alternatively assist in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity.

3.14 The applications were also presented to elected members as part of the elected member notification procedure and objections were received from Cllr Davy Douglas with regard to Wynchurch Road and from Cllr Bradley Ferguson with regard to Annandale Crecent, Kingsberry Park and Ardenlee Court. The members were concerned about the potential for adverse impacts on good relations with full details of their objections in paragraphs 3.5 - 3.15 above.

3.15 The council retains 'residual discretion' in relation to these applications. In effect this gives elected members the option to not proceed to survey and/ or halt the erection of an Irish language street sign in this street where, in the view of elected members considering the agreed criteria, this action would be considered inappropriate.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That the Committee agrees, given the potential for an adverse impact on community relations, that no surveys on the erection of a second street sign in Irish be carried out on the residents of Knock Eden Crescent, Willowfield Gardens, Wynchurch Road, Sicily Park, Upper Knockbreda Road, Annandale Crecent, Kingsberry Park and Ardenlee Court.

Amendment

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

That the Committee agrees that surveys in respect of the erection of a second street sign in Irish be carried out on the residents of the aforementioned streets.

On a vote, fourteen 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 carried by fourteen votes to six.

Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Deerpark Gardens, Grasmere Garden, Ravensdene Crescent, Ardilea Court, Kingsmere Avenue and St. Judes Parade.

Proposals for the Naming of New Streets

The Committee approved the naming of Hopewell Gardens.

Dilapidations Bill - Consultation Response

The Committee approved a **draft response** to the above-mentioned consultation exercise and agreed that it be submitted, in accordance with the deadline for submissions, to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) in advance of the Council meeting on 3rd November, subject to any amendments being notified to DEARA.

Item Raised in Advance

Use of the Cutts Recycling Centre

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor McCann addressed the meeting and suggested that the Council should consider entering into a short-term agreement with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) to enable the use of the Cutts Recycling Centre by Belfast residents whilst the Blackstaff Recycling Centre was closed for repair work. The Operational Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that, since the item had been added to the agenda, officers from LCCC had contacted him to advise that its Environment and Sustainability Committee, and, in turn, its full Council, would, given the timing of its committee meetings, be unable to consider any request within the timescale anticipated for the temporary closure of Blackstaff Recycling Centre.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and noted also the comments of several Members in relation to the matter, particularly the inability of Belfast residents living in the Twinbrook, Poleglass and Lagmore areas to use the Cutts Recycling Centre. It was pointed out that the issue dated back to the Reform of Local Government in 2014 and that the Council should seek again to raise the matter formally with LCCC with a view to finding a mutually beneficial resolution.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 8th October, 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, McCabe, McCallin,
McCormick, McKay, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan,
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;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th September, 2025, 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 October, 2025, subject to the following amendment:

- the minute under the heading "Vacant to Vibrant Programme" was amended to provide that letters be sent to the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for Communities to seek additional funding to support the Vacant to Vibrant scheme.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four 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.

2 Royal Avenue Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on 2 Royal Avenue and set out a proposed approach in respect of the long-term use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor.

During discussion, a Member requested that engagement be undertaken with all relevant partners in relation to the future use of the building.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the Committee agrees not to progress with the recommended proposal as outlined within the report, and that a report be submitted to its next meeting to provide further detail and options in respect of the future use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation as outlined within the report in respect of the long-term future use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor.

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

The original proposal, standing in the name of Councillor R. McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Duffy, was thereupon put to the Committee. On a vote, seventeen Members voted for the proposal and two against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

i. noted the background information provided in relation to previous Committee decisions on the longer-term use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor;

ii. agreed not to progress with the recommended proposal as outlined within the report, and that a report be submitted to its next meeting to provide further detail and options on the future use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor; and

iii. agreed that engagement with all relevant partners be undertaken in relation to the future use of 2 Royal Avenue.

St George's Market Update

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update in relation to the ongoing and planned engagement with St George's Market traders to support the effective working of the market.

The Director advised the Committee that trader documentation had been updated and would be issued to all traders in due course. He stated that the updated trader documentation would help support those officers responsible for carrying out operational management activities and enable the effective management of the market.

During discussion, a Member highlighted the need to strengthen connectivity between the market and the neighbouring communities and residents.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

i. the update in relation to the ongoing and planned engagement with all St George's Market traders to support the effective working of the market; and

ii. the planned introduction of updated trader documentation in the coming weeks to support officers responsible for carrying out operational management activities for the effective management of the market.

Malone House

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update in relation to Malone House and outlined a proposed approach in respect of the asset's future use.

During discussion, several Members highlighted the need for engagement to be undertaken with all relevant stakeholders in relation to the future use of Malone House and that all options should be explored and considered. A Member also requested that a condition survey of the building be undertaken to help inform future consideration.

After discussion, the Committee:

i. noted the contents of the report; and

ii. agreed that, in respect of the proposed approach to Malone House as set out in the report, all options should be explored and considered in relation to the potential future use of the asset, which would be informed by a range of factors, including a condition survey of the building.

Presentation - Belfast Waterfront Task Group

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with background information on the Belfast Waterfront Task Group, which was chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and included representatives from the Maritime Belfast Trust, Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour, Titanic Quarter Limited, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure, Department for Economy, Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Tourism NI, Odyssey Trust, Sailortown Regeneration, EastSide Partnership and the Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group.

She reported that the Task Group had been established, in response to the city's 'A Bolder Vision' key move 'Embrace the River Lagan and Waterfront', to scope how the waterfront could fully realise its potential as a connected, vibrant corridor which would link with key destinations, neighbourhood communities and the city centre. She highlighted that a key objective of the Task Group had been to agree a place-making framework for the city's waterfront promenade and advised that a progress update in relation to the projects within the framework would be provided following the presentation by the Task Group representatives.

The Chairperson welcomed the following representatives of the Belfast Waterfront Task Group to the meeting:

- Ms. Kerrie Sweeney, Chief Executive, Maritime Belfast Trust;
- Ms. Michele Bryans, Chief Executive, EastSide Partnership; and
- Mr. Gerard Rice, Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group.

Ms. Sweeney provided the Committee with an update in relation to the Belfast Promenade Framework, which had been developed by the Belfast Waterfront Task Group to set out a long-term vision to help transform the city's waterfront.

She outlined the waterfront's distinct character areas and development opportunities and provided an update in relation to the current strands of work, including the development of a Maritime Story Plan, which provided a framework to help guide the development of the waterfront and had also identified heritage sites, and the commissioning of a Blueway feasibility study to explore the potential to establish a Blueway along the waterfront in line with the Blueway Ireland Accreditation.

Ms. Sweeney reported that the Belfast Historic Waterfront had been designated as a Heritage Place, one of only two in Northern Ireland, through the National Lottery Heritage Fund's 'Heritage Places' initiative. She stated that the funding would help deliver capital and revenue projects along the waterfront with potential themes in relation to community capacity building and engagement, heritage preservation and conservation, biodiversity, nature and access to water, waterfront promenade connectivity, animation and activation, and destination and organisation sustainability.

She concluded the presentation by providing the Committee with indicative timescales in relation to the 'Heritage Places' initiative, including the announcement, development stage and the overall project delivery.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of question from the Members in relation to community capacity building and engagement, funding, upscaling city events, Sailortown and the balancing of access to the river with biodiversity and nature. The representatives highlighted the positive engagement that had taken place in respect of the Waterfront Framework and the benefits that had been realised by local communities through participation in the Task Group. It was reported that the Task Group would provide a number of avenues to build capacity and offer along the waterfront for existing and new communities.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Belfast Waterfront Task Group Update

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 progress of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework, and in particular to provide an update 'Under the Bridges' and the 'Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge' projects, including progress to date, consultation/ planning timeline and next steps.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Note the update on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework;**
- **Note that Members of the Waterfront Task Group will be providing an update presentation to this Committee meeting that will be in conjunction to this report;**

- **Note the update on the Under the Bridges and Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge projects.**

3.0 Background

3.1 As reported to the CG&R Committee in October 2023 a Waterfront Task Group was established to develop a focused approach to the Belfast waterfront, in response to 'A Bolder Vision' Key Move 'Embracing the River'. This Key Move seeks to capitalise on one of the city's most defining, but underused assets, the River Lagan, by strengthening connections, promoting new leisure activities and attracting tourism. Improved connections from the city centre to the waterfront and its surrounding communities would remove barriers by providing links across with new bridges and enhanced walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure along the river. The Key Move also promotes revitalisation along the Lagan waterfront and on Queen's Island including activating the river front with new uses and spaces to dwell and utilise waterfront developments like Titanic Quarter, City Quays, community led projects and other initiatives such as the Maritime Mile.

3.2 The Waterfront Task Group, chaired by BCC Chief Executive and consisting of Maritime Belfast Trust, BCC officers, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, local community groups, Titanic Quarter Ltd, DfC, DfE, Tourism NI, Odyssey Trust and DEARA commissioned a detailed analysis of the waterfront area from the Ormeau Road Bridge to Thompsons Dock.

3.3 Consultants, Schulze + Grassov undertook a detailed analysis of over 10km of the waterfront, compiling analysis on the completed and pending developments, as well as identifying the catalyst opportunities and gaps in infrastructure to maximise the social, economic and environmental opportunities that exist along the waterfront. This work also undertook to identify the existing and proposed projects emerging from within the adjacent communities, and to identify catalyst opportunities to connect these projects and the local communities to the wider education, employment and leisure facilities along the waterfront corridor. This work was carried out in consultation with a range of stakeholders including local communities through online surveys and a dedicated charrette style design workshop.

3.4 Following a detailed analysis of over 10km of the waterfront, Members of the CG&R Committee received a presentation on the Framework in October 2023 and approved the Belfast Waterfront Framework.

3.5 **The Waterfront Task Group continues to meet regularly and are making significant progress in the ongoing regeneration of Belfast's waterfront, with a range of initiatives currently underway that aim to enhance connectivity, promote active travel, celebrate the city's maritime heritage, and foster inclusive, community-led placemaking. Local community groups, including Eastside Partnership, Lower Ormeau Residents Association and Sailortown Regeneration Group are Members of the taskforce and are proactively engaged in the Taskforce to develop the emerging work strands to ensure effective design and delivery to meet the shared vision of the Waterfront Framework.**

3.6 **As part of this work, representatives of the Waterfront Task Group undertook a study visit to Copenhagen in 2024 to research best practise, and recently participated in a cycle tour along the Maritime Mile which provided valuable insight into the active travel experience in the area, highlighting both existing connections to the wider cycling network and identifying barriers that require further attention. The tour also served as a platform to learn more about future initiatives under development along the waterfront, including projects under development, which seeks to improve accessibility and recreational opportunities across the waterfront.**

3.7 **This Committee has received a number of updates on Council Led projects emerging from A Bolder Vision and the Waterfront Framework, including Under the Bridges, the Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge and the Queens Quay Kiosk. Members were also invited to attend a presentation update and boat tour of the Framework area in October 2024.**

3.8 **The waterfront has seen substantial development in recent years, with a steady pipeline of emerging developments coming through the planning system to further enable the areas' ability to deliver on the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and the LDP. In addition to the relocation of Ulster University to York Street and the subsequent influx of student accommodation in the surrounding areas, the emerging development landscape of this area is ambitious with the impact expected to be transformational. Projects such as City Quays Gardens has been delivered and is operational since April 2025. The gardens transformed a former car park into a vibrant green space with walkways, seating areas, an events lawn with amphitheatre-style seating, and an iconic 'Gateway Nest' sculpture. Planning approval has been secured for further developments in the area including;**

- **Public realm works at Little York Street, Little Patrick Street, Planning secured in 2025, and currently undergoing the Traffic Road Order Process prior to commencing construction procurement**
- **Residential development comprising 256no. units, public realm, and associated access at City Quays 4 and the 69 affordable homes in Pilot Street,**
- **Office, retail, community and cultural development at City Quays 5,**
- **Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) at 39 Corporation Street.**
- **Build to rent scheme at 21-29 Corporation Street / 18-24 Tomb Street.**
- **Public realm environmental improvement scheme at Cathedral Gardens.**

3.9 Furthermore, there are several additional schemes at various stages of development, namely,

- **Public realm improvements including development of urban recreational space Under the Bridges.**
- **Sailortown / Titanic Quarter Active Travel Bridge,**
- **BCC Housing Led Regeneration Site at Corporation Street.**
- **DfI's Corporation Street Active Travel Cycle Lane development (including lighting at Dock Street) which is due to open to public consultation in October 2025, and**
- **The Clarendon Wharf residential development plans within the Harbour Estate including activation of Clarendon Dock, Barrow Square, Clarendon Road and Corporation**
- **. The Gasworks to Ormeau Park Bridge, funded through BRCD, is currently at the procurement stage to secure a contractor to deliver this cross-Lagan active travel connection.**
- **John Murray Lockhouse secured planning in 2023, to transform the site into a community café, exhibition and training space, and a good relations hub, with a new water activity hub at McConnell's Lock with work ongoing through the BCC Neighbourhood Renewal fund to bring the project forward.**
- **Construction is ongoing to deliver 94 affordable homes on the Gasworks Northern Fringe Raphael St site**

3.10 The work of the Waterfront Framework will be ensuring the successful integration of these projects into the waterfront area as well as delivering key connectivity and public spaces

to enable the successful embedment of sustainable communities within the existing landscape and areas.

3.11 Collectively, the work of the Waterfront Task Group reflects the strength of cross-sector collaboration in shaping Belfast's waterfront. They represent a shared commitment to delivering an inclusive, connected, and world-class destination that supports cultural life, environmental sustainability, active travel, tourism, and community development. The work currently underway is laying a strong foundation for the long-term transformation of the waterfront as a space that will serve both residents and visitors and ensure the protection of the area for future generations.

4.0 <u>Main Report</u>

4.1 <u>Waterfront Promenade Framework Progress Update</u>

In conjunction with this Committee paper, Maritime Belfast Trust will be providing a presentation to this Committee meeting to provide an update on an emerging strand of work that will focus on building on the heritage of the area, as well providing capacity building within the local community networks. A presentation will also be provided along with this paper to highlight some of the projects delivered to date, and to provide an overview of emerging projects currently under development, as outlined below.

4.2 Maritime Belfast Trust is undertaking a feasibility study to establish the River Lagan as a Blueway in line with Blueways Ireland Accreditation standards. Blueway Accreditation identifies a network of approved and branded multi-activity recreational trails and sites on a waterway. With the potential to be the first urban Blueway under the scheme, the accreditation brings a number of opportunities including strong branding, user reassurance, enhanced visitor experience, community engagement and funding opportunities. The study will involve site assessments, stakeholder and community engagement, and a co-design process to evaluate the potential of the Blueway route. Key recommendations will be developed to ensure any proposals balance environmental sustainability with the area's industrial heritage and meet accreditation criteria over the short, medium, and long term. While water quality remains an issue this work strand will set out a pathway to achieving Blueway accreditation for the River Lagan.

4.3 Several projects are already contributing to the transformation of the waterfront into a welcoming and vibrant destination. The recent addition of the Queen's Quay Kiosk to the Maritime Mile has delivered an increased social value to the area. Operated by Native Coffee, the kiosk combines hospitality with cultural expression, offering a 'coffee and bake' menu alongside a platform for local artisans to showcase and sell their work. Delivered by BCC and funded through the Department for Communities' Covid Revitalisation Programme, the kiosk features public artwork by local artist Terry Bradley, depicting stories of industrial Belfast. The space around the kiosk has also been enhanced with new planting and seating, reinforcing Queen's Quay as a key gateway along the waterfront. Native Coffee have been active in animating the area as a key connectivity node between the city centre and Queens Island, regularly hosting jazz evenings, DJ evenings and running clubs centred around the iconic structure.

4.4 Upstream, work has commenced on the redevelopment of the former Lockhouse along the Lagan Towpath. This £2.9 million capital project, led by Council, will transform the site into a community café, exhibition and training space, and a good relations hub. The project complements the existing community garden and men's shed already active in the area and will be supported by a new water activity hub at McConnell's Lock, being delivered in partnership with the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) through the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

4.5 The waterfront is also being activated through a growing programme of cultural events, most notably the Belfast Maritime Festival, which took place in September. Organised by Belfast City Council in partnership with the Maritime Belfast Trust and supported by multiple stakeholders including Belfast Harbour, Titanic Quarter, Odyssey Trust, and Tourism NI, the festival brought the Maritime Mile to life through a diverse offering of maritime-themed entertainment, music, food, arts, and family activities. The festival served both to celebrate Belfast's rich maritime heritage and to animate the waterfront as a space for public engagement and tourism.

4.6 <u>Connectivity, Sustainable and Active Travel</u>

At CG&R Committee in October 2023, Members approved the Waterfront Framework and initial priority areas including, Under the Bridges and the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Active Travel Bridge, and as such work commenced on developing these schemes. In January 2025 the Committee approved the submission of a funding application to DfI's Active Travel funding to progress designs on the Under the Bridges and Sailortown Bridge projects. These projects aim to improve the connectivity and place-making between the Sailortown community, the City Quays and Queens Island areas and the city centre. The need to improve the connection between the city and the harbour area has been highlighted in previous plans including the Great Clarendon (Sailortown) Masterplan, A Bolder Vision and the Belfast Waterfront Framework, and is of increasing importance to overcome the long-standing severance to communities and given the growth in population as a result of new residential developments, educational and leisure opportunities within the area. There is fragmentation in the urban form and blight caused by large road infrastructure that generates air and noise pollution and creates a hostile environment for pedestrianisations and cyclists. The sporadic lighting and unoccupied spaces also raise issues in relation to personal safety, which prevents people from taking this route, despite it being a direct link to the city centre and the Sailortown and City Quays areas. This funding is now secured, and in conjunction with funding from BCC and BHC the design development work is underway with updates below.

4.7 <u>Under the Bridges</u>

The Under the Bridges project will be a significant connectivity project for the city that aims to improve the connectivity links between the City Centre and City Quays / Sailortown and to provide an enhanced amenity / urban sports space in the area under the M3 bridges. The design work focuses on the connections between Corporation Square and the city centre along the proposed active travel routes of Tomb Street, Gamble St, Gt. Patrick St (connecting into the BCC Housing Led Regeneration site at Corporation Street), and Little Patrick Street (connecting into the Little York Street Little Patrick Street Scheme). Proposals for an urban sports / recreation space will also be brought to public consultation for the car park areas under the M3 flyover, aimed to improving lighting and usage of this area as well as providing a recreation facility for existing and emerging communities and users alike. Design development is happening in tandem with the DfI Active Travel Team to ensure that the proposed scheme integrates with the proposed Corporation Street Cycle Scheme that is due to go to public consultation in October 2025.

4.8 Designs have progressed on the Under the Bridges Project with a PAD public consultation event to be held in the ‘AC Hotel Belfast by Marriott’ on Thursday 9th October, 3pm –

7pm, followed by an online event to follow on Tuesday 14th October, 6pm – 7pm to inform the emerging designs. In addition to this an update presentation on the projects shall be taken to the North, East and City Centre Area Working Group's in November/December 2025. The ICT will then analyse the results of the consultation process and use this information to update the designs to ensure the outcomes of the consultation are integrated into the design. The emerging designs that will be brought to public consultation will be presented to this Committee meeting.

4.9 Following the completion of the consultation, the ICT aims to submit a full application to Planning in Autumn 2025, targeting an approval by end of March 2026, however it should be noted that the scheme remains subject to capital funding to enable delivery.

4.10 <u>Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge</u>

The proposed Sailortown bridge will provide a new cross harbour pedestrian and cycle opening bridge that could complete the Harbour Loop, provide connections between Sailortown and North Belfast to the economic and educational opportunities on Queen's Island and providing a critical active travel connection to the newly completed York Street Train Station and the Queens Island estate.

4.11 Funding has now been secured from DfI, BCC and BHC, and a design team of Arup with Knight Architects have been appointed to develop the bridge designs up to RIBA Stage 2. This work will provide concept design, technical requirements, cost plan and outline specification, and feasibility information including capex and opex requirements that will clarify the optimum route to securing capital delivery funding and long-term operation and maintenance.

4.12 Community and Stakeholder engagement will be undertaken throughout the process to ensure the optimum design and route for the area with further updates to be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

5.0 <u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>

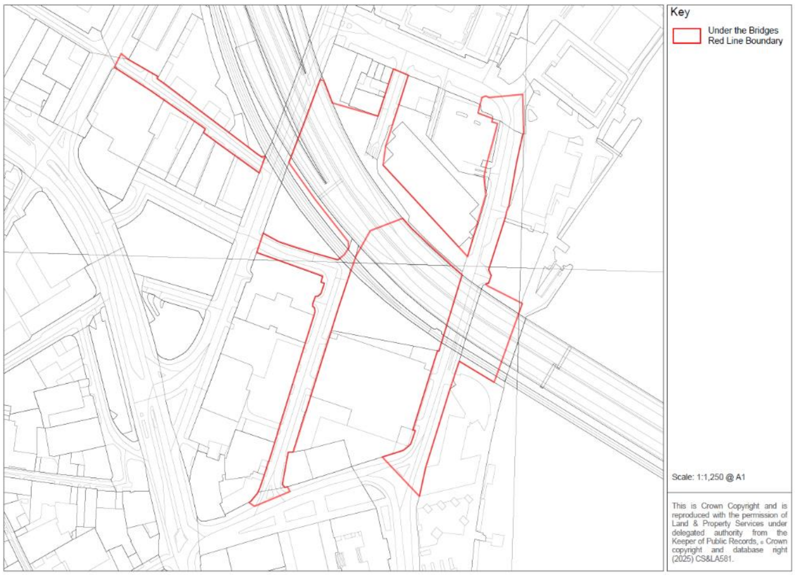
The design development of the Under the Bridges and Sailortown Bridge projects are funded by DfI, BHC, and BCC through previously agreed budgets. Work is ongoing to identify and secure Capital funding to deliver these projects. Financial implications in terms of the loss of carparking income associated with the UTB's site will be assessed and

incorporated within the whole life costs of the project, and will be reported to a future meeting of the CG&R and SP&R Committees.

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

Appendix



Under the Bridges - Red line boundary map"

The Senior Development Manager presented to the Committee an overview of the following strands of work:

- the waterfront's catalyst and key projects;
- the emerging development landscape;
- the work to establish the River Lagan as a Blueway in line with the Blueways Ireland Accreditation;
- the Queen's Quay Kiosk;
- the Lockhouse Redevelopment; and
- the Belfast Maritime Festival.

The Senior Development Manager also provided the Committee with an update in respect of the Under the Bridges project and the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Bridge project.

The Committee noted:

i. the update on the progress of the Belfast Waterfront Promenade Framework; and

ii. the update on the Under the Bridges and the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Bridge projects.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Events Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues

1.1

- **To update members on Culture Night 2025**
- **To seek approval from Members for a dedicated workshop session to support the development of Belfast City Council's Events Action Plan, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and effective stakeholder engagement.**
- **To seek approval from Members to facilitate a site visit to Dundalk to view festive lighting scheme as part of planning for future years.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Note the update on Culture night**
- **Approve request to facilitate members workshop for events action plan**
- **Approve request for site visit associated to festive lights**

3.0 Culture night

3.1 Members are advised that Culture Night Belfast 2025 was successfully delivered on 19th September, with a diverse programme of cultural activity taking place across the city centre and neighbourhoods. The event featured over 100 individual performances, exhibitions, workshops and community-led activities, delivered in partnership with artists, cultural organisations, local businesses and residents.

Attendance was strong, with thousands of people engaging in events throughout the evening, reinforcing the festival's reputation as one of Belfast's flagship cultural celebrations. The programme highlighted the breadth of creative talent across the city and promoted wide public participation,

supporting both the cultural sector and the night-time economy.

Officers are now progressing the final evaluation and reporting process. This will include detailed analysis of outcomes, audience reach and impact, alongside reflections from stakeholders and delivery partners. Recommendations for the future development of Culture Night will be prepared and brought back to Committee in due course for Members' consideration.

3.2 Events action plan

Officers are continuing to work on the development of an events action plan.

Belfast's programme of events plays a vital role in shaping the city's identity, attracting visitors, supporting the local economy, and fostering civic pride. As the Council looks ahead to the next phase of delivery, it is essential that a refreshed Events Action Plan is developed to:

- **Reflect the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and cultural strategy.**
- **Respond to changes in the events landscape post-pandemic.**
- **Support wider city recovery, tourism, and place-making objectives.**
- **Ensure an inclusive and sustainable approach to event planning and delivery.**

The development of the Action Plan will require input from Members to ensure that the priorities and outcomes reflect the ambitions of the Council and the needs of communities across the city.

It is proposed that a workshop be convened with Members (dates to be circulated via democratic services) to:

- **Provide an overview of the current events programme, highlighting successes, challenges, and areas for improvement.**
- **Explore opportunities for enhancing the city's events offering, including community events, cultural programming, and signature events.**
- **Consider themes such as sustainability, accessibility, economic impact, partnership opportunities, and international positioning.**

- **Discuss priorities and desired outcomes for inclusion in the draft Events Action Plan.**
- **The workshop will be designed to be interactive and informative, giving Members the opportunity to shape the direction of the Plan at an early stage. Feedback from the session will be used to inform the drafting of the Action Plan, which will be presented to Committee for approval later in the year.**

3.2 Festive lights – site visit

As part of the planning and development for future iterations of the festive lights scheme it is proposed to conduct a site visit to Dundalk at some point between the 2-9th December to see an installation that our suppliers have previously delivered as we move towards planning for 2026, and a subsequent members planning workshop in January

Dundalk's 'The Northern Light Show' presents a valuable opportunity for Belfast City Council to gain insights into the planning, delivery, and impact of large-scale festive lighting installations. Dundalk's success in creating a visually captivating and community-driven experience offers a practical model for enhancing Belfast's own seasonal lighting strategy.

Aligning with the objectives of the Belfast Lighting Strategy, particularly in relation to innovation, placemaking, and increasing civic pride. With Belfast introducing new Christmas lights supplier this year, there is a timely opportunity to explore how immersive lighting can be used not only during the festive season but also extended to other key calendar events such as Halloween. These extensions would allow for year-round engagement, encouraging repeat visits and boosting local economic activity.

The learnings from Dundalk's approach, particularly around community involvement, sustainability, and creative design can inform Belfast's own delivery model, ensuring that future lighting installations are both impactful and inclusive.

The Dundalk installation, which formed the centrepiece of the Brigid1500 Festival , attracted an estimated 48,000 visitors within its first few days (Dundalk Democrat) , demonstrating the strong public appetite for high-quality, visually impactful light experiences.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no immediate financial implications associated with this paper.

5.0 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).”

During discussion, Members thanked officers for the work that had been undertaken to help deliver a successful Culture Night on 19th September.

After discussion, the Committee:

i. noted the update on Culture Night;

ii. granted approval for a dedicated Members workshop to be held to support the development of a Council’s Events Action Plan; and

iii. approved that Members undertake a site visit to Dundalk in relation to festive lighting.

International Engagement – Update on Proposed Approach

The Committee considered a report which set out a response to queries raised by Members at its meeting in August on the proposed approach to international engagement. The report also set out, for the Committee’s consideration, a draft International Relations Framework for 2025-2028 and a delivery plan for the Council’s international engagement activity for 2025/26.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy and the Senior Manager, Economy, answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to EU engagement, ethical and environmental considerations, USA 250 activities and international visits.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees that the Council’s membership of the Eurocities network be continued, and that options be explored, in partnership with the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and other relevant partners, in relation to the potential for an annual event to be held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities.

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

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees to recommend the establishment of an EU stakeholder group.

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

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees to recommend that invitations to all international engagement stakeholder groups be extended to the Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

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

Accordingly, the Committee:

i. noted the response, as set out in section 3.5 of the report, to the issues raised by Members at its meeting in August, 2025;

ii. agreed that the Council's membership of the Eurocities network be continued, and that options be explored, in partnership with the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and other relevant partners, in relation to the potential for an annual event to be held as part of the European Week of Regions and Cities;

iii. agreed to recommend the establishment of an EU stakeholder group;

iv. agreed to recommend that invitations to all international engagement stakeholder groups be extended to Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee; and

v. agreed to defer consideration of the proposed approach to Council international engagement work activity for 2025-28, and the Annual Action plan for 2025/26, to enable an updated draft International Relations Framework 2025-2028 to be submitted.

Issue Raised in Advance

Belfast Cycle Network (Councillor de Faoite to raise)

Councillor de Faoite raised an issue in relation to the delivery of the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme. He stated that, in response to a letter he had written to the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the scheme, the Minister had advised that the formal consultation stage on the scheme had been moved from autumn 2025 to early 2026. He expressed his disappointment at the delay in progressing the scheme, given that it had been highlighted as deliverable in the short term within the Department for Infrastructure's Belfast Cycle Network Delivery Plan.

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to express its frustration at the lack of progress in delivering the Belfast Cycle Network's Ravenhill Road Scheme, and to seek an update on the reasons for the delay.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 14th October, 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, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Magee, McCabe, McCann and Whyte.
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); Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy); Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer; Mr. M. McErlean, Senior Planning Officer; and Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in item 10b – "LA04/2024/1576/F - Demolition of existing buildings at no. 733 and no. 735 Antrim Road to facilitate proposed residential social housing development comprising of 2no. buildings containing 34no. units with associated in-curtilage parking and landscaping (Amended description) - 733-735 Antrim Road" in so far as the Housing Association was a client of his and he left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the site visits.

Loft Lines Site Visit

The Committee noted the site visit.

Notification of Provision/Removal of Accessible Parking Bay

The Committee noted the Notice of Provision of Parking Bays in relation to:

- 18 Jocelyn Avenue;
- 5 Knockland Park,;
- 20 Archdale Park; and
- 24 Oberon Street.

The Committee noted the Notice of Removal of Parking Bays in relation to:

- Opposite 49 Seymour Street;
- 22 Whitehall Gardens;
- 96 Rosebery Road;
- 17 Hillview Avenue;
- 39 Willowfield Parade;
- 180 Colinmill Road;
- 11 Titania Street; and
- 4 Sydenham Drive.

Notifications from Statutory Bodies: Abandonment and Extinguishment

Abandonment at Ballymacarrett Walkway/ Tamar Street, 11 Chichester Street, Woodbourne Crescent

The Committee noted the Notices of Abandonment.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in September, 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

Scheme of Delegation for Planning

The Director of Planning and Building Control outlined the proposed adjustments to the Scheme of Delegation.

She advised the Committee that the proposed adjustments would be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration in advance of being submitted to the Department for Infrastructure for approval in accordance with Section 31 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

The Committee noted the proposed minor changes to the Scheme of Delegation ahead of consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Local Applications subject to objections from NI Water

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Planning and Building Control those Local planning applications to which NI Water had objected.

Planning Applications

LA04/2022/0809/F - Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) and ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 94 No. dwellings and associated and ancillary works. - Lands to the south and west of Woodland Grange to the north of Blacks Gate and to the east of Moor Park Mews

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Site layout, density and Design;
- Open space provision;
- Affordable housing;
- Trees and landscaping;
- Traffic, movement and parking;
- Climate change;
- Impact on amenity;
- Contaminated land;
- Drainage and flooding;
- Natural heritage/impact on protected sites;

- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application community consultation.

He pointed out that the case officer's report referred to an incorrect dwelling mix and should have stated that the proposal provided for 58 semi-detached, 16 detached and 20 apartments. He added that the report omitted the total number of wheelchair units and that it should have stated that units 2 to 6 and 7 to 21 were proposed wheelchair units.

He reported that, since publication of the report, the applicant had confirmed that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive had confirmed that it welcomed the provision of affordable housing but had no input into the housing mix.

The Senior Planning stated that, through discussions with DfI Roads' Active Travel Section, the dedicated and segregated cycle path had been removed, at the request of DfI, and that the main access road had been redesigned as a cycle priority road.

He stated that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. C. Bryson, Gravis Planning, to the meeting, who was attending on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Bryson stated that he welcomed the officers' recommendation and that he was happy to answer questions from the Members.

In response to a Member's question regarding being able to provide assurances to local residents on the removal of trees and wildlife habitats within the protected zone, Mr. Bryson explained that a number of shrubs and saplings had been removed, however, no mature vegetation or trees had or would be removed and would be protected by condition, should the application be approved.

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 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.

(Councillor Whyte left the meeting whilst the following item was under consideration.)

<u>LA04/2024/1576/F - Demolition of existing buildings at no. 733 and no. 735 Antrim Road to facilitate proposed residential social housing development comprising of 2no. buildings containing 34no. units with associated in-curtilage parking and landscaping (Amended description) - 733-735 Antrim Road</u>

The Planning Manager summarised the application and drew the Committee's attention to the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of housing in this location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and Placemaking;
- Impact on amenity;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Climate change;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Natural heritage;
- Trees and landscaping;
- Waste management; and
- Section 76 planning agreement.

He explained that NI Water had provided an updated response which confirmed that the wastewater treatment plan does have capacity, however, the issue was downstream wastewater network capacity and that a possible solution could be reached through engagement with the developer in order to submit a Wastewater Impact Assessment to allow for stormwater offsetting. He pointed out that draft condition 24 required details of foul and surface water drainage to be submitted and approved by the Council prior to commencement of development.

The Planning Manager reported that no other consultees had offered objection to the proposed development and that 22 third-party objections had been received and all issues raised had been addressed within the case officer's report.

He 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. R. O'Toole, OTS Planning, Mr. P. Turley, Project Architect, Mr. B. Owens, S4S Group and Ms. D. Quinn, Radius Housing, to the meeting.

Mr. O'Toole explained that the proposal sought to deliver 34 social housing units in an area of acute need and that the scheme was supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

He stated that the Council had previously approved 34 apartments on the site and that the proposal had a similar layout to the previous approval. He stated that the design had been informed by feedback from the Council's planning officers and urban designer during the course of the application.

He outlined how the proposal had taken consideration of density, open space, traffic, parking and tree protection.

He concluded by stating that he believed that the proposal represented a well-considered and beneficial development for the area and asked the Committee to support the officers' recommendation to approve the application.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to NI Water's response, Mr. B. Owens explained that the applicant was content to accept the condition and submit a Wastewater Impact Assessment.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. F. McElhatton to the meeting, a solicitor speaking in objection to the application.

Mr. McElhatton stated that he was speaking as a resident and also on behalf of several individuals who had lodged objections to the application. He explained that local residents had three core objections, density and impact on character, open space provision and a lack of protection afforded to trees.

He stated that the segment of the Antrim Road where the application site was located was an area of low density which averaged at 19 dwellings per hectare and the proposal represented a density of 89 dwellings per hectare and he outlined how the density would impact on the character of the area and was overdevelopment and not appropriate to the location.

He explained that the proposed building lines would cause harm to the established character of the area and therefore did not respond positively to its local context, contrary to planning policy.

He stated that the proposal was on an elevated site and didn't suit the needs of wheelchair users or the elderly. He disputed that the trees which had been removed had not been destroyed by a storm and could have been retained, contrary to the Council's tree policy.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to dwellings per hectare, the Planning Manager stated that the proposal fell below the target density for a city corridor, which was 100 dwellings per hectare, and he explained that it was important to make effective use of land, particularly in sustainable locations such as the application site and that officers considered the density of the application to be appropriate.

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 conditions, and to deal with any other matters that might arise provided that they were not substantive.

(Councillor Whyte returned to the meeting.)

LA04/2022/1819/F - Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 32 apartments in 3No. blocks (7@ 1no. bedroom and 25@ 2no. bedrooms) (6no. wheelchair adaptable) and associated site works. - 39 Upper Dunmurry Lane, Dunmurry

The Senior Planning Officer summarised the application to the Committee and explained that the application sought planning permission for the demolition of the existing mill buildings and the erection of 32 apartments within three blocks.

He outlined the following key issues for consideration:

- The principle of housing in the location;
- Demolition of existing buildings;
- Impact on the historic environment;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing density;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Provision of open space;
- Access and transport;
- Climate change;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Natural heritage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Flood risk and drainage; and
- Section 76 planning agreement.

He pointed out that there was an error in the case officer's report with regard to the unit sizes and explained that the proposal would provide seven one-bedroom apartments (22%) and 25 two-bedroom detached dwellings (78%).

He 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 79 planning agreement.

A Member pointed out that it was disappointing that no social housing provider had been willing to partner with the proposed development.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Carson, and

Resolved – “That the Committee writes to the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations to invite them to attend a meeting of the Planning Committee to discuss the obstacles Housing Associations face with regard to partnering with housing developers in order to provide social housing.”

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 conditions, and to deal with any other matters that might arise provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2024/1159/F - Extensions and alterations to former Lidl building and change of use to builders merchants premises with external stock yard, acoustic fence and associated site works - 41 Montgomery Road (former Lidl supermarket)

The Principal Planning Officer explained that planning permission had been granted in March 2022, to extend and subdivide the application building to form four Class B4 Units as part of a wider mixed use regeneration scheme and that the current application pertained to 41 Montgomery Road only. She reported that the proposed extension was smaller that that which had been previously approved and that JP Corry intended to relocate from its current site in order to benefit from the larger premises.

She referred the Committee to the following key issues to be considered in the assessment of the application:

- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Impact on neighbouring amenity;
- Climate change;
- Contamination risk; and
- Access and parking.

She reported that consultees had offered no objection to the proposal and that one third-party representation had been received with regard to amenity and noise. She explained that the issues raised had been addressed in the case officer’s report.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. J. Mawhinney, MBA Planning, and Mr. G. Browne, Heron Brothers, to the meeting.

Ms. Mawhinney explained that the application proposed to redevelop the site to an appropriate standard to host JP Corry. She stated that JP Corry had a rich history in local industry which spanned over three centuries and was one of the leading building merchants which had been looking for an alternative site in the area and it had outgrown its current premises at Grove Street East.

She stated that at application site was strategically located along an arterial route that would make it more accessible and that a larger premises would see JP Corry double its local workforce.

She explained that the proposal would provide important redevelopment of a prominent whiteland site with brownfield status on a key transport route into Belfast and that the various supporting technical and environmental reports which had been submitted with the application had dealt with the acceptability of the proposal in terms of all other material considerations related to design, noise, traffic and contamination.

She stated that statutory consultees had supported the proposal and she commended the recommendation to approve the application.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the proposed acoustic barrier and how it would mitigate any noise pollution, the Principal Planning Officer explained that the Noise Impact Assessment had been discussed with Environmental Health which had indicated that it was content that the appropriate mitigations would be provided in order to protect local 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 conditions, and to deal with any other matters that might arise provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2025/0613/F - Single storey rear extension with fenestration changes. Creation of new patio areas and garden studio. Attic conversion and the creation of a rear dormer. Partial demolition of existing side and rear elevations. Demolition of existing patio areas and shed. Removal of existing rear roof to facilitate attic conversion. - 23 Everton Drive

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and highlighted the scale, massing and design, impact on neighbouring amenity and the impact on the Cregagh Park and Everton Drive Area of Townscape Character.

She reported that no third-party representations had been received and that, having regard to the policy context, the proposal was considered to be acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be granted.

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.

Chairperson

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 9th October, 2025

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY
RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present:	Councillor M. Donnelly (Chairperson); Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey; Councillors Anglin, Bell, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Collins, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Groogan, Magee, McCann, Meenehan, Murray and Walsh.
In attendance:	Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy; Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner; and Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Presentations

(Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, attended in connection with these two items.)

Review of the Belfast Stories site (BRINK!)

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. G. Morrison and Mr. P. Kelly, Brink!, to the meeting.

Together they outlined that Brink! was dedicated to addressing climate breakdown through discussion, education, and action. They used art and citizen science to explore innovative ways of living in a rapidly changing environment. They encouraged individuals to rethink urban spaces, highlighting their recent “meanwhile use” of the Belfast Stories site within the city centre.

They advised the Committee that they had hosted workshops, panels, and community events to engage participants in meaningful conversations and hands-on activities to develop skills to build a sustainable future. They promoted sustainable practices such as reducing waste, rethinking consumption, and empowering communities to take action. The Members were advised that Brink! aimed to inspire change and invited people to join the movement and to contribute to the transformation of their city.

In response to a number of Members' questions as to what was next for Brink! and how the Council could help, the representatives explained that, while the meanwhile use of the Belfast Stories site was undoubtedly a success, available sites were difficult to come by, highlighting there was often a lot of bureaucracy and delays in the way of making progress with such projects.

In response to a further Member's point, they outlined that they had had discussions with the Cathedral Quarter Trust in respect of the North Street Arcade.

A further Member asked whether they had worked with local schools in respect of local growing. They explained that they had trialled reaching out to a number of different age groups but that schools, in particular, had significantly more health and safety requirements in regards to reaching a city centre site with uneven ground, for example. They stated, however, that, given more lead in time, they would be happy to work with local schools on such projects.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the representatives for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

The future of Urban Treescapes in the UK (Involve)

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. R. McCabe (Involve), Mr. I. McArthur and Ms. J. Holmes, to the meeting.

Ms. McCabe, Head of Northern Ireland at Involve, explained that the "Our Future Treescapes" public dialogue had brought together 48 members of the public from across the UK to envision the future of trees, woodlands, and forests over the next 50 years. The participants, including Mr. McArthur and Ms. Holmes in NI, had been selected through a civic lottery and had engaged in a four-month process involving place-based and online sessions to explore how treescapes could meet environmental, societal, and individual needs.

The Committee was advised that six principles and 15 calls to action had been developed specifically for Belfast, focusing on fair access, public involvement, and sustainable treescape management. The representatives reported that the recommendations resulting from the process included promoting locally sourced seeds, education initiatives, public engagement strategies and intentional planting. The conversations had emphasised collaboration among local authorities, Non - Governmental Organisations, schools and communities to ensure long-term resilience and ecological benefits. The Members were advised that the programme aimed to support local projects, share findings with decision-makers, and promote treescape expansion through advocacy and education.

In response to a Member's questions, Ms. McCabe confirmed that they were liaising with Mr. Conor McKinney, Wild Belfast, regarding the National Park City initiative.

In response to a further Member's question, Mr. McArthur and Ms. Holmes stated that they had been delighted to have participated in the initiative and that the model of dialogue had been incredibly interesting, having heard from so many different perspectives, and that they had been able to come up with practical solutions and plans for the future.

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor advised the Committee that it had been energising to be involved in the project and that the Council had clear actions through it's Climate Action Plan.

A further number of Members stated that it was important to recognise that the young people were taking ownership and pride in their City and that they were often ahead of the curve in terms of Climate action. They commended those Council staff who were working within the community to engage young people in activities such as tree planting.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their presentation and they retired from the meeting.

Noted.

Notices of Motion Update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy presented the Members with four Notices of Motion/Issues Raised in Advance for which the Committee was responsible.

In relation to the Motion "New Ireland Forum and Citizens Assemblies", a Member requested that a further follow up letter be sent to the Taoiseach, given that no response had been received to date.

After discussion the Committee:

1. noted the updates to the Notices of Motion / Issues Raised in Advance for which Climate and City Resilience Committee was responsible; and
2. agreed to issue a further follow up letter to the Taoiseach regarding the New Ireland Forum and Citizens Assemblies.

DAERA NI Climate Action Plan Consultation Response

(Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate), attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members about the recent public consultation on the Draft NI Climate Action Plan 2023-2027

2.0 Recommendation

I. Members are asked to note the proposals set out in the consultation document and to approve the draft Council response as attached at appendix 1. Subject to approval by Council, the response will be submitted to DAERA via their online consultation platform.

II. Approve the officer response that was submitted by Belfast City Council to the public consultation which closed on 8th October 2025.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 committed Northern Ireland to reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to net zero by 2050, with a series of five year carbon budgets set to ensure steady progress from the outset. In December 2024, the Executive agreed that for the period of this plan, 2023-2027, GHG gas emissions need to be reduced by an annual average of 33% from 1990 levels.

Importantly, the Act places a specific legal duty on all Northern Ireland departments to exercise their functions, as far as possible, in a way that supports achieving targets and carbon budgets. This ensures a shared responsibility both to reduce emissions through policies and proposals included in this plan and to monitor any likely impact on emissions of emerging policies and proposals during this first carbon budget period, 2023-2027.

The draft Climate Action Plan sets out 52 policies and proposals designed to reduce emissions across nine sectors:

- **energy production and supply;**
- **transport;**
- **business and industrial processes;**
- **residential buildings;**
- **public buildings;**
- **waste management;**
- **agriculture;**
- **land use, land-use change and forestry; and**
- **fisheries.**

Some sectors are expected to contribute more than others; some policies and proposals have a greater impact than others; some contribute to emissions savings across more than one sector. Together, these policies and proposals set a roadmap of action needed to reduce emissions and keep Northern Ireland on track for future targets. Policies and programmes referenced also vary in terms of states of readiness, with some well established and others still under development.

The CAP attempts to quantity the potential GHG emission reductions that the 52 policies and programmes might result in, with analysis based on a number of stretching assumptions.

3.2 <u>Draft Council Response</u>

Overall, the approach of the CAP's policies and proposals outlined is welcomed and supported, as is the recognition by DAERA that without adequate, secured funding and political and public backing, achieving the carbon budget will be challenging. Within the draft consultation response, a number of key points and recommendations were made, as summarised below.

- **Energy - we welcomed more detail on the proposed Renewable Electricity Support Scheme for Northern Ireland but cautioned that without a complementary additional policy towards storage, it could lead to higher electricity bills for consumers and additional challenges for the grid operator. The response also highlighted that significantly more investment will be needed than is currently planned to meet rising electricity demand and increased supply of renewable electricity.**

- **Transport - re-ordering the three proposed transport policy priorities (of switching fuels to lower emission versions, switching modes of transport and reducing the need and length of journeys) to prioritise reducing car journeys and modal shift in urban areas, recognising the risk around the global supply chain for critical minerals needed for the proposed fuels and technologies. Transport related policies should also consider targeted financial support, such as grants, for low-income households and consider instruments to promote the used electric vehicle market as well as incentives for rural users.**
- **Business and industrial processes – a major challenge is the labour skills gap both in terms of number of workers and skills for new low carbon services and technology. A limitation of the current Energy and Resource Efficiency Programme is that the technical consultancy support is only available for businesses spending over £30k annually on energy and resources, which excludes many small businesses (80,000 registered SMEs and 70,000 micro businesses in operation across Northern Ireland). The need for policies to incentivise the re-use of waste heat from industrial processes for heat networks was also highlighted.**
- **Residential buildings - lack of finance is a major barrier to the implementation of domestic retrofit in NI. The response welcomed a radical scaling up of the proposed energy efficiency and warmer healthier homes programmes to a scale that mirrors schemes available in GB and RoI. In addition to strengthening Building Regulations to improve building fabric, householders require impartial support and advice to help them access funds and improve the energy efficiency of their homes. The response also cautioned against policies that would incentivise the continued use of oil boilers in urban areas.**
- **Public buildings sector - councils should be included in future government energy efficiency schemes. Although councils do not represent a large proportion of emissions in this sector, they have an important presence in communities and should be seen to be leading by example in terms of energy consumption and best practice. Climate should be considered throughout public sector capital projects, factoring in considerations such as Sustainable Urban Drainage and Whole Life Carbon Modelling as standard. The need for a specific support mechanism to help develop heat networks and make them competitive with gas heating, in particular mechanisms to support/facilitate the connection of public buildings to heat networks as this will avoid the costly grid upgrades**

that would be required if all public buildings were fitted with individual heat pumps.

- **Waste – a 65% municipal recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to not more than 10% by 2035, will not be met without the inclusion of all commercial and industrial waste and there must be greater emphasis on statutory buy-in from this sector. To meet these targets, Northern Ireland requires clear strategic direction in the form of policy and legislation supported with adequate finances. There is also a need for improved data provision from the commercial and industrial sectors to assist with waste projections and ensure compliance with waste legislation.**
- **Agriculture - rather than seeking interventions to address pollutants caused through over stocking the pollution should be decreased at source by moving to more regenerative farming practices, identifying the carrying capacity of land to assess sustainable livestock numbers and taking into account factors such as soil type and local hydrology.**
- **Land use, land-use change and forestry – the response challenges the claim 'that sustainable forestry, including afforestation meets the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard and open habitat restoration, is, by definition, a nature-based project', as it does not meet the International Union for Conservation of Nature definition. Likewise, coniferous forests are not nature-based projects as claimed in the plan. The response advises alignment with the UK Forestry Standard which recommends 5% native broadleaved trees or shrubs; 10% of other tree species; and 10% open ground, or ground managed for biodiversity as the primary objective. The response also recommends an assessment of current forest estate planted on peat and identify opportunities to restore these peatland areas.**
- **Economic Impact Assessment of the CAP – the response highlights the failure of the Plan to frame climate action as a cost avoided, treating the short-term costs of climate action in isolation, without comparing them to the much higher economic, social, and environmental costs of climate inaction. Cost avoidance is critical to justifying the upfront investment. Also, there is no mention of intergenerational equity, acknowledging that climate action today helps avoid passing greater costs and risks onto future generations.**

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 At this stage there is no immediate resource or financial ask of the Council to respond to this public consultation.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Consideration of equality, good relations and rural needs was embedded in the consultation document questions by DAERA and in Belfast City Council responses."

In response to a Member's question, the Climate Commissioner confirmed to the Members that Council officers regularly collaborated with other Councils and with central Government through a number of forums.

A Member stated that they felt the stackable home recycling boxes should be reviewed. He also felt that the unrecyclable waste at the Council's recycling centres was given too prominent a location, making it too easy for people to dispose of waste to landfill without considering the environmental impact.

A further Member stated that the cycle lanes throughout the City needed considerable investment before any further money was contributed towards the Belfast Bikes scheme.

After discussion the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Innovate UK Project - Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder

(Mr. O. Crolly, Local Energy Systems Advisor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. O. Crolly, Local Energy Systems Advisor, to his first Committee meeting.

He presented the following report to the Committee:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update members on the completion of the Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder project.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note that:

I. the project ended on 31st July 2025 with the completion of six strategic work packages which

have helped de-risk two of the priority projects identified in the city's Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), namely the heat network and rooftop solar;

II. The outputs of the project been used to develop a new funding bid, for round 3 of Pathfinders Net Zero Living funding from Innovate UK with a decision expected in Oct 2025.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The Pathfinders Net Zero Living project kicked off in June 2024 with £149,964 secured in funding to help de-risk two key energy interventions listed within the Local Area Energy Plan as priority projects for Belfast. Belfast City Council worked in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult (ESC) to deliver the work packages. The two key energy interventions were the city centre heat network and rooftop solar deployment.

3.2 To address non-technical barriers, the project focused on market readiness, organisational capacity, business model clarity, legal and commercial frameworks and community opportunities. The project was structured into 6 distinct work packages. The Summary Report, attached as an Appendix gives more detail on each work package and the overall project.

3.3 Work Package 1: Project assessment

- **Established project definitions, scoped two priority projects and analysed non-technical barriers.**

3.4 Work Package 2: Market readiness assessment

- **Provided an understanding of the readiness of market actors (potential off-takers, investors, supply chain stakeholders etc) to engage and deliver decarbonisation projects ESC conducted structured interviews with various market actors.**
- **Identified market constraints and off-taker requirements.**

3.5 Work Package 3: Stakeholder capacity

- **Knowledge sharing across city-wide working groups and an internal council working group.**

3.6 Work Package 4: Commercial viability and route to finance

- **WP4a Business model analysis assessed the viability of various rooftop solar business model, with the innovative portfolio PPA for rooftop solar aggregation included.**
- **WP4b Legal and Commercial arrangements provided analysis of potential delivery vehicles for a Belfast City Centre heat network, with the JV ESCo and Golden Share emerging as the most favourable.**

3.7 Work Package 5: Community Opportunities

- **Assessed opportunities for net zero investments (heat network or significant uptake of solar PV) to upskill /empower excluded groups and identified ways to support underrepresented groups to communities.**

3.8 Work Package 6: Impact Assessment

- **Assessed the economic, environmental and social impacts associated with the implementation of the heat network and rooftop solar interventions.**

3.9 The BCC Working Group continues to support delivery and the work is coordinated at the City level through the Belfast Net Zero group which reports into the Our Planet Board. This work is also a key part of the 2025/26 Corporate Annual Delivery Plan.

Next steps

3.10 BCC was invited to bid in a closed competition (for £50-150k projects) to enable projects to build on the innovation delivered so far. A bid was submitted in September within the short competition window (3 weeks). If successful, (notification by 14th October) the project will start on 1st December and complete by 31st March. The funding would provide an additional resource to develop delivery pathways for LAEP projects in the City. The proposed project focuses on further developing the innovative portfolio PPA and investigating the economic benefits of the thermal store element of the heat network as methods to lower the price of heat. The project would also further engage potential heat off-takers, produce a procurement roadmap for the heat network and engage other local authorities in knowledge sharing.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

This work was funded through a £150k grant from Innovate UK. The proposed project would also be funded through a £150k grant from Innovate UK.

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

Intelligence around diversity, inclusion, fairness and equality in the projects impact on the transition to net zero has been integrated into the project under WP6."

In response to a Member's question as to the expected timeframe for the work, the Local Energy Systems Advisor advised the Committee that an optimistic timeframe was likely four years.

In response to a query regarding any associated enabling works which were required, the officers confirmed that they were working with the Systems Operator Northern Ireland (SONI) with regards to digging up roads, for example.

The Climate Commissioner added that Local Development Orders would be a real game changer and that grant finance was unfortunately not available in NI, unlike the rest of the UK. She explained that certain networks in the UK were receiving £34 million in grant finance.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Standards and Business Committee

Thursday, 23rd October, 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, de Faoite,
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Long, Lyons,
Magee, McCallin, McCormick, McDowell,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and Murphy.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor Carson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin declared an interest in item 2c, namely “Ban on Greyhound Racing in Northern Ireland”, in so far as their partners were Members of the Northern Ireland Executive, and they did not participate in the discussion or vote on that item.

Motions

The Committee considered the following five motions which had been received in advance of the Council’s meeting on 3rd November:

Together: Building a United Community Strategy

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Nelson and seconded by the High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Bike Bunker Trial

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor Groogan be referred, in the first instance, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Ban on Greyhound Racing in Northern Ireland

Proposal

Moved by the Chairperson (Councillor Flynn),
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees to refer the motion for debate at the Council meeting without restrictions.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor P. Donnelly,

That the Committee rejects the motion.

On a vote on the amendment standing in the name of Councillor Murphy, four Members voted for it and twelve against and it was accordingly declared lost.

The Committee subsequently agreed to adopt the proposal as moved by Councillor Flynn.

Work Safe - Home Safe

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor Collins be referred, in the first instance, to the Licensing Committee.

Parents' Attendance Records at Council

The Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Maghie and seconded by Councillor Abernethy be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Chairperson

Ban on Greyhound Racing in Northern Ireland

"This Council notes that greyhound racing in Northern Ireland is unregulated, with no statutory oversight of welfare, injuries, or retirement outcomes. Thousands of greyhounds across the UK and Ireland die each year due to racing-related harm, and Northern Ireland lacks transparency, accountability, and legal protections for these animals.

This Council further notes that other jurisdictions in the UK are moving towards reform or abolition of greyhound racing, with increasing public and political support for a ban.

This Council believes that the absence of regulation poses unacceptable risks to animal welfare and public confidence.

This Council resolves to call on the Northern Ireland Executive and DAERA to introduce legislation banning greyhound racing, and to support rehoming efforts and welfare organisations working to protect retired greyhounds."

Proposer: Councillor Anthony Flynn

Seconder: Councillor de Faoite

This page is intentionally left blank