

# 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, 1st December, 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 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
6. Change of Position of Responsibility

Councillor Cobain to replace Councillor R. Brooks as Chairperson of the People and Communities Committee;

Councillor Ferguson to replace Alderman McCoubrey as the Deputy Chairperson of the Climate and City Resilience Committee; and

Councillor McCormick to replace Councillor Ferguson as the Deputy Chairperson of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee.

7. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 82)
8. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 83 - 92)
9. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 93 - 126)
10. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 127 - 136)
11. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 137 - 150)
12. Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 151 - 154)
13. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 155 - 162)
14. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 163 - 166)

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 Monday, 3rd November, 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, 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 'Additional Budget Social Supermarket Fund' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes of 24th October, Councillors Beattie, Canavan, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Duffy and Groogan declared interests in that they were associated with groups or organisations which had applied for within the terms of the fund. As the item did not arise during discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin declared an interest in the Notice of Motion on Greyhound Racing in that their partners were Ministers in the NI Executive. They left the meeting during the item.

Councillors I. McLaughlin and Verner declared an interest in the item "Requests for Funding" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes of 24th October, in that they were associated with an organisation in receipt of funding. They left the meeting during the discussion of the item.

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In respect of the item 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls – Additional Funding' within the People and Communities minutes of 7th October, Councillors R.M. Donnelly and Murray declared an interest in that their employers had applied for support under the project. Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin also declared an interest in the item, in that their partners were Ministers in the NI Executive. As the matter did not arise during discussion, they were not required to leave the meeting.

In respect of the item 'Shared City Partnership' within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October. Councillors Duffy, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Groogan and McCabe declared an interest in the PEACEPLUS Programme item in that their employers were in receipt of funding under the terms of the fund. As the matter did not arise during discussion, they 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 October, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

**Official Announcements**

The Lord Mayor, along with a number of Members of the Council, expressed her condolences to Councillor Carson, whose sister had recently passed away.

A number of Members congratulated Alderman McCullough on his recent marriage to Jessica and wished them well.

A Member extended her thanks to the Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist Party members who had recently participated in a charity Football match to raise money for Little Heroes NI, the Lord Mayor's chosen charity.

In response to a request from a Member, the Council agreed that, in light of Andrew Mountbatten Windsor recently having had his royal title removed by the King, a report be submitted to the appropriate Committee on the City's procedures to re-name streets.

A Member paid tribute to organisers of the Oireachtas na Samhna which had been held in the ICC Belfast over the weekend and had brought 20,000 Irish speakers together in the City.

A Member congratulated Gort na Móna minors on their recent football championship success against St. John's and paid tribute to the hard work of their coaches.

He also welcomed the opening of the recently completed Black Mountain Shared Space, and paid particular thanks to the local coaches, Caoimin and Gary, who had recently established Ox Performance at the site.

A Member congratulated Glentoran Women's Football Club on winning the Premiership.

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A further Member thanked those officers in Emergency response for their help and assistance during recent flooding across the City.

A further Member congratulated St. John's Senior Hurlers on becoming the Antrim Senior Hurling Champions, having beaten Loughgiel in the final.

A Member highlighted that tomorrow would mark the 75th Anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights.

A Member congratulated the Shankill Protestant Boys Flute Band on their 45th Anniversary, for which a dinner had recently been held in the City Hall to mark the occasion. The Lord Mayor agreed to write and congratulate them.

The Member also paid tribute to Ms. Betty Carlisle MBE and her team on the flagship Shankill Shared Women's Centre, which had recently won the Community Benefit Project of the Year at the RICS Awards 2025. The Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations.

A further Member congratulated those who had organised and attended the inaugural Hall of Fame event for Glentoran Football Club. He paid tribute to Mr. Roy Coyle, Director of Football at Glentoran, and the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations.

A further Member wished all four Council nominees well at the upcoming Pride of Place Awards, which would be held in Limerick on 7th November. He highlighted the work of the Half Moon Lake Men's Shed which did great work for its community.

A Member congratulated Catherine Connolly, the President-elect of Ireland, and also paid tribute to the outgoing President M. D. Higgins for his time in office.

**Change of Membership on Outside Bodies**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that notification had been received from Sinn Fein indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Micheal Donnelly with Councillor Duffy on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

The Council approved the change.

**Requests to Address the Council**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that requests to address the Council had been received from Mr. Kieran Connolly, Ms. Stephanie English and Mrs. Lynda Bonner OBE, representing Greyhound Racing Constituents Northern Ireland, and Mr. Daniel Barclay, who was opposed to Greyhound racing.

The Council acceded to the requests.

Firstly, the Lord Mayor welcomed Mr. K. Connolly, Ms. S. English and Mrs. L. Bonner OBE (Greyhound Racing Constituents Northern Ireland - GRCNI) to the meeting. Together they outlined that greyhound racing was a cross-community, working class sport. They stated that GRCNI prioritised greyhound welfare and adhered strictly to greyhound racing regulations. The Members were advised that greyhound welfare was regulated by The Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and that all their owners adhered to strict rules on licensing,

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microchipping and breeding. The Racing operated under the Greyhound Racetrack NI Regulations 1962, as amended in 2007, with oversight from the Irish Coursing Club under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958. They also outlined that, under the Act, the Club managed the Irish Greyhound studbook for the registration and identification of all greyhounds. Both Drumbo and Brandywell racetracks were members of the Club, as were all the owners. They highlighted the importance of having well-regulated, safe racing surfaces for the greyhounds and that Club Stewards were always on hand for the welfare of the animals. They stated that retired greyhounds were re-homed responsibly. The representatives cautioned that banning greyhound racing could push the sport underground, putting the animals at risk. They thanked the Council for its time and the representatives retired from the meeting.

The Lord Mayor then welcomed Mr. D. Barclay to the meeting. He outlined that greyhound racing should be banned due to cruelty and corruption. It was only legal in five countries, namely, the U.K., Ireland, Australia, Mexico and Vietnam. He stated that, contrary to what the previous deputation had claimed, there was no regulation of NI's Greyhound Racing Industry, as Greyhound Racing Ireland did not have the jurisdiction to inspect or give welfare checks in Northern Ireland, nor did the regulations for Great Britain apply. He stated that there was therefore no legal requirement for the industry to publish data on deaths on track, registered owners, health and safety requirements or adherence to the Welfare of Animals Act. He stated that thousands of greyhounds went missing each year, despite them all having to be registered and traceable. He gave an example of a lorry full of unregistered greyhounds which had died in transit on their way to Spain for hunting purposes. He emphasised that regulation did not stop the cruelty and he highlighted that emaciated dogs and cruel treatment of greyhounds still occurred in regulated parts of the world, such as GB and Ireland. He thanked the Members for their time and retired from the meeting.

The Chief Executive advised that a further request had been received from Ms. Sue Pentel and Ms. Rossa Coyle, representing Belfast IPSC (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign), who wished to address the Council in relation to Barclays Bank.

The Council acceded to the request and they were admitted to the meeting.

The Lord Mayor welcomed Ms. S. Pentel and Ms. R. Coyle, Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) and Jews for Palestine Ireland, to the meeting. They advised the Council that they wished to highlight the complicity of Barclays Bank in the Israeli genocide. They explained that the genocide was not only being fought with weapons but also with money, namely Israeli Bonds, and that it was more important than ever to speak up and to hold companies which were profiting from the genocide to account and to ensure that no public money went to complicit companies. They stated that over 11,000 people had signed a petition to condemn the Bank's complicity in the genocide.

They stated that over 750 days, over 68,000 people had been killed and over 100,000 people had been injured, including over 20,000 children, many of whom had now lost their entire families. According to the United Nations, Gaza now had the highest number of child amputees in world history. They highlighted that teachers, journalists, aid workers, doctors and healthcare workers had been killed, abducted or tortured by the Israeli regime. While a ceasefire had been agreed on 10th October, 2025, over 200 people had been shot since that date, with 100 Palestinians having been killed in one day last week. Aid, fuel, building materials and clean water were all still severely restricted. They stated that Israel had seized more land since October 2023 than in the last 20 years. They highlighted the violations of

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international law by Israel, the Declaration of Famine, forced starvation and the deliberate devastation of 90% of Gaza's buildings, all of which were reported by Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur, in July 2025. They urged the Council to cease trading with Barclays Bank and to adopt an ethical procurement policy. They thanked the Council for its time and they retired from the meeting.

**Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted, subject to the following amendment of the minute under the heading "Requests for Funding", to provide that:

"It is proposed that there would be a one-week expression of interest including project details forms which would be released for North, South, East and West Belfast which would include:

- Organisation would have to demonstrate support from a minimum of four neighbourhoods within one quadrant of the city.
- The fund would cover either one large or a range of mini winter programmes.
- There would need to be a minimum of 2,000 participants across all events.
- The activities must be inclusive for the entire community.
- The events would not be at the same time as Belfast City Councils main Christmas event.
- Governance and spend would be aligned to current grants programmes.

Officers will assess the returned expression of interest and project details forms to appoint the appropriate organisation. The process will follow all due diligence and governance arrangements, with delegated authority being granted to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to appoint the appropriate organisation and allocate the funding."

**Request to Adjourn**

Moved by Councillor Long  
Seconded by Councillor Nelson

That the Council resolves to adjourn proceedings.

On a vote, nineteen Members voted for the proposal and fifteen against and it was accordingly declared carried.

*(The Council stood adjourned for a period.)*

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After discussion, and in response to a Member's suggestion, the Council agreed to adopt the amendment moved by Councillor Brennan to the Strategic Policy and Resources minutes of 24th October regarding the "Requests for Funding", with the addition that officers would also engage with smaller community organisations to advise them of the funding.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Murphy  
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the minute under the heading "Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests" be amended to also provide that, in recognition of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that the Council agrees to erect the National Flag of Palestine above the City Hall on 29th November, 2025.

On a vote, forty-one voted for the amendment and fifteen against and it was accordingly declared carried.

**Exclusion of the Press and Public from the Meeting**

The Council agreed, in accordance with Section 42(4) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to exclude the press and public from the meeting to allow consideration of confidential information in relation to the minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October, under the heading "Belfast Stories Update".

In accordance with the aforementioned Act, the press and public were excluded from the meeting to enable the matter to be discussed in private.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Smyth  
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite and

Resolved – That, under the heading "Belfast Stories Update", that the decision be amended to provide that the Council approves the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined within the report and that recommendations 8 and 9 be referred back to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further discussion, supported by additional information in relation to potential additional market demand for the use of a media production studio.

(The press and the public were re-admitted to the Chamber at this point in proceedings and the Chief Executive informed the meeting of the decision which had been taken whilst the Council had met in Committee.)

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**Correspondence - Translink – Belfast Grand Central Station Update**

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed to write to the Belfast Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the Belfast and Northern Ireland Chambers of Commerce and the hospitality sector's Trade Unions to ask them to join with the Council in requesting that Translink lowers its bus fares over the Christmas period to encourage more footfall in the city centre and to lower traffic congestion.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Long,  
Seconded by Councillor Murray,

That the minute under the heading "EV Update - EV Charging Network on Council sites and Depot Charging Scheme" be amended to provided that the Council agrees that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model as outlined in the report and defers 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, twenty-eight Members voted for the amendment and twenty-eight against. There being an equality of votes, the Lord Mayor exercised her second and casting vote for the amendment and it was subsequently declared carried.

**Supporting Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building**

At the request of a Member, the Council agreed that the recommendations would go straight to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration, removing the requirement for Area Working Groups to consider them initially.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

**Minutes of People and Communities Committee**

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

"That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 7th October, 2025, be approved and adopted."

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor D. Douglas,  
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks,

"That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 7th October, under the heading 'Applications for Dual Language Street Signs

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with Potential for an Adverse Impact, be rejected, given the potential for an adverse impact on community relations, and 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.”

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

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 7th October were thereupon approved and adopted.

**Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

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

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th October, 2025, be approved and adopted.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor C. McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

“That the minute under the heading “International Engagement” be amended to also provide that the Council writes to the Department of Education, asking it to remove the content posted on their communication channels regarding the Minister's trip to occupied Palestine, declares that Belfast City Council has no confidence in the Minister for Education, and to write to him informing him of our position.”

On a vote, forty Members voted in favour of the amendment and fifteen against and it was declared carried.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite  
Seconded by Councillor Lyons

“ That the minute under the heading “International Engagement – Update on Proposed Approach” be amended to also provide that the Council, in acknowledging that Ireland will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in July 2026 for six months, agrees to write to the Irish Government and to the President of the EU Council to advise that Belfast City Council wishes to deepen its engagement with the European Union and that it would encourage European representatives to visit Northern Ireland during that six month period.

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On a vote, forty-one Members voted in favour of the amendment and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th October were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th October, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Request from a Member**

**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**

At the request of Councillor Collins, the City Solicitor agreed to liaise with the Planning officers in respect of examining the trees at the site.

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th October were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee**

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Magee and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 9th October be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Standards and Business Committee**

Moved by Councillor Flynn  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

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

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**Notice of Motion**

**Ban on Greyhound Racing in Northern Ireland**

Councillor Flynn proposed the following:

“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.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

**Amendment**

Moved by the High Sherriff (Councillor McAteer)  
Seconded by Councillor Nelson

To delete everything after “This Council” and replace with the following:

“resolves to call on the Northern Ireland Executive and DAERA to improve regulation of greyhound racing, noting the developments in other jurisdictions, and to support rehoming efforts and welfare organisations working to protect retired greyhounds.”

On a vote on the amendment, forty-six Members voted in favour of the amendment and four against and it was declared carried.

The amendment was thereupon put to the Council as the substantive motion and passed.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson

## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st November, 2025

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

- Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);  
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,  
de Faoite, 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. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing  
and External Affairs;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and  
Development;  
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);  
Ms. L-A O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;  
Ms. K. Mullan, Fleadh Cheoil - Operations Lead;  
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 Alderman McCoubrey.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the

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Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, and subject to the amendments of the minutes under the following headings:

***Requests for Funding***

The Council agreed that there would be a one-week expression of interest for winter programmes including project details forms which would be released for North, South, East and West Belfast;

***Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests***

The Council agreed that the minute under the heading “Human Rights Day 2025 - Flag Requests” be amended to also provide that, in recognition of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, that the Council would erect the National Flag of Palestine above the City Hall on 29th November, 2025;

***Belfast Stories Update***

That the decision be amended to provide that the Council approves the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined in the report and that recommendations 8-9 be referred back to the next Committee for further discussion, supported by additional information in relation to potential additional market demand for the use of a media production studio;

***Correspondence - Translink – Belfast Grand Central Station Update***

The Council agreed to write to the Belfast Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), the Belfast and Northern Ireland Chambers of Commerce and the hospitality sector’s Trade Unions to ask them to join with the Council in requesting that Translink lowers its bus fares over the Christmas period to encourage more footfall in the city centre and to lower traffic congestion;

***EV Update - EV Charging Network on Council sites and Depot Charging Scheme***

The Council agreed that the minute be amended to provide that the Council agrees that officers begin the tender process based on a Concession Operating model as outlined in the report and defers consideration of the specific locations of the proposed Phase One sites so that a broader list could be submitted to the Committee; and

***Supporting Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building***

The Council agreed that the recommendations would go straight to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration, removing the requirement for Area Working Groups to consider them initially.

**Declarations of Interest**

Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 8. (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.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 5.e) Planning Information, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 5. (d). Update on Hardship Programme, Councillor Beattie declared an interest associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest regarding 9. (b) Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality, in so far as he had assisted with the Cregagh Wanderers Football Club application, which was being recommended for the use of the City Hall. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 3. (a) Motion - Together: Building a United Community Strategy and 5. (h) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in that his partner was a Minister in the NI Executive and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Councillor Long declared an interest under item 3. (a) Motion - Together: Building a United Community Strategy, in that his wife was the Justice Minister and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following ten 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 ten 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 the 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.

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**Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann**

The Committee was provided with an update on the planning to support the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026.

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting, Mr. A. McQuillan, Traffic Management Company, to the meeting. She advised that he was attending the meeting to answer any operational questions the Committee might have.

During discussion, Members highlighted the need for: accessible/blue badge parking; a pilot residents' parking scheme for the duration of the event; community and member engagement, in particular with the Department for Infrastructure; and international marketing.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the detailed update on venues and ground footprint;
- Approved the approach to submit a major events order to Department for Communities;
- Approved the request for permission to enter into land agreements;
- Noted the update in relation to communications and engagement;
- Approved proposals for addendum to Ards CCE funding agreement; and
- Noted that the issues raised by Members in relation to accessible parking, a pilot residents' parking scheme, community and member engagement with the Department for Infrastructure, and international marketing would be investigated.

**Belfast Stories Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in November, the Council had agreed that the decision of the Committee of 24th October be amended to provide that the Council approved the recommendations (points 1-7) as outlined within the report and that the following recommendations (points 8 – 9), be referred back to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further discussion, supported by additional information in relation to potential additional market demand for the use of a media production studio:

- 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

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- 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.

Subsequently, the Programme Director (Belfast Stories) and Creative and Strategic Lead (Belfast Stories) presented an update on the further engagement that had taken place on the potential to include an enhanced studio/event space in the Belfast Stories scheme and the findings of an independent report on the opportunity presented by an enhanced studio/event space and mix of uses.

**Proposal 1**

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin

That the Committee agrees to cease the design development of the enhanced studio and event space provision (including use as a Media Production Studio) for the Belfast Stories scheme.

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

**Proposal 2**

Moved by Councillor Maghie,  
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations as outlined in the report.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed to proceed with design development to include an enhanced studio and event space provision (including use as a Media Production Studio) in the planning application for the Belfast Stories scheme;
2. Agreed to complete an addendum to the Outline Business Case to further assess the viability of an enhanced studio and events space to inform a final decision by Council; and
3. Agreed, in principle, to the financing of the additional capital costs associated with the enhanced studio and events space subject to legal agreements and the approval by Council and the Department for Economy of an addendum to the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case.

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**2025-26 Quarter 2 Finance Report**

The Director of Finance presented the Quarter 2 financial position, including the year-end forecast for 2025/26. The Quarter 2 Finance and Treasury Management reports had been included as appendices to the report.

The Committee:

- Noted the Quarter 2 financial position and year end forecast (Appendix 1);
- Noted the Quarter 2 Treasury Management report (Appendix 2);
- Agreed to use of remaining EPR monies, £6.2m, to fund Waste Collection Vehicles;
- Agreed to a specified reserve for unspent Leisure (£2m) and Pitches (£1.5m) capital financing in 2025/26;
- Agreed to creation of a parks improvement programme of £750k; and
- Agreed that an evaluation report be submitted to the Committee in December in relation to the 2025 Summer Diversionary Funding.

**Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and  
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

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;
- Agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2026; and
- Noted a further workshop would be held in January 2026.

**Update on Standing Orders**

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services presented the proposed amendments to Standing Orders as outlined in the report.

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**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees not to proceed with the changes to Standing Orders as outlined in the report.

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

The Committee agreed to the proposed amendments to Standing Orders, as outlined in the report, which provided clarity in relation to the process for reconsidering decisions which had been subject to call-in.

**Vacant to Vibrant Programme**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and sought approval for a Council contribution to the proposed extension to the Vacant to Vibrant City-Wide Scheme.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and the current approvals for the extension of the Vacant to Vibrant City-Wide scheme, including the offer of funding from the Department for Communities; and
- Agreed the Council's contribution to the proposed extension to the Vacant to Vibrant City-Wide Scheme.

**Asset Management - Gasworks**

*This minute has been restricted on the basis of Commercial Sensitivity. The restriction will be removed in due course.*

**UK Pipe Band Championships**

The Committee was advised that an application had been received from the Ulster Scots Agency to host the 2026 UK Pipe Band Championships at Grove Playing Fields, Belfast in June 2026.

The Committee:

- a) Agreed to the request to support the application to host the 2026 UK Pipe Band Championships by permitting the use of Grove Playing Fields in June 2026, subject to all necessary due diligence and completion of the necessary licence agreements etc; and

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- b) Agreed to provide a financial contribution towards the costs of delivering the event in the sum of £30,000.

**Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy**

The Committee considered the draft Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy as outlined in Appendix one of the report.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report; and
- Agreed to adopt the draft Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

**Sponsorship**

The Committee considered a report in relation to a corporate and cross-departmental Sponsorship and Advertising Income Generation Pilot.

During discussion, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services advised that Members' comments in relation to St. Patrick's Day sponsorship, the ethical procurement policy, naming rights and sponsorship of Council assets, the wording of the review report, and engagement with local businesses would be considered.

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

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Motion - Together: Building a  
United Community Strategy**

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Councillor Nelson and seconded by the High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer:

***'This Council recognises the commitment laid out in the Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy to remove all Interface structures by 2023. Recognises that a failure to remove the interface barrier in Alexandra Park would be a missed opportunity and commits to developing plans to ensure the complete removal of the interface structure as part of the Reconnecting Waterworks and Alexandra Park project.***

***That a report is submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee detailing plans for the removal, alongside a programme of work with local stakeholders to establish support required to assist with the transition, including local detached youth and community relations provision, coinciding with significant investment in the park.***

***That Belfast City Council engages with key stakeholders, including the Department of Justice Interface Programme, to identify any resources that can assist with the removal of the interface barrier.'***

Councillor Murphy proposed additional wording (highlighted in bold) and the proposer accepted the amendment. The motion, as amended, therefore read:

'This Council recognises the commitment laid out in the Together: Building a United Community' (T:BUC) Strategy to remove all Interface structures by 2023. Recognises that a failure to remove the interface barrier in Alexandra Park would be a missed opportunity and commits to developing plans to ensure the complete removal of the interface structure as part of the Reconnecting Waterworks and Alexandra Park Project.

***That this Council prioritises the concerns of surrounding residents in this regard as per the T:BUC strategy in that "the removal of barriers cannot proceed unless local resident's views, perceptions and consent are sought.***

That a report is submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee detailing ***plans regarding Alexandra Park Wall removal, in the context of the above over-arching priority, which will include plans for local stakeholder and resident engagement, including relevant statutory agencies, local detached youth and community relations organisations.***

***This Council also recognises the acute sporting pitch provision need in this area of Belfast and determines to ensure that the report to SP&R reflects this as an opportunity to address that need in an overall process of investment and wall-removal.***

***That this Council agrees that the SP&R report should include detail regarding accompanying significant investment in the park.***

***That Belfast City Council engages with the above stakeholders and refer to all past internal BCC reports re Alexandra Park, especially concerning the interface barrier, so as to explore all strategies and potential resources that can assist with the removal of the Alexandra Park interface barrier.'***

During discussion, several Member's highlighted that community engagement was integral to the process.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report;
- agreed the amended motion: and
- noted that a subsequent report would be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential implications including any implications in respect of the letter of offer for the project.

#### **Motion - Parents' Attendance Records at Council**

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Councillor Maghie and seconded by Councillor Abernethy:

***"That this Council, recognising the important contribution of parents to politics, will investigate ways in which new parents' attendance records reflect the fact that they may have missed meetings due to maternity or paternity for the first six months after having a baby."***

The Committee:

- noted that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report; and

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- agreed that a subsequent report would be brought to Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications.

**Governance**

**Committee Schedule 2026**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for the period from January to December, 2026:

- Friday, 16th January at 9.30 a.m. (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday, 23rd January at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 20th February at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 20th March at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 24th April at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 22nd May at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 19th June at 9.30 a.m.
- No monthly meeting in July
- Friday, 21st August at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 18th September at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 23rd October at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 20th November at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 18th December at 9.30 a.m.

The Committee also agreed to the holding of additional special meetings, if required, to consider the rate-setting process, on dates to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson.

**Change of Date of Council Meeting in  
January and Schedule of Meetings 2026**

The Committee agreed to move the Council meeting in January from Monday, 5th January to Thursday, 8th January, 2026.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Draft Amenity Bye Laws**

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services presented the following report for consideration:

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

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

- update Members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement,
- provide Members with revised draft byelaws for approval

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that Members:**

- note the contents of this report and appendices
- approve the revised draft byelaws

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

Members will be aware of ongoing issues caused by noise and the display of graphic imagery in the city centre and the negative effect that this can have on social and economic activity. This primarily impacts the primary retail core but also extends more widely to those who work, live in and visit Belfast.

The Council is empowered to draft byelaws under Part VI of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (the ‘Act’) and in the absence of primary legislation to enforce such a nuisance, officers agreed to draft byelaws to address these issues.

On 26 June 2023, Committee agreed to authorise officers to begin the formal public consultation process on a set of draft byelaws. This followed formal consultation and engagement with the Department for Communities and receipt of a legal opinion that addressed issues on human rights considerations that were raised by DfC.

**3.2 Consultation and Engagement**

A public consultation was launched on 27 November 2023 on the Council’s online engagement platform YourSay Belfast. The consultation ran for a period of 14 weeks and ended on 4 March 2024.

At the request of Elected Members, further workshops were held with stakeholders in May 2025.

Party briefings have been carried out in the past few months.

This report will give Members a high-level summary of the results of the public consultation and the workshops.

The proposed draft byelaws are attached to this report as Appendix 1 and the detailed Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 2.

### 3.3 Consultation Format

The online survey contained a series of questions designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative information in relation to the following areas:

- Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a rules and regulations around the use of amplification devices and the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre
- Level of usage of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre and for which purposes
- Experience of the use of amplification and display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre (positive, neutral or negative)
- Extent of agreement or disagreement with the introduction of a permit scheme around the use of amplification devices and promotional literature (including graphic imagery) in the city centre
- Extent of agreement or disagreement with standard conditions for a permit as listed in the draft byelaws
- Extent of agreement or disagreement with the proposal that the Council may designate areas in which specific types of instruments or amplification is prohibited

Respondents were asked to declare their interest in Belfast in terms of whether they lived, worked, studied in Belfast, if they were a business owner in Belfast or a visitor. Respondents were also asked for feedback on equality of opportunity or good relations issues that they thought should be considered by the Council in relation to the draft byelaws.

Standard monitoring questions for the categories of age, gender, community background, ethnic origin, disability and dependency status were asked for the purpose of capturing data in relation to the Council's obligations under Section 75

of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Just under three-quarters of respondents indicated that they would be happy to answer these questions.

### **3.4 Further Engagement**

At Members' requests, two further workshops with a range of stakeholders were held on 12 and 14 May 2025.

These sessions were facilitated by an independent consultant and were attended by Elected Members from the DUP, the UUP, the Alliance Party, the Green Party and the TUV as well as representatives from the following organisations: The Committee on the Administration of Justice; Belfast Chamber; Linen Quarter BID; Crown Jesus Ministries; Socialist Party NI; TUV; PSNI; Belfast One and the Free Presbyterian Church.

These sessions provided useful feedback, with general consensus being reached that there is nuisance created by amplified noise in the city centre.

### **3.5 Consultation results and analysis**

There was a total of 3,571 responses to the survey, with a combined total of 14,878 written comments.

There was an extremely high level of engagement from varied sections of the public, who had a wide range of backgrounds, perspectives and opinions.

Many of the written responses were nuanced, thoughtful, detailed, reasoned and complex. They provide a rich source of data in terms of how the city centre is experienced by individuals and groups from a wide range of backgrounds. Respondents stated in detail how amplified noise and /or the content of that amplified noise, as well as the display of graphic imagery have affected them personally, whether positively, negatively or both.

An overriding theme amongst respondents' written answers is the importance that is attached to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights. The Consultation Report explores other themes in responses in more depth.

Written submissions were received from a diverse selection of interested groups and organisations as follows:

- Belfast & District Trades Union Council
- The Committee on the Administration of Justice
- HERe NI
- Free Presbyterian Church
- Northern Ireland Committee – Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- NIPSA
- UNISON NI
- Rainbow Project
- Socialist Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- WRDA
- A joint response from People Before Profit on behalf of a range of political parties, activist groups, art collectives, and other organisations

A summary of these submissions is included as Appendix 3 to the Consultation Report.

A total of 36 hard copy responses were received, which all expressed disagreement with the draft byelaws.

High-level quantitative results from the public survey in the form of pie charts and bar charts are attached to this report as Appendix 3.

### **3.6 Summary of Content of Draft Byelaws**

The draft byelaws that were published for public consultation aimed to strike the balance between freedom of expression and the need to tackle the nuisance that can result when multiple individuals or organisations come together in busy pedestrian areas to share their views, ideas or performances, often using amplification devices.

The draft byelaws contained a requirement for a permit for anyone wishing to use an amplification device in the city centre, including the primary retail core. This related to any situation where on-street amplification is used, such as busking, preaching and outdoor performances. The same rules applied for anyone wishing to place a stand, stall or vehicle carrying any form of promotional literature or other information, regardless of its purpose. This would include displays of graphic imagery.

The draft byelaws further provided that a modest annual fee (to be determined) would be charged to cover the costs of administering the permit scheme.

### 3.7 Proposed Changes to Draft Byelaws Following Consultation

#### Permits

Feedback from the public survey and further engagement has indicated that whilst most respondents are in favour of regulating amplification in the city centre, a permit system is not considered to be the optimal way to achieve such regulation.

Reasons for disagreement with a permit system ranged from concerns around any fee to be charged, potential interference with freedom of expression and the ability to undertake spontaneous performances, and the administration and enforcement of such a scheme. These are explored in more detail in the consultation report.

Officers have therefore removed a permit system from the draft byelaws.

#### Decibel limit

The revised byelaws now provide for a maximum decibel limit of 70dB for performers wishing play music or operate amplifiers and similar devices in the city centre. This decibel limit is slightly louder than the ambient street noise and should ensure that performers can be heard, whilst not being excessively loud or intrusive.

#### Graphic Imagery

The draft byelaws presented for public consultation included provisions around the regulation of graphic imagery. Feedback from the public consultation indicates that the display of certain images in the city centre has a mixed reception. Whilst the majority of respondents in the public consultation indicated quantitatively that their experience was positive, the written comments of those not in favour of the display of graphic imagery (particularly with regards to abortion) expressed strong views to the contrary.

Officers are aware that enforcing a ban on certain graphic images is difficult given the current lack of legislative framework in this area. It is therefore suggested that the provisions on graphic imagery are removed from the current draft of the byelaws and that a separate report is brought back as this issue is further considered.

### **Special Events**

The revised byelaws now contain provisions relating to Special Events to be held in the city centre.

Provision is made (i) for the restriction or prohibition of amplification in the city centre during Special Events and (ii) for the suspension contained within applicable Council byelaws for prohibition of consumption of alcohol in public places in certain areas of the city centre.

### **Alcohol**

Whilst not directly addressed in the draft byelaws, the issue of on-street drinking was raised in the written comments during the public consultation and subsequently in the workshops.

Members will note that a report on the Council's view of the proposed commencement of Articles 68-72 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 was presented at the People and Communities Committee on 9 September 2025 and subsequently ratified at Council on 1 October.

The proposed commencement of these Articles would effectively extend the powers conferred on police officers requiring individuals to stop drinking alcohol in a designated area, and surrender any alcoholic drinks in their possession, to council officers. Anyone refusing will be committing an offence and may be issued with a fixed penalty notice. This is an 'opt in' power that the Council may choose to avail of.

The Council has indicated broad support of the commencement of these provisions to DfC and has noted that they would complement the proposed byelaws to make Belfast a safe and welcoming place for all, in line with the Belfast Agenda.

### **3.8 Enforcement Mechanisms**

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 provides a mechanism for officers to issue abatement notices in relation to noise, however, the current issues around noise in the city centre for the most part do not meet the threshold of a statutory nuisance.

Members may be aware that Section 92 of the Act provides that penalties for the contravention of byelaws shall be in the form of a fine payable on summary conviction. The draft byelaws contain a provision whereby an authorised officer may issue a

fixed penalty notice for an offence committed under the byelaws.

Whilst the issuance of a fixed penalty notice via byelaws is not usual practice, the Department has indicated that it will consider the fixed penalty enforcement mechanism currently included in the draft byelaws.

### **3.9 Suggested next steps**

After considering feedback from the public consultation and workshops, officers have revised the draft byelaws that reflect the changes noted above. These are attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and approval.

Members are also advised that officers will continue to log and monitor all complaints about busking, preaching, or any other kind of street performance. Current statistics are included in the consultation report.

Members will be aware that Section 91 of the Act requires byelaws to be approved by the Department for Communities before they can be adopted. Therefore, any revised draft byelaws will be subject to this process.

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

There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. There will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.

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

An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.”

During discussion, one member raised concern in relation to the enforcement of all Bye-laws, in particular, the display of material at the railings of the City Hall.

In response to a Member's concern in relation to the display of graphic imagery material not being included in the draft Bye-Laws, the City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services highlighted that a report on this issue would be submitted to the Committee in the coming months.

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**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That, to deal with some of the obstructive, threatening and abusive behaviour in the city centre, the Committee agrees to:

- write to the Justice Minister to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the need for an additional class of offenses, noting that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough; and
- write to the Chief Constable to seek clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

After discussion, the Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and appendices;
- approved the revised draft byelaws which would be forwarded to the Department for Communities for consideration;
- agreed that a report be submitted to a future committee in relation to the enforcement of all bye-laws, including the display of material at the railings of the City Hall;
- noted that a report be submitted to a future committee in relation to the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre;
- agreed to write to the Justice Minister to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the need for an additional class of offenses and that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough; and
- agreed to write to the Chief Constable to seek clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

**Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral  
Challenge Competition**

The Committee was reminded that the Council had applied to Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge in April 2025 with an outline concept 'to re-imagine Belfast's network of alleyways'.

Belfast was one of only 100 cities (from 640 applications worldwide) selected to further develop this concept into a more detailed proposal. It was reported that Belfast was subsequently one of only 50 cities awarded \$50,000 to support local engagement and to carry out research to develop the proposal into a funding bid. This bid was submitted to Bloomberg on 17th October. Bloomberg was currently assessing the final 50 applications, of which only 25 would be awarded \$1 million each to deliver their projects. This decision was expected in the next few weeks.

The Committee was provided with an update on the Belfast Bid which built on a series of successful alleyway transformations that had had a positive impact on the lives of local people. The challenge for the city going forward was how it could scale and replicate such successes across many more parts of the city and do in ways that were sustainable and community-led.

The Belfast proposal therefore sought to establish, over a two-year period, a city programme that could support the sustainable development of up to 25 miles of transformed alleyways. These projects might range from quite modest interventions to much more radical transformations, depending local circumstances and on the interest of each community. The programme sought to harness the Council's services in an integrated way and work directly with communities and with other public bodies (such as the Department for Infrastructure, the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive) and utilise digital and data tools, co-design techniques and innovative funding models. It was reported that a decision from Bloomberg was expected in the next few weeks.

**Belfast Inclusive Futures**

The Committee was reminded that, in May 2025, it had approved a series called '*Belfast: Inclusive Futures*' which brings together city leaders (private, public and community) and senior policymakers to build understanding and consensus about the challenges and opportunities that digital technologies represent for our city's shared commitment to inclusive growth.

The Committee was advised that the second event was planned for Monday, 24th November in the City Hall. The guest speaker was Dr Nell Watson, a national AI expert and advisor to Google. A follow up panel discussion would include the NI Chief Scientific Officer Helen McCarthy and Mark Lawler, Professor of Digital Health at Queen's University.

The Committee:

1. Noted the ongoing work on the Bloomberg alleyways transformation proposal;

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2. Noted Bloomberg's final funding decision would be shared with Members at the following Committee meeting; and
3. Noted the invitation to the second Belfast: Inclusive Futures event on Monday, 24th November from 16:00 in the Great Hall.

**Cities@Heart Project 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 provide Members with an update on the progress of the Horizon Europe Cities@Heart project and to seek agreement to approve the final agreed Consortium Agreement.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and agree that the Council signs the final agreed Consortium Agreement required for its participation in the Cities@Heart project.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1 Members will recall that at its meeting on the 18 April 2025, the Committee agreed that council officials work with QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to input to a joint funding submission to the Horizon Europe Innovative Health Initiative grant funding call. The intention was to develop an overall €15million funding bid across seven cities (named Cities@Heart) to enable work to be undertaken with the WHO Healthy Cities Network and innovative technology with the aim of reducing recognised cardiovascular risk factors in order to more effectively manage risk and prevent future cardiovascular events.
- 3.2 The Cities@Heart proposal focuses on obesity, hypertension, dyslipidaemia and diabetes as key drivers of cardiovascular disease and poor health. The intention is to identify effective public health activities which offer potential to scale-up. The project will also seek to develop and deploy strategies to leverage engagement and citizen empowerment, raise awareness of cardiovascular disease, effective prevention, early detection and optimal management to improve outcomes.

- 3.3 The bid involves a range of representatives including public sector, academia and industry experts from across seven municipalities including Izmir (TR), Belfast (NI), Łódź (PL), Cork (IE), Udine (IT), Birmingham (EN) and Utrecht (NL). Each have diverse communities and a commitment to deploy multi-disciplinary health strategies. Working together with citizens and industry experts, each city would intend to apply a structured, multi-sector methodology which includes:
- i. City-level approaches to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease;
  - ii. A digital ecosystem that will power the development of European health technology and economic growth;
  - iii. Integration of health policy and health economics to deliver cost-effective city-level solutions; and
  - iv. Sustainability at its core using an implementation framework that can apply across the 1800+ cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.
- 3.4 It is intended that the Cities@Heart project would build connections and capacity across a broad array of stakeholders, including citizens, patients, municipalities, healthcare providers, policymakers and industry experts, and support the next generation of health technology to address critical barriers in cardiovascular disease across Europe. Members will be aware of the significant health challenges, including cardiovascular disease, impacting on people across the city and will also be aware that addressing health inequalities has been identified as a key priority set out in the Belfast Agenda.

Current position

- 3.5 Following Committee agreement, council officials continued to work alongside colleagues from QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to explore a possible role for Belfast and Council in the emerging Cities@Heart project proposal. Officers have also engaged with representatives from the other cities working on the development of the project proposal and exploring the opportunities and benefits which can be realised for Belfast through participation in Cities@Heart. Some early opportunities identified include:
- Awareness: City-wide campaigns to raise understanding of CVD risks, targeting communities with highest inequalities.
  - Prevention: Building on strong partnerships to tackle obesity, inactivity, smoking, and poor diet; share and learn from other cities.

- **Detection:** Expansion of early identification of hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidaemia in high-risk groups through community outreach and digital tools.
  - **Inequalities:** Strengthen and improve knowledge of available services and support across Belfast, focusing on deprived populations with the highest premature CVD mortality.
- 3.6** Ultimately, through the participation in the project, Belfast has a real opportunity to understand the deep rooted and multi-faceted issues impacting on people's health and to design and bring forward innovative solutions to deliver:
- A reduction in premature cardiovascular disease deaths (currently 35.8 per 100,000 vs 26.9 NI average)
  - Narrow the inequality gap between deprived and affluent wards (communities and neighbourhoods)
  - Create a healthier, more active and sustainable city through prevention, active travel and behavioural change
  - Position Belfast as a model city for equitable cardiovascular health and system-wide prevention
- 3.7** Pending notification of the Cities@Heart bid being successful, the organisations across the seven cities making the joint bid for funding are required to enter into a Consortium Agreement to specify the rights and obligations of each party and set out inter alia project management, governance, confidentiality etc between the parties. As a prerequisite to participation in the project, the Council is required to enter into the Collaboration Agreement. The draft Agreement has been reviewed by the relevant Council officers including Legal Services who have provided comments to the project administrators to inform the terms of the final Consortium Agreement.
- 3.8** In terms of specific areas which have been initially identified whereby Council can provide support as the Cities@Heart programme progresses include:
- Project management
  - Communication, dissemination and engagement
  - Civil society representative
  - Prototyping and demonstration
  - Public procurer of results
- 3.9** Members will note that discussions are underway with Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC) in terms of how they can support these areas of work from a Belfast perspective. The Council will be required to enter into a formal Grant Agreement with the IHI JU

in respect of the funding being awarded under the Cities@Heart bid and alongside this, the Council shall enter into a MOU with Belfast Healthy Cities to set out how both parties will work together on the project.

It is understood that the combined budget for the Council and Belfast Healthy Cities for the overall administration of the programme is in the region of €75,000 for 3 years.

- 3.10 It is further understood that additional project-specific funding awards would be allocated to Belfast, if successful, in securing delivery of projects within the overall Cities@Heart funding award. Any such opportunities would be presented to Committee for review.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.11 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Officer time will be required to help shape the emerging bid and programme of work.

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

- 3.12 There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October, it had been informed that, whilst some underspend from previous years was available to support a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, the amount available was £75,000 which was significantly lower than previous years. Subsequently, it had agreed to write to the Minister for Communities seeking funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in the 2025/26 financial year.

The Committee was advised that the Council had issued correspondence to the Department for Communities requesting them to consider providing funding support for the continuation of the Hardship Programme in 2025/26. Additionally, the letter advised the department that the Council would welcome exploration of a recurrent multi-year funding model to enable more strategic long-term efforts in tackling poverty and hardship at the local level (copy available at Appendix 1). It was reported that update would be provided once a response had been received.

The Committee:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 21st November, 2025**

- I. Noted the contents of this report, including the recent correspondence issued to the Minister for Communities on 10th November; and
- II. Noted the vastly reduced budget position of £75,000 for the development and delivery of a Hardship Programme in 2025/26, which members had agreed should be allocated to Family Support Hubs to help support families and children.

**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.

**Consultation on Review of Planning Fees**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**The Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) is consulting on its review of planning fees, namely the proposed introduction of fees for the following types of application:**

- **Non-Material Changes**
- **Discharges of Condition**

**1.2 Dfi is also seeking views on whether any other application types, which are currently not charged for, should also attract a fee.**

**1.3 This report was noted by the Planning Committee at its 11th November 2025 meeting. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is asked to agree the Council’s response to the consultation.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

**Agree to the Council’s response to the consultation as set out in this report including the additional comments provided by the Planning Committee (summarised at paragraph 3.28).**

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

**3.1 Most planning applications submitted to the Council attract a planning fee, however, several application types currently do not, even though they can be quite time consuming and costly for the Council to process.**

**3.2 DfI is proposing to introduce a flat rate planning fee of £115 for the following types of application, for which there is currently no charge:**

- Non-Material Changes
- Discharges of Condition

**3.3 In addition, the consultation is asking whether there are any other planning application types which are not currently charged for, but which should attract a fee, including but not limited to the following:**

- Tree Preservation Order
- Proposal of Application Notice (PAN)
- Pre-application discussions

**3.4 The introduction of fees for applications for Non-Material Changes and Discharges of Condition would be made through amendments to the Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.**

**3.5 The public consultation opened on 1st October 2025 and closes on 23rd December 2025. A copy of the public consultation document is provided at Appendix 1. This committee report (if agreed) will be provided as the Council's consultation response rather than completing the form as provided as all questions are addressed in the sections below.**

**Assessment**

**3.6 Belfast City Council is one of several NI councils that have advocated the introduction of planning fees for Non-Material Change (NMC) and Discharge of Condition (DOC) applications for many years. This is in the context of the not insignificant resources that councils expend on processing such applications each year.**

**3.7 DfI is proposing to introduce a flat rate fee of £115 for both application types, equivalent to the minimum fee charged for**

such applications in some UK jurisdictions. Table 1 below shows the number of NMC and DOC applications that the Council has received over the last three years.

Application type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
NMC	65	78	77	220
DOC	239	235	245	719
<b>Total</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>939</b>

**Table 1: volume of NMC and DOC applications received by Belfast City Council**

- 3.8 Table 2 below shows the income that would have been received by the Council over the last three years had the proposed fee of £115 been applied retrospectively. This would have amounted to around £36k per annum. However, this projection is caveated by the fact that the introduction of a fee for Discharge of Condition applications may result in more discharge of condition requests to be grouped under a single application, to save costs. This could result in fewer Discharge of Condition applications and lower overall fee income.

Application type	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
NMC	£7,475	£8,970	£8,855	<b>£25,300</b>
DOC	£27,485	£27,025	£28,175	<b>£82,685</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£34,960</b>	<b>£35,995</b>	<b>£37,030</b>	<b>£107,985</b>

**Table 2: Projected fee income if the proposed fee of £115 was retrospectively applied**

**Non-Material Change applications**

- 3.9 Section 67 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the Act') permits the Council to approve a 'non-material change' to a planning permission to facilitate relatively minor and inconsequential amendments to an approved scheme. This dispenses with the requirement for applicants to submit a whole new planning application, therefore, saving time and costs for both applicants and the council. This provision also permits the imposition of new conditions as well as to remove or alter existing conditions. Where approved, the NMC amends the original planning permission; it does not create a new standalone permission.

- 3.10 There is no legal definition of a ‘non-material change’. Guidance is provided by DfI’s [Development Management Practice Note 25: Non-Material Changes](#).
- 3.11 As shown in Table 1 above, the Council receives around 70 applications for Non-Material Changes each year. The complexity of the amendments proposed by NMC applications can vary considerably and can be time consuming for the Council to deal with, especially where the proposals relate to largescale Local and Major applications (depending on the scale and nature of the proposed changes). The Council is also responsible for processing applications for Non-Material Changes to regionally significant permissions granted by DfI. Therefore, the principle of a charge for NMC applications is welcomed.
- 3.12 However, officers have the following concerns about the proposal to introduce a flat rate £115 fee for all NMC applications:
- Firstly, it is considered unreasonable and disproportionate that the fee to amend more complex applications, such as permissions for Major and large-scale Local proposals, is the same as the fee for amending a householder or minor applications.
  - Secondly, planning fees in NI should work towards increased cost recovery and a flat rate fee of £115 would not cover the Council’s costs in processing NMC applications. DfI acknowledges that further work should be undertaken by councils and DfI around increased cost recovery to inform more appropriate fees across the board.
- 3.13 Consideration should be given to separate rates for NMC applications for householder, Local and Major planning permissions, with an increasing scale of charges respectively, Alternatively, consideration could be given to the NMC fee being a percentage of the original application fee.

**Discharge of Condition applications**

- 3.14 Section 52 of the Act enables a council to impose conditions on a planning permission. Guidance on the use of condition is provided by DfI’s [Development Management Practice Note 20: Use of Planning Conditions](#). The Council may only impose a condition where it meets all of the six tests, namely that the condition is:

1. necessary;
  2. related to planning;
  3. relevant to the development permitted;
  4. enforceable;
  5. precise; and
  6. reasonable in all other respects.
- 3.15 Some conditions require submission and approval of further information to the Council before a specified trigger point being met, typically prior to commencement of development or occupation. This process is referred to as the 'discharge of conditions'.
- 3.16 Examples include the submission and approval of the following information:
- details of external materials (e.g. brick, stonework, render and roof tiles)
  - landscaping details (e.g. tree planting and boundary treatment)
  - a final remediation strategy to deal with contaminated land
  - details of the precise window specification to ensure appropriate sound-proofing if the development is next to a busy road or other noise source.
- 3.17 As a general principle, the Council's Planning Service seeks to avoid the use of DOC conditions where possible by front-loading the submission of the information as part of the original application. This saves time and costs later down the line; however, this approach is not always possible as often the information will only be available – or the developer is only willing to provide it – post-decision once the planning permission is in place.
- 3.18 Like NMCs, Dfl is proposing to introduce a flat-rate £115 fee for DOC applications.
- 3.19 Officers have similar concerns to the proposed flat-rate fee of £115 for NMC applications:
- the charge for the DOC application is the same, irrespective of the scale and complexity of the development and nature of the conditions. For example, a householder would pay the same fee for approval of external materials for a domestic extension as a developer would pay for the discharge of a series of complex conditions (such as land contamination, archaeology and drainage) associated with a Major

development. This is considered unfair, particular as the proposed fee would represent a third (33%) of the original planning fee for a householder application. In comparison, for a largescale Major application, the fee might represent only 0.1% of the cost of the original application.

- in a similar vein, it is proposed that the same fee applies irrespective of the number of conditions that require to be discharged; therefore, a DOC application to discharge a single condition on a householder permission would attract the same fee as a DOC application to discharge a dozen conditions relating to a complex Major permission.
- in practice, the Council deals with very few DOC applications for Householder permissions and it would be more appropriate to waive the fee for such applications, with a higher charge rate proposed for discharging conditions associated with more complex proposals.
- the flat rate fee of £115 would not cover the Council's actual costs in processing such applications and would not represent anywhere near cost recovery.
- the DOC process often requires engagement with consultations for their expert technical advice, such as the Council's Environmental Health service or Government Departments such as Dfl Roads, Dfl Rivers, DfC HED and DAERA NIEA. This consultation process can be very involved and time consuming for consultees and the proposal does not address income for consultees to cover their staff costs in assessing the information and advising the Council on its suitability. Officers are of the clear view that a service should only be charged where a responsive and quality service is provided. The current fee proposal does not address consultee resources and would not speed up the DOC process. Informal feedback to the Council from agents is that applicants would generally be prepared to pay a higher fee if it would guarantee a quicker decision.

3.20 Similar to the NMC fee proposals, further work should be undertaken by councils and Dfl around increased cost recovery to inform more appropriate fees for DOC applications.

3.21 Officers recommend that there should be no charge for DOC applications relating to householder permissions. A fee higher than £115 should be introduced for DOC applications for Local permissions (excluding householders) with a higher fee for Major applications. A fee should be introduced per condition rather than a flat rate fee irrespective of the number of

conditions. Correct adherence to the six tests for conditions (see par. 3.14) would ensure that the system is not abused with conditions unnecessarily added.

**Other application types**

3.22 In addition, Dfl is asking for views on whether fees should be introduced for the following application types, which are currently not charged.

- **Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)** – the Council receives about 130 applications for works to trees each year. Officers are concerned that the introduction of a fee could deter tree owners from making such applications or to not undertake necessary tree maintenance works because of the cost of making an application. Therefore, it is recommended that there continues to be no fee payable for an application for works to a protected tree (i.e. a tree subject to a TPO or within a Conservation Area).
- **Proposal of Application Notices (PANs)** – legislation requires applicants for Major development to submit a PAN to the Council that sets out the applicant's proposals for Pre-Application Community Consultation. Councils have 21 days to assess the proposals, advising of any necessary further steps. There are both administrative and professional costs associated with the assessment of PAN applications and an appropriate flat-rate fee could be introduced to recover typical costs.
- **Pre-Application Discussions (PADs)** – the Council already charges for PADs (as a discretionary service) and has been doing so since 2017. It similarly charges for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) – a project management tool used to support the efficient and timely handling of more complex planning applications. BCC would not want to see standardisation of such costs across all councils as the resources attributed to such discussions and how each PAD is treated will be at the discretion of each Planning Authority.

3.23 The Dfl consultation also asks if there are any other application types that currently do not attract a planning fee for which councils recommend that charging is introduced. Officers advise that fees could also be introduced for the following application types:

- EIA screening – where an applicant asks the Council to give a formal ‘screening’ opinion as to whether a proposal is ‘Environmental Impact Assessment’ (EIA) development. Applications for EIA development are required to be supported by an Environmental Statement and normally only relate to very large-scale and complex development proposals. The EIA screening process invariably involves engagement with internal and external consultees and can be a complex and time-consuming technical process to complete.
- EIA scoping – where it is accepted that a proposal is ‘EIA development’ and the applicant asks the Council to give a formal ‘scoping’ opinion as to the required content of the Environmental Statement that will accompany the planning application. Similarly, the EIA scoping process invariably involves engagement with internal and external consultees and can be a complex process.
- Discharge of planning obligations contained in a Section 76 planning agreement (MDPA) – there is currently no charge for the Council assessing information required by a Section 76 planning application, such as the submission and approval of a Travel Plan, open space management plan or Employability and Skills Plan. It is similar to the process of discharging conditions and should be charged.

3.24 Applications for Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent (DCA) are historically not charged for in NI, England and Wales. Like applications for works to trees, it is assumed that the reason is not to deter applicants from making such important applications. Nevertheless, the processing of these applications does have costs implications for the Council. Further targeted consultation should take place with a range of stakeholders should DfI consider introducing planning fees for Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent applications.

#### Other matters

3.25 It is proposed that councils should be able, if they so wish, to set their own fees for Non-Material Change and Discharge of Condition applications. This recognises that the costs associated with the processing of such applications will vary from council to council, particularly for a large built-up urban area such as Belfast where issues such as land contamination are prevalent.

- 3.26 The Council would express its disappointment that Dfl did not carry out any pre-consultation with councils ahead of publication of the consultation. As can be seen from this report, whilst the principle of charging for NMC and DOC applications is accepted, there are a range of concerns about the specific proposals and factors that will need to be considered. These could have been addressed, and more developed proposals consulted on, had there been prior engagement with councils and wider development industry (planning agents, architects and developers).
- 3.27 For the reasons set out in this report, it is considered that the proposals to charge for NMC and DOC applications should be developed further before charging is introduced.

Consideration by the Planning Committee

- 3.28 The Planning Committee noted the report at its 11th November 2025 meeting. During the discussion there was particular support for the waiving of fees for Discharge of Condition applications for householder proposals. In addition, the Planning Committee agreed that Dfl should be asked to consider increasing fees for retrospective applications, to act as a deterrent to those who may consider carrying out development or works without the necessary permission or consent. This could also lead to reduction in unauthorised development or works, reducing complaints and lessening the pressure on the Council's planning enforcement function.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.29 The NI Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee reports (2022) recognise the financial unsustainability of the NI planning system. Planning Authority costs typically outstrip planning income through planning fees by a significant margin. The introduction of charging for Non-Material Change and Discharge of Condition applications is welcomed in principle, however, the proposals do not represent actual cost recovery. Further work is required by councils and Dfl, with input from consultees and the development industry, to refine the proposed charging model for these and all other application types.

Equality or Good Relations Implications /  
Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.30 No adverse impacts have been identified.”

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Friday, 21st November, 2025**

The Committee agreed to the Council's response to the consultation, as set out in the report, including the additional comments provided by the Planning Committee (summarised at paragraph 3.28 of the report).

**Review of Building Control non-statutory charges**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**The purpose of this report is to consider the review of charges for non-statutory functions delivered by Building Control. Part 11 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 allows the council to charge a fee for a service that is not a statutory provision that the council is required to provide to the person, providing the cost does not exceed the costs of the provision.**

**1.2 The charges of fees are in the line with the Corporate Pricing Framework, Financial Regulations and the Scheme of delegation.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

**Agree the set of charges and fees for non-statutory services provided by Building Control. A list of the fees is detailed in Appendix 1. It is recommended that the additional fees come into effect from 1st April 2026, in line with the budget setting process and will be reviewed after 12 months.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Members will be aware that some fees for statutory services in Building Control are set by the Department of Finance others such as licensing are set through the Licensing Committee and referred to Strategic Policy and Resources. As part of the budget setting process officers are required to review charges and fees for services provided that are not part of the Council's statutory functions.**

**3.2 Building Control's management team reviewed all services provided and whether fees were charged and the reason why some services were provided with no chargeable fee.**

**3.3 A benchmarking exercise was carried out across all local councils in Northern Ireland and some councils in Scotland and England. In most cases councils charge for the**

non-statutory functions, whereas none have been charged in Belfast.

3.4 Following the benchmarking exercises, the fees for non-statutory services are proposed to be revised with the introduction of some charges and an increase in others, as set out below.

3.5 Building Control currently charge a fee for the services below but would propose a fee increase.

1. Building Control service currently charges £30 for a property enquiry. This charge does not cover the cost for the provision of the service, based on an analysis of time spent by staff carrying out the service. Therefore, the proposal would be to increase the charge based on the hourly rate to carry out the task to £100 per single dwelling and £100 for a commercial property consisting of one unit.

2. Building Control currently charge an administration fee of £50 for Building Regulation applications that are withdrawn, which would include fees charged for full plan applications and building notice applications. The service propose to introduce this charge to all application types which would include, Property Certificates, Property Enquiries, Licensing applications (Entertainment, Amusement, Cinema, Petroleum, Street Trading, Pavement Café and Road Closures).

3.6 Building Control do not currently charge for the services below but would propose to introduce a fee.

1. Copy certificates or confirmation of postal address. There is a significant increase in the demand for copy certificates. Taking into consideration the costs incurred the Service propose to introduce a charge of £50 for both services – copy certificates and confirmation of postal address. This is in line with the charges levied by other councils.

2. Confirmation of completion letters prior to 1994. There is no requirement to provide documentation for applications made prior to 1994, however the service receives regular requests. This would fall within the parameters of a property enquiry, with a full search being required. Therefore, a new £100 charge is proposed to match the property enquiry fee.

3. Building Control currently offer a pre-submission consultation service which provides advice and guidance prior to the submission of a Building Regulations application. This service is primarily offered to larger commercial projects, is currently free of charge, and takes time to administrate, review in advance, meet with the applicant and provide a response. The Service would receive on average approximately 30 applications per year. Based on the officer time required using the hourly rate for an administration officer and an average hourly rate for a Building Control Surveyor to provide professional technical advice a new charge of £170 per enquiry is proposed.
4. Additional or replacement set of approved drawings. This request can take a substantial amount of staff time as there is the requirement to compare the new set of drawings submitted with the approved drawings held on file, check for an acceptable match, and if so, stamp each drawing and post out. Taking the requirements to deliver this service and officers time into consideration a new charge of £80 per request is proposed.
5. Provision of specification notes for Energy Performance Certificates. The requests for these are limited but the work entailed would fall into similar criteria for the charge for a property enquiry, therefore a new charge of £100 is proposed.

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

- 3.7 Based upon the suggested new fees or fee increases, an analysis of the number of applications and requests previously made, benchmarking other councils and assumptions made in relation to the levels of ongoing applications, a conservative increase of £20,000 has been added to the 2026-2027 estimates, subject to council approval of these proposed fee changes. This will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, to determine if application numbers are sustained given the changes in the charges and to evaluate the actual increase in income.

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

- 3.8 There are no Equality or good relations implications from the increases in charges proposed. A rural assessment is not considered necessary.”

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
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The Committee agreed the set of charges and fees for non-statutory services provided by Building Control. A list of the fees was detailed in Appendix 1 and noted that it was recommended that the additional fees came into effect from 1st April 2026, in line with the budget setting process and would be reviewed after 12 months.

**Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**1.1 To update the committee on the programme of work that council is delivering to support The Executive Office’s (TEO) strategic framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG).**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the update on the wide range of work being delivered by council in support of TEO’s strategic framework to EVAWG; and
- Endorse the Women’s Night Safety Charter, to support partner organisations with its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of TEO’s strategic framework.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Policy Context**

**What is Violence Against Women and Girls?**

**Violence against women and girls is comprised of actions and the threat of actions including:**

- 1. physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence occurring in the family including children and young people (Domestic Abuse), in the general community, or in institutions, including coercive control and stalking**
- 2. harmful sexual behaviour which is sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people that are inappropriate or abusive**
- 3. sexual harassment, bullying, and intimidation in any public or private space**
- 4. commercial and non-commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, trafficking, child sexual abuse, so-**

called honour-based violence, including female genital mutilation, forced and child marriages, and so-called honour crimes

5. online and technology facilitated abuse [or gender-based violence] including cyberstalking, cyber flashing, sexual harassment, grooming for exploitation or abuse, image based sexual abuse and abuse through emerging technologies such as 'internet of things' devices
6. workplace sexual harassment ranging from sexual jokes or comments to unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature
7. financial abuse such as controlling a woman's or girl's access to their money, taking loans or credit cards in their name, or using their money without their permission
8. everyday harm caused by everyday misogyny, sexist jokes and language, and discrimination which contributes to an atmosphere in which the threat of violence, specific or general is consistently in women's minds.

### 3.2 The Executive Office's Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls

In 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive directed that a Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) be developed, and the Executive Office (TEO) is leading on this whole of government, whole of society approach.

TEO led the development of a co-designed Strategic Framework which sets the agenda for all of government and society to address the whole range of gender-based violence, abuse and harm which is disproportionately experienced by women and girls, and which is rooted in gender inequality. The framework is ambitious, long term, and wide reaching. The Vision is: *A changed society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse, and harm, including the attitudes, systems, and structural inequalities that cause them.* There are six outcomes organised under the four themes of 1) prevention; 2) protection and provision; 3) justice system; and 4) working better together:

- Outcome 1: Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.

- **Outcome 2: Healthy, respectful relationships** – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.
- **Outcome 3: Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere** – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.
- **Outcome 4: Quality frontline services, protection, and provision for victims and survivors of violence against women and girls** – Provision of high-quality services for women and girls who are victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.
- **Outcome 5: A justice system which has the confidence of victims, survivors and the public in its ability to address violence against women and girls** – In the context of violence against women and girls, a justice system that is trauma informed, considers the needs of people who come into contact with it, gives victims and survivors a voice and a place in the process, holds perpetrators to account, while challenging and supporting them to change and has the confidence of the public.
- **Outcome 6: All of government and society working better together to end violence against women and girls** – A whole system approach with collaboration and cooperation by default across central and local government, statutory bodies, and with, within and between the community, voluntary, trade unions, employers, business and other sectors.

The council is supporting TEO with the implementation of its strategic framework for EVAWG. This works comprises several separate workstreams as set out in sections 3.3-3.5. In addition, the council is also delivering, supporting, endorsing or signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls both internally and externally within the Belfast district. This work is detailed at section 3.6.

### **3.3 Regional Change Fund**

The council administers a regional funding programme on behalf of TEO with eight specialist delivery organisations receiving a share of £1.2 million up to 31 March 2026. There is a possible uplift of £50-£75K per group to be complete in year (process not yet confirmed).

- Youth Action
- NSPCC
- Women's Aid
- White Ribbon
- WRDA
- Nexus
- Barnardo's
- Relate NI

### 3.4 Local Change Fund

The council also administers a smaller grant programme (budget of £255,000) through the Central Grants Unit for projects which equip third sector groups in Belfast to achieve the prevention outcomes of the EAWG Strategic Direction which are detailed below. Every project must contribute to changed attitudes behaviours and culture; and may contribute to the other two outcomes:

1. Changed attitudes, behaviours and culture - Everyone in society understands what violence against women and girls is, including its root causes, and plays an active role in preventing it.
2. Healthy, respectful relationships – Everyone in society is equipped and empowered to enjoy healthy, respectful relationships.
3. Women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere – Organisations and institutions across government and society embed the prevention of violence against women and girls in all that they do, so that women and girls are safe and feel safe everywhere.

The grants (which include three separate tiers – up to £5k, £15k and £25k) provide funding up to 31 March 2026 to support 27 local groups to deliver events, projects or programmes of activity aimed at EAWG within the communities they support. At its meeting on 5 August, the People and Communities committee agreed the proposed approach to allocate any additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund on the understanding of receiving further funding from TEO (demand £1,251,422 greatly exceeded the available budget). However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO.

### 3.5 Belfast Mobilisation Programme

The Belfast Mobilisation Programme (budget of £110,000) enabled immediate and urgent action to raise awareness of the new EAWG Strategy. This funding (agreed by People & Communities in December 2024) facilitated an expansion of existing good work by council and communities, in addition to new activity within the 2024/25 financial year. The diverse programme reached over 1,000 participants across

65 sessions with a number of extremely successful projects, including training for council officers and local community organisations; high profile area events; safety awareness sessions for women and girls; targeted training and support for people working in hostels or with female who are rough sleeping and a bystander conference for leaders in sport to explore how men can help end violence against women and girls. While this programme has been very successful, many of the participants were keen to continue their involvement. An evaluation of the programme to date notes:

- 95% of respondents felt that participation had increased their knowledge of what violence against women and girls is.
- 89% responded that the programme has given them a better understanding of the underlying causes of violence against women and girls; and
- 91% feel that participation has increased their confidence about what they can do to help end violence against women and girls.

Given the success of council-led initiatives, TEO has indicated that it wishes to support an extension of the Momentum Programme for 2025/26. A Programme of activity is currently being developed and is expected to be brought to the People & Communities Committee for final approval as soon as possible once the Letter of Offer has been received from TEO.

3.6 Ending Violence Against Women and Girls is included as a priority within the council's 3-year Corporate Plan 2025-28. The Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services, and Strategic Director of Place and Economy have both been appointed as champions for women's safety and EVAWG. The Council has been delivering, supporting, endorsing and signposting a range of activities to support women's safety and the campaign to end violence against women and girls. This includes a range of internal staff based training and external interventions amplifying the council's leadership role within the city, and is detailed below:

- Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence (Platinum level) this comprises a Workplace Policy on Domestic Violence and Abuse, associated network of trusted colleagues, regular trusted colleague training and support, and general awareness raising training, communications and signposting to additional support outside of work.
- International 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign – this year the council's campaign

begins on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (Tuesday 25 November) and ends on Human Rights Day (Wednesday 10 December). Corporate HR has organised a series of Raise Your Voice workshops, including one specifically for male colleagues. All sessions aim to promote allyship and support safer communities for everyone.

- **White Ribbon Pledge** – an annual commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe City and creating a safer society by challenging harmful behaviours, promoting equality and respect, and fostering a community where everyone feels safe and valued. The pledge is that ‘together we pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls’. The Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and Director of HR will sign the Charter on 2 December 2025.
- **Gender Action Plan** – the council’s 2024-27 Plan contains actions that supplement domestic violence training and awareness raising across the city, annual funding of the International Women’s Day rally and march in the city (organised by Reclaim the Agenda), and delivery of a partnership research project with Queen’s University to improve design of public spaces.
- **Onus Safe City Award (assessed annually)** – Domestic Abuse Policy and support for staff is integrated within a much wider cohesive and co-ordinated approach to addressing both domestic and sexual abuse and violence against women and girls across the Belfast City Council area.
- **Community Safety – 2025/26 Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan** - Delivery of a range of specific projects and activity that addresses issues related to violence against women and girls, including but not limited to funding for Belfast Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership Programme, additional Safer Neighbourhood Officer patrols, safety awareness classes within our community centres and funding for safer socialising kits which include bottle covers to prevent drink spiking.
- **Late Night Transport** - At September’s SP&R meeting, the committee agreed to provide funding to support a one-year pilot scheme extending hours for late-night transport in Belfast which will contribute towards reducing the potential for violence against women and girls on late night transport on their way home from socialising in the city centre.
- **Safer Socialising** - as part of EVAWG Foundational Action Plan, Hospitality Ulster have partnered with TEO,

PSNI, SIA, Youth Work Alliance, Health and Social Care NI, Department of Justice, SOLACE, Translink, Tourism NI and the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland to establish a Safer Socialising Steering Group (SSSG), which will coordinate a range of NI-wide initiatives, including the rollout and oversight of the [Women's Night Safe Charter](#). Members are asked if they are content to agree to endorse the Charter, which has been signed by 10 Councils across NI, to support its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of the TEO's strategic framework.

- **Entertainment Licensing current work and Best Practice Signposting** – The Building Control Licensing team actively promote the 'Ask for Angela' initiative when engaging with hospitality premises that apply for or have an entertainments licence. This may include discussing the scheme with licensees and managers during renewal inspections and asking bar staff if they are aware of the scheme when during performance inspections are being carried out at night. The SSSG are currently reviewing a range of safer socialising initiatives including 'Ask for Angela' which is led by HU in partnership with the PSNI. As soon as the group have finalised their recommendations, Building Control Licensing officers will proactively promote and signpost to any updated scheme. Under entertainments licensing the building control licensing team assess event management plans including the health and welfare and medical provisions proposed to keep people attending outdoor concert events safe, when often there is considered to be a high risk of harm and vulnerability due to drugs and alcohol, often particularly for young women and girls. Officers from the council's community safety and the alcohol enforcement team work in conjunction with licensing and event promoters and provide support to vulnerable people on the ground before, during and after outdoor concerts. For indoor nightclubs and dance music venues the licensing team references conditions within the safer dancing appendix of the council's Rules of Management for Indoor Places of Entertainment which have the aim of helping keep people attending indoor dance events safe from drink/drug related harm.

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.7 TEO currently provides funding to enable council's management and administration of the Regional and Local

**Change Fund Projects to March 2026.** As outlined in section 3.4, further in-year funding may be received from TEO to allocate additional Momentum fund, Local Change Fund grant support and additional in-year allocations for the Regional Change Fund. However, at the time of writing there has been no confirmation or letter of offer received from TEO. The Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership Action Plan is funded by the Joint Committee of the Department of Justice and the NI Policing Board. A number of workstreams have been incorporated within relevant corporate work programmes and utilise existing staff and resources. Specific funding has been allocated to the late-night transport pilot scheme.

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

**The Executive Office’s Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and Action Plan has been screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications.”**

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the wide range of work being delivered by the Council in support of TEO’s strategic framework to EVAWG;
- Endorsed the Women’s Night Safety Charter, to support partner organisations with its promotion and roll-out to the hospitality and entertainment sector as part of TEO’s strategic framework;
- Agreed to write to the Executive Office to suggest the inclusion of Unite the Union onto the Steering Group; and
- Agreed to write to Hospitality Ulster to request information on what work was being undertaken to support the implementation of the Charter in the sector.

**Age Friendly Employer Pledge**

The Committee was reminded that, in 2012, the Council had provided the initial leadership to explore Belfast becoming an Age Friendly City and, in May 2012, the Lord Mayor had signed a declaration committing Belfast to this process by joining the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

The Committee was advised that the Health Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) had been working collaboratively to ensure Belfast was an Age Friendly City. It was responsible for the development and implementation of the city’s Age Friendly Plan on behalf of the Council and the wider community planning partners. In the third Age Friendly

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Plan 2023 – 2027, partners were focusing on four thematic areas to address infrastructure, social inclusion, health and well-being, and financial security for older people.

It was reported that Age Friendly Belfast was a key workstream in the Belfast Agenda. It recognised Belfast's older population with its diverse range of abilities and needs, along with the contribution older people make to their families, their communities and the economy.

The Committee was reminded that the Reference Group on Older People had supported the development of the Age Friendly Belfast Plan which included a commitment to promote Age Friendly employers within the city. The Council's Age Friendly Coordinator, who was also the lead officer on the Reference Group for Older People, had asked that the Council consider adopting the Age Friendly Employer Pledge.

***Age Friendly Employer Pledge***

The Age Friendly Employer Pledge was for employers who recognised the importance and value of older workers; were committed to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s (and beyond) and were prepared to take action to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce. The Council currently had 1060 employees who were aged 50 and above – 42.9% of the workforce.

Currently over 450 employers had signed the pledge, which included other council's such as Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Ards and North Down Borough Council, Manchester City Council and more. The Age Friendly Employer Pledge (see Appendix 1 for more information) was a nationwide programme for employers that:

- Identified a senior sponsor for age-inclusion in the workforce and publicly state their commitment to the pledge;
- Ensured age was specifically named within their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies;
- Take action to improve the recruitment, retention and development of workers over 50 from one of the following areas:
  - Create an age friendly culture
  - Hire age positively
  - Be flexible about flexible working
  - Encourage career development at all ages
  - Ensure everyone has the health support they need

The Committee was reminded that the Council had in place flexible working opportunities for all staff which were regularly advertised, there was regular staff support, opportunities for training or e-learning sessions on interview skills and selection techniques and that a comprehensive Health and Wellbeing programme in place covering menopause, yoga, musculoskeletal issues, addiction, stress awareness.

The Committee was advised that signing the Pledge signified that the Council would commit to take action in at least one of the above areas every year and report back to the Centre for Ageing Better.

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The Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs had been nominated by CMT to be the Council's senior sponsor for age-inclusion in the workforce should this proposal be agreed by the Committee.

The Committee noted the contents of this report and agreed to the Council signing up to the [Age Friendly Employer Pledge](#).

**Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition 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 provide Members with an update on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- I. Note the update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition, including the completion of the Business Case for Place-Based Investment which has been forwarded to UK Government for consideration.**
- II. Note the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, and the Northern Ireland Executive.**
- III. Approve attendance of Elected Members as set out in the report at the Scottish Cities Alliance roundtable, as part of advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition.**
- IV. Note the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and ministerial level.**

**3.0 Background**

**3.1 Members will recall that an update was brought to this Committee in April 2025 and the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in June and September 2025 on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition and the development of a full five-part business case to underpin the ask. which sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding in line with other UK cities, aligned to a clear growth proposition underpinned by regeneration priorities for the city.**

**3.2 As previously reported, the Place Based Growth Proposition sets out the compelling case for Belfast but notes that there are significant levers required for the city to realise it's growth**

potential. It notes that due to a combination of Regeneration and place based funds not being applicable to the devolved administrations, and Northern Ireland receiving relatively lower allocations from funds operating on a competitive basis, results in Northern Ireland having amongst the lowest spend on regeneration and local growth per head of population, compared to Scotland, Wales and English regions – nearly half the regional average spend per capita. This outcome is not reflective of the need for regeneration in Belfast relative to other cities in England, Scotland or Wales or Northern Ireland more broadly. Arguably the need is greater in a Northern Ireland context. A number of specific regeneration funds available in the rest of the UK have not been available in Northern Ireland which has led to a clear deficit and a missed opportunity for growth and positive economic, regeneration, social and environmental outcomes.

- 3.3 The wider context for seeking enhanced powers and funding was outlined previously to the Committee. The English Devolution White Paper, published in December 2024, envisions a fundamental change of the relationship between Whitehall and local government in England – with the intent of tackling regional inequality by transferring authority and funding over key policy areas and funding, such as economic development, housing, planning, transport and skills. There is now a presumption in favour of devolution on foot of this White Paper and with the creation of new Strategic Authorities this means funding and legislative powers will be further devolved in other UK cities. The transfer of additional funding and power to these Strategic Authorities across the whole of England will allow Councils to set and deliver on priorities that better respond to local needs and drive growth. Increased funding pots and flexibilities are to be afforded to those Strategic Authorities that progress within the devolution framework, with single-pot integrated settlements over 30 years and access to consolidated funding pots covering local growth, place, housing, and regeneration, non-apprenticeship adult skills and transport. Strategic Authorities designated at the Established Mayoral level of devolution will receive Integrated Settlements. By way of example, West Midlands Combined Authority will receive £388.6m for 2025-26 and Greater Manchester will receive £630m for 2025/26. Other areas include the North East, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region and Greater London Authority, where the process for determining the value of the integrated settlements has been published but not the funding allocations currently.
- 3.4 In addition, the spending review, June 2025, the Government set an ambition to deliver around 300,000 social and affordable

homes through the new £39bn Social and Affordable Homes programme. At this stage it is uncertain if comparable funding will be allocated to the Devolved Administrations via the Barnett Formula, however it is understood that it will not. Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency, has recently started working more closely with Combined Authorities which reflects Homes England remit to include a range of regeneration activities i.e. wider than just housing delivery. Between 2018 – 2023 Homes England has supported the development of 186,413 new homes, unlocked land with the capacity for a further 392,000 homes and invested £11.1bn. The recently announced Land Fund (BIL) which is a £1bn capital programme, is targeting unlocking 40,000 new homes and up to 200,000sqm employment floorspace.

- 3.5 Major regeneration schemes that are being funded by Homes England include a UK Government approved £121m funding package to bring forward new homes, public realm and commercial space at Forth Yards, a 50-acre water frontage brownfield site in Newcastle. Funding will allow for site remediation, ground works and infrastructure activity, fixing complex land issues in advance of procurement process to appoint a private sector delivery partner. The business case was developed by Homes England, working in partnership with Newcastle City Council, North East Mayoral Combined Authority and Network Rail. Homes England has also just announced a regeneration scheme they are supporting with Plymouth City Council and City College Plymouth with £18.4m grant funding from their BIL Fund which includes transforming the listed Civic Centre for residential use, alongside the College Campus. It is to pay for a programme of remediation work to bring the building to a point where residential units can be fitted out and delivered by a private developer. Additional funding for this wider regeneration scheme has come from other public sector sources including the Levelling Up Fund and Future High Streets Fund, as well as Council funding. The purpose of BIL funding is to deliver housing led brownfield infrastructure and land projects but is only available in England.
- 3.6 It is clear that Belfast is already facing a regeneration deficit in both powers and funding and could be left even further behind if there are not commensurate levels of funding as with other core cities. This could make it even harder for the city to attract the resources needed to unlock demand and growth.
- 3.7 The Growth Proposition seeks to secure regeneration funding for Belfast from UK Government and sets out asks for a Regeneration, Housing and Infrastructure Fund seeded by the

Government focussed on potential priority areas to transform Belfast. It also seeks capacity (revenue) funding to further regeneration priorities, in line with similar funding received by the Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Strategic Authorities in England. This includes:

- Housing Led, Mixed Use Regeneration including measures to address dereliction
- Improved infrastructure, connectivity, public realm, place making, public and green spaces
- Unlocking Major Regeneration Schemes

3.8 Development of the Proposition has been informed through significant engagement with a range of cross-sector stakeholders and in line with the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake findings which received political and stakeholder endorsement.

#### 4.0 Main Report

##### 4.13 Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Investment

As noted to Committee in April 2025, the Place Proposition was to be supported by a full five part business case. This is now completed and outlines the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and management case to support the request to Westminster. The business case sets out how BCC has spent the last 18 months laying the groundwork to develop the proposition and establish the conditions for successful delivery. This has included stakeholder engagement with elected representatives and business, investor and local communities, and builds on more than 10 years of wider community and stakeholder engagement through the Belfast Agenda and BCCRIS. The recommendations have been informed through previous engagement with Members, Belfast MPs, Executive Ministers and engagement with BCC officers, senior officials from DoF, DfI and DfC and representatives from local development, business and local communities to inform the priority areas, and to assist with quantifying the ask.

4.2 The business case includes a comprehensive evidence base to provide insight about Belfast's economic, demographic, housing, business, labour market and commercial property performance. The analysis recognises the city's strategic role within the wider region and its function as the capital city of Northern Ireland. The proposal builds on the success of the Belfast Region City Deal, and targets the city's legacy of physical regeneration challenges, and the wider 'regeneration

deficit' that has seen Belfast struggle to match the power and dynamism of the English and Scottish Core Cities. This proposition sets out a compelling case for change and notes that unlike its peers, Belfast has lacked the means and resources to correct what could be seen as 'regeneration deficit'. Public spending on 'regeneration' has been about one half of its English counterparts, while decision-making remains fragmented and difficult. It notes that there are significant opportunities to be gained from an uplift in place-based regeneration and that this is best addressed by public-sector led investments which can provide the leadership and confidence to the private sector and strategic stakeholders.

It outlines how BCC is seeking to equip itself with the ability and responsibilities to drive growth and investment in the city and is seeking to establish a new City Regeneration Fund (CRF) designed to drive catalytic change - focusing on people and city living, delivering active and sustained travel, developing green and climate resilient public realm, unlocking stalled major redevelopment schemes, addressing dereliction and vacancy and taking a multi-agency approach to place making and city management.

- 4.3 Critically, the proposition is based on an evidence-led understanding of market failures and a shared vision for the future. The business case highlights that the proposed areas of focus provide value for money and deliverability. Conservatively based economic analysis shows that the proposal will achieve a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of at least 1.5 (as assessed against MHCLG criteria and indicates that £1 public expenditure returns £1.50- £2 in benefits achieved). However, it notes HM Treasury has recognised that the current place-based appraisal approach inadequately captures the wider economic impacts associated with regeneration activity. Therefore, it suggests that this understates the dynamic impact that the Fund could have on the wider economy and anticipates long-term benefits will be transformational for the wider region.
- 4.4 The proposal builds on established systems and existing work streams undertaken by BCC and its partners. This includes the strong governance and administrative structures already in place, and a Regeneration Framework which can prioritise investments and activities. It proposes that the current governance structures in place to support the City Regeneration Fund provide a mechanism for supporting the CRF.

- 4.5 It recognises the incredibly difficult financial conditions across the United Kingdom but highlights that this proposal is about unleashing potential and growth and is a statement of intent for the future of the whole of Northern Ireland. It notes that our asks mirror arrangements in other parts of the country, and requests:
- A £250m City-Wide Infrastructure, Housing and Regeneration Fund - seeded by the UK Government and supported in the long term by greater business rates retention. This would be targeted on delivering housing led regeneration, green urban infrastructure and placemaking and unlocking strategic regeneration schemes. To address the 'regeneration deficit', we would ask that this be provided on the same basis as a City Deal, that is over and above the Northern Ireland Block Grant settlement.
  - £1m Capacity (revenue) funding per annum for three years – to provide the support needed to building house capacity .
- 4.6 The Proposition, and the business case is premised as a Barnett Bypass. It will not affect the core settlement and highlights that Council are committed to working in partnership with the Executive if successful through a new model of collaboration. It is not seeking to 'unpick' the current core settlement via Barnett but seeks to ensure that Belfast receives comparable funding to other UK cities on foot of recently announced funding of Strategic Mayoral Authorities via Home England regeneration funding. The Proposition and business case highlight that a successful Belfast is a successful Northern Ireland. This has been demonstrated via the Innovation & Inclusive Growth Commission, the BRCD and extensive economic analysis and empirical evidence. It is important to highlight that Belfast's city region geography like Birmingham and Manchester's, benefits from a central urban area with a higher density of economic activity. As such Belfast is highly attractive to knowledge based economic activity which is highly productive and which delivers prosperity and opportunity through the region
- 4.7 In order to develop the full model business case specimen projects were identified. Projects were identified on the fundamental basis of growth output. Given that the Proposition is predicated on delivering growth projects identified were on the basis that they were catalytic in nature and had the ability to deliver the expected growth. The Regeneration Framework as previously agreed by Committee assisted in drawing down on specimen projects for

inclusion. This approach allows for some degree of agility to permit the inclusion of other schemes going forward if they can deliver similar economic growth outcomes. The specimen schemes included:

- A Housing Led Regeneration Programme including BCC seed sites, wider viability support for housing-led regeneration, H.O.U.S.E (Homes over upper spaces for everyone, aimed at reactivating vacant spaces on upper floors for retrofit delivery)
- Unlocking Major Developments including Tribeca, Waterside, Dunbar Street and the The Sixth
- A Bolder Vision including Belfast Streets Ahead public realm, High Street Investment Fund, Under the Bridges, Inner North West Placemaking and Castle Street and Environs.

4.8 As updated at PLCF in November, the Business Case has been recently completed and submitted to UK Government for consideration. This is in line with advice on the need to ensure the compelling case is with Government in advance of the Chancellors Budget Statement on 26 November 2025. It is recognised that this submission is in the backdrop of a time of fiscal constraint. The Mayoral Combined Authorities in England have however been successful in securing investment because they have built a clear growth story. The business case articulates Belfast’s growth proposition.

4.9 Advocacy & Engagement

Work has continued on engagement and advocacy activities to support the Proposition, including engagement with NI Executive and Westminster at official and political level. As noted to Committee in April 2025, a joint Ministerial meeting with Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities has now taken place. This meeting was held in late September 2025 and follows a meeting with the Minister for Finance in April 2025 which was facilitated by the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership. The feedback from Ministers was positive and noting the case for Belfast as the Regional Economic Driver.

4.10 As previously noted by the City Growth & Regeneration Committee engagement has included attendance at the Labour Party Annual Conference 2025. The conference took place in Liverpool from 28 September – 1 October 2025. This provided an opportunity to engage with key Labour MP’s and officials, in pursuing the case for change as set out in the Place Based Growth Proposition.

4.11 Following submission of the Business Case to Government work on a wider communication and engagement plan, with supporting messaging documents aligned to the business case findings, is advancing. Continued support from Members in advocating for this Proposition, notably through party political channels, will be very important to raise visibility for this Proposition within NI Executive and Westminster at local, MP / MLA and Ministerial level.

4.12 Scottish Cities Alliance

The Scottish Cities Alliance have issued an invitation for Council to participate in a roundtable discussion with city leaders from Scotland and Wales to discuss the English devolution white paper, and response from cities in devolved nations. The invitation is for the attendance of the Lord Mayor, and as Belfast City Council are the lead Authority for the BRCD the invite was extended to Council's nominated Elected Member who would Chair the BRCD Council Panel when BCC host meetings. It is understood that the Scottish Cities Alliance are considering inviting the other BRCD Councils.

4.13 The session will focus on how to respond to the pace and scale of English devolution to ensure city regions in the devolved nations remain competitive for investment and growth including best practice in demonstrating the strength of partnership working within existing and established governance models which can ensure the UK Industrial Strategy supports balanced growth across all nations and regions. It will consider how the devolved nations capitalise on their strong established brand to compete for investment alongside Mayoral Strategic Authorities at events such as UKREiiF as well as opportunities for collaboration across shared sectoral strengths. Political leaders from all eight Scottish cities will attend, Cardiff Capital Region have also indicated that their political leaders will attend. This event will take place on 21 January 2026 in London. Committee approval is sought for Elected Members attendance and travel.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

5.1 Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course following consideration by UK Government.

Costs including travel and subsistence for the Scottish Cities Alliance roundtable at the time of preparing the report for Committee are estimated at £500 per person.

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

**6.1 None associated with this report.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined in the report.

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

**1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to –**

- **Capital Programme Movements –**
  - **St George’s Market – New Stalls – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.**
  - **Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26 – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231.**
  - **Workshop Plant Replacement - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000.**

- Wilmont House H&S works – Agree that ‘Wilmont House Health & Safety Works’ is moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building, 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.
- Fernhill House H&S works – Agree that ‘Fernhill House Health & Safety Works’ is moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building, 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.
- Colin Active Travel (formerly Colin Greenway) – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
- Depot Charging Scheme - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

### 3.0 Main report

#### Key Issues

#### Physical Programme

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Property &

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

**Capital Programme - Proposed Movements**

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

<b>Project</b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>Stage movement</b>
<b>St George's Market – New Stalls</b>	Replacement of market stalls in St George's Market.	<b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £433,840</b>
<b>Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26</b>	Rolling programme to replace grounds maintenance machinery which is beyond its lifespan.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £336,231</b>
<b>Workshop Plant Replacement</b>	To replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years and no longer fit for purpose.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £120,000</b>
<b>Wilmont House H&amp;S Works</b>	Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</b>
<b>Fernhill House H&amp;S Works</b>	Remedial works to be carried out to ensure the building is made safe for further surveys to enable renovation works.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</b>
<b>Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)</b>	Development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</b>
<b>Depot Charging Scheme</b>	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>

3.3 **St George's Market – New Stalls**

Members will recall that in November 2024 this project was moved to **Stage 3 – Committed** and held at **Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk** pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. It was also agreed that an update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final

budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. This project involves the replacement of market stalls in St George's Market. The current stalls are over 18 years old and many are in a poor state of repair. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.

**3.4 Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26**

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025, to replace grounds maintenance machinery to maintain service provision across the Council's estate. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. The list of machineries to be procured under the programme for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix 1. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

**3.5 Workshop Plant Replacement**

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in September 2025, with the aim to replace workshop plant which exceeded 10 plus years of working wear and tear and no longer fit for purpose. In order to meet the demands placed upon the service, these workshop plant and equipment need to be replaced immediately. This includes replacement of single girder overhead crane, GVC/ MOT roller brake tester and others. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

**3.6 Wilmont House Health & Safety Works**

Members will recall that in November 2024, the Committee received a detailed update on Council heritage assets including Wilmont House and agreed that the project be added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging. The building current state of internal disrepair has meant only a visual inspection was conducted, mainly due to restriction of safe access around the internal areas. A high-level feasibility study for remedial works was carried out to ensure the building is

made safe for further renovation works. A series of immediate health and safety works are required. Members are asked to agree that 'Wilmont House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to Stage 3 – Committed due to the condition of the building, 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.

**3.7 Fernhill House Health & Safety Works**

In November 2024, Members received a detailed update on Council heritage assets including Fernhill House and Courtyard and noted that both the main House and the Courtyard buildings are on HED's 'At Risk' register. In September 2025, the Council agreed that the £948k underspend be committed to Fernhill Capital Works. The project is currently in the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging and the business case is being developed. A high-level feasibility study for remedial works was carried out with evidence and recommendations required to proceed with essential 'make safe' works that will allow safe access and future decision-making on the long-term use of Fernhill House. Implementing these initial stabilisation, health and safety works, we can secure the building for further evaluation and preserve the opportunity for longer term restoration of a property of both historic and cultural importance. Members are asked to agree that 'Fernhill House Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to Stage 3 – Committed due to the condition of the building, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

**3.8 Colin Active Travel Phase 1 (formerly Colin Greenway)**

Members will recall that in November 2021 the 'Colin Greenway' project was moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted under the Connectivity/ Access to the Hills theme. The project involves the development of active travel routes within the Colin Area to connect residents to key services, amenities and employment opportunities, including recent major public investments in amenities such as the Transport Hub, Belfast Rapid Transport (BRT) and Páirc Nua Chollann. The project

aims to make walking/ cycling routes more direct to incentivise people to use them. The active travel routes identified will be delivered on a phased approach. The order of delivery will be agreed with Dfl once designs have been completed. Members will note that the development of Active Travel Routes has broad support from several key stakeholders & partners including Dfl, DfC, BCC, TEO Urban Villages Initiatives, NIHE, and the local community including Colin Neighbourhood Partnership (CNP). Dfl have agreed to explore a partnership delivery with BCC by proposing to fully fund the active travel routes which form part of their Belfast Cycle Network. The proposal is for BCC to act as the lead delivery partner delivering the BCN routes within the Colin area. Members are asked to agree that this partnership project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed, 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.

### 3.9 Depot Charging Scheme

In October 2025, the SP&R Committee has approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government’s Depot Charging System. The Depot Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council’s counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed and funding application to be submitted.

### 3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

#### *Financial Implications –*

St George’s Market – New Stalls – capital budget allocation of up to £433,840 in which £250,000 is profiled for 2025/26 and the remaining £183,840 for 2026/27.

OSS Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26 – capital allocation of up to £336,231.

**Workshop Plant Replacement** – capital allocation of up to £120,000.

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

*Resource Implications* – Officer time to deliver.

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

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

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the recommendation to move the Fernhill House Health and Safety works project to Stage 3 until the Irish Language Policy call-in had been resolved.

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

Accordingly, the Committee:

• **Capital Programme Movements –**

- **St George’s Market – New Stalls** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that the project was within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of £433,840 be allocated.
- **Open Spaces and Streetscene (OSS) Machinery Replacement Programme 2025/26** – Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*, with a maximum allocation of up to £336,231.
- **Workshop Plant Replacement** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*, with a maximum allocation of up to £120,000.
- **Wilmont House H&S works** – Agreed that ‘Wilmont House Health and Safety Works’ be moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building, 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.

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- **Fernhill House H&S works** – Agreed to defer consideration of the recommendation to move the project to Stage 3 until the Irish Language Policy call-in had been resolved.
- **Colin Active Travel (formerly Colin Greenway)** – Agreed that the project be 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.
- **Depot Charging Scheme** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

**Asset Management**

The Committee:

- i) Barnett Demesne – Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited**
  - Approved the Deed of Surrender and entering into a new 35-year lease with Add Venture Northern Ireland Limited.
- ii) Barnett Demesne - Deed of Surrender and New Lease with Belfast Activity Centre**
  - Approved the Deed of Surrender and entering into a new 35-year lease with Belfast Activity Centre.
- iii) Car Parking – New Agreement for existing ESB Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points**
  - Approved entering into rolling 12-month agreements with the ESB for the continued use of space for electric vehicle car charging points at Glenburn Road, Hope Street and Little Victoria Street Car Parks.

The Committee noted that the previously agreed report on the development of a policy framework to clarify guidance on any future display of materials in all Council assets, including community centres, would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Contracts Update**

The Committee:

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- 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
- In relation to the 'Provision of Sharps Boxes Services' contract, agreed that a report be submitted to a future committee to outline the volume of usage and resources of the issue, together with the work being undertaken with community organisations.

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Est. Max Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short description of goods / services</b>	<b>On published pipeline (Y/N)</b>	<b>Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee &amp; Date</b>	<b>External Funding (Y/N)</b>
Email filtering to remove spam and malware in emails	Up to 3 years	£150,000	S McNicholl	Without a filtering solution like this BCC would receive a large number of spam and malware emails. This would increase the risk of a cyber attack	N	N	N
Urban Meadows Creation Works – in relation to a Notice of Motion	Up to 1 year	£50,000	S Leonard	Required under a Notice of Motion to create 4 new urban meadows across the city	N	Y – P&C Oct 25	N
The repair, deployment, filling and storage of 20 beacons	Up to 36 months	£172,000	J Girvan	A supplier is required to carry out these works prior to the delivery of the annual	N	N	N

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<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Est. Max Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short description of goods / services</b>	<b>On published pipeline (Y/N)</b>	<b>Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee &amp; Date</b>	<b>External Funding (Y/N)</b>
				Beacon programme on July 11th.			
Fairground rides and entertainment package for events	Up to 4 years	£480,000	D Sales	Service required to support wide range of Council events held throughout the year. May also be used to support Fleadh requirements as well.	N	N	N
Provision of fuels; Diesel, Gas Oil, Kerosene & Ad Blue	Up to 3 years	£500,000	D Sales	Required to fuel various machines, plant items and buildings throughout the Council's estate	N	N	N
Collection, treatment and recycling of hard plastics	Up to 4 years	£650,000	D Sales	Service required to support recycling of hard plastics from household recycling centres by our waste management team.	N	N	N
Provision of Sharps Boxes Services	Up to 3 years	£90,000	D Sales	Specialist and suitable certified contractor to provide a sharp boxes service.	N	N	N

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Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				Service includes supply of sharps/ needle boxes to designated street and parks locations and safe removal/ disposal of same.			
Public protection software for the provision of a Case Management Solution for NI HMO.	Up to 3 years	£85,000	P Gribben	For the continued use of the current public protection software system for NI Housing of Multiple Occupation 'HMOs'. It is a regional service. BCC provide the service, collect all the fees and licence HMOs for all Councils in NI. All Councils have licences and access to the system.	N	N	N

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**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Pest control services across BCC sites	Up to 1 year	£80,000	N Largey	A STA is recommended with Termapest to regularise this off contract spend until insourcing project is complete. This is estimated to be completed within 6 to 12 months; STA to cover up to 12 months as open tender exercise will take up to 6 months to complete. No fixed term contract will be created with Termapest as part of this STA so spend with Termapest will cease once insourcing project is complete.	Termapest Ltd	11.	N	N
Support and maintenance of E-Bravo tendering solution	Up to 2 years	£111,146	S McNicholl	Annual license for the continued use of E-Bravo to support the Council's procurement teams and publishing tenders electronically. Exploring options about delivering through e5 financial system and their procurement module.	Bravo Solutions (Jaggaer)	3.	N	N

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Tricostar Case Management solution	Up to 3 years	£46,304	P Gribben	The current system delivers functionality which is required in Legal Services to manage case files along with associated documents / correspondence. There is no other supplier who can offer the license and support requirements for this solution	Tricostar Software Ltd	3.	N	N
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**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 10th November**

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 10th November, including:

**Presentation from Law Centre - Welcome Information Programme**

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

**Presentation from International Organisation for Migration**

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

**Update from Partnership Members**

- Updates from members were noted in the minutes for further information.

**Good Relations Verbal Update**

- The Shared City Partnership agreed to note the update and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they also agreed and noted the and agreed the verbal update recorded in the minutes.

**PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update**

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.



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**Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update**

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update**

- Members noted the contents of the report and agreed:
  - Extended delivery timeframe to 31st March, 2028 for Lot 1 – Language and Cultural Access of the CCD5 Multiculturalism to Interculturalism project
  - Morton Community Centre, as the initial location for a Welcome Hub and to consider nominations for the Civic Mentor element of the CCD2 – Community Connections project; and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed the recommendations and noted the contents of the report.

**Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update**

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Any Other Business**

- There was no further business.

**Equality Screening and Rural Needs  
Outcome Report Quarter 2 2025-26**

The Committee was reminded that the Council had a duty to have, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

- Due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories; and
- Regard to the desirability of promoting good relations

In addition, under section 1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

- Due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

It was reported that the Council had a process to carry out equality screening and rural needs assessment of new and revised policies. This allowed any impacts related to equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs to be identified and addressed.

The Committee was advised that an equality screening and rural needs impact assessment template had been completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality and Diversity Unit. On a regular basis, the Unit collated all completed templates

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into a screening outcome report which was published onto the Council’s website along with the relevant completed templates. The current screening outcome report for Quarter 2 2025-26 was attached at [Appendix 1](#).

The Committee noted the Quarterly Screening Outcome Report which would be published on the Council’s website.

**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of the Party Group Leaders  
Consultative Forum of 13th November**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 13th November, 2025.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION</b>	<b>FUNCTION DATE</b>	<b>FUNCTION DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CRITERIA MET</b>	<b>ROOM CHARGE</b>
Multi-Ethnic Sports & Cultures Northern Ireland (MSCNI)	10 January 2026	<b>MSCNI 10th Anniversary &amp; Launch of Northern Ireland Sports, Cultures and Neighbourhood Stories Awards (NISCANS Awards)</b> The NISCANS Awards aim to shine a light on local heroes, community champions, and organisations who have helped welcome individuals and families who have migrated to NI from diverse backgrounds, contributing to inclusion, cohesion and a shared sense of belonging. Awards, cultural performances followed by dinner and entertainment.  Numbers attending – 100	C & D	Current rate free as charity
Department of Education N.Ireland/ Ireland	12 May 2026	<b>Creative Connections Shared Island Pilot Programme– Celebration Day</b> to celebrate the work of young people, Teachers and Creative Practitioners and showcase the value of cross border collaboration in Education. Speeches, showcase of work, entertainment followed by lunch.	A & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

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		Numbers attending – 230		
Cregagh Wanderers Football Club	22 May 2026	<b>Cregagh Wanderers FC 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration</b> – Formal dinner with presentations and light entertainment.  Numbers attending – 200	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Northern Ireland Screen	3 June 2026	<b>Ulster-Scots Broadcast Fund USA 250 reception at the Celtic Media Festival</b> – coinciding with the Celtic Media Festival, Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund would like to celebrate it's 15-year anniversary and showcase the work they have funded for broadcasters including BBC NI and RTE with a drinks reception with light catering, speeches and showreels played.  Numbers attending – 200	A, B & C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
The Church of Ireland	28 June 2026	<b>Opening Gala Dinner for the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC-19).</b> The council, which includes Anglican bishops, other clergy, and laity, meets every 2-3 years in different parts of the world. This dinner followed by speeches will see attendees from over 40 countries.  Numbers attending – 180	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Queen's University Belfast (QUB)	2 July 2026	<b>QUB International Summer School Farewell Event</b> – Drinks reception followed by dinner, speeches and awards to celebrate around 100 international students who will have been studying in Belfast for 3 weeks prior to event.  Numbers attending - 100	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Heritage Network	28 September 2026	<b>Heritage Network Conference Dinner</b> following main conference day in the assembly buildings. The event is expected to attract 250+ delegates from across the community heritage sector in the UK. Reception, dinner, presentations and cultural performances.	A & B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

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		Numbers attending – 300		
ImageNation NI	17 October 2026	<b>Belfast Diwali 2026</b> – Indian celebration event with dinner and cultural performances to mark the festival of Diwali.  Number attending – 400	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Gertrude Star Flute Band	31 October 2026	<b>Gertrude Star 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner</b> – drinks reception, dinner, speeches and presentations followed by flute band performance and live music to end the evening.  Numbers attending 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

Chairperson

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## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 4th November, 2025

### MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);  
Alderman Copeland; and  
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower,  
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain,  
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 reported.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 7th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Flynn declared an interest under the item 'Request from Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland', in that he was a member of Archery Great Britain and Archery Northern Ireland. Councillor McKeown declared an interest in the item 'Healthwise and Physical Activity Referral Programme', in that his employer was one of the funders of the programme.

Since the aforesaid items did not become the subject of discussion nor debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

#### **Correspondence re: Annadale Embankment Pedestrian Crossing to Lagan Gateway**

At its meeting on 6th August, the Committee had agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure, Liz Kimmins, MLA, and to her department's Active Travel Unit, to request that consideration be given to installing a pedestrian crossing between the Annadale

**People and Communities Committee,  
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Embankment and the Lagan Gateway. It was reported a response had been received on behalf of the Minister and the Active Travel Unit which had indicated that there were no existing plans to provide a crossing at the site since it was not considered to be a priority.

Noted.

**Schedule of Meetings 2026**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2026, all to commence at 5.15pm:

Tuesday 13th January	July – no meeting
Tuesday 10th February	Tuesday 11th August
Wednesday 4th March	Tuesday 8th September
Tuesday 14th April	Tuesday 6th October
Tuesday 12th May	Tuesday 10th November
Tuesday 9th June	Tuesday 8th December

**Restricted**

**Request for the use of Ormeau Park - Belsonic**

The Committee was informed that an application had been received to host the 'Belsonic' event in the Ormeau Park in June of 2026, 2027 and 2028, with permission sought for up to a maximum ten concerts per year.

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

**Greenwich Leisure Limited –  
Contract Compliance and Performance**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter. Arising from discussion, it was noted that a report would be submitted in due course that would provide an overview of the proposed capital investment that the Council intended to make in the upgrade of a number of sites across the leisure estate, with particular reference to the Shankill Leisure Centre.

**Healthwise and Physical Activity  
Referral Programme**

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

**Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the above-mentioned Working Group which had been held on 8th October.

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**Appointment of a Public Analyst**

The Director of City Services reminded the Committee that, under Article 27 (1) of the Food Safety (NI) Order 1991, the Council was required to appoint a suitably-qualified individual as a public analyst for the purpose of examining and analysing food samples to determine compliance with food safety, compositional and labelling requirements.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the appointment of an individual, as recommended within the report, and agreed that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services be granted delegated authority to approve any future appointments in this regard.

**Matters referred from the Council/Notices of Motions**

**Notice of Motion - Imagination Library**

(Councillor de Faoite attended in connection with this matter.)

At its meeting on 6th December, 2022, the Committee had adopted a motion in respect of the above-mentioned matter. Furthermore, at the meeting on 29th January, 2025, the Committee had agreed that a sum of £10,000 be allocated to support a project, to be delivered in conjunction with the 'Dollywood Foundation', to provide age-appropriate reading materials to the first 75 new-born babies registered at the Registration Office in the City Hall from 1st October, 2025. The Committee noted that all of the places within the scheme had been allocated within four days and that the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor had hosted a celebration event on 23rd October to mark the success of the initiative.

The Committee welcomed the success of the initiative and agreed that the motion would remain open and that an expression of interest form be made available on the Council's website should parents wish their children to be considered within a future scheme, subject to the securing of additional funding.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**People and Communities Committee Plan**

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

**Partnership Liaison Officer**

The Director of City Services reminded the Committee that, since 2010, a financial part-contribution had been provided to support the provision of a Partnership Liaison Officer whose role was to undertake collaborative work on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland with councils across Northern Ireland. It was reported that correspondence had been received seeking to extend the remit of the post for a further two-years, the cost of which would be approximately £7,000, per annum, to the Council.

The Committee approved the Council's continued contribution towards the funding of the post until the end of the financial year 2027/28. In addition, the Committee agreed

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that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services be granted delegated authority to approve any future contributions, if deemed appropriate, after 2027/28.

**Lagan Valley Regional Park**

The Committee agreed to grant funding in the sum of £88,000 to the Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) for the 2025/26 financial year, provision for which had been included within the department's revenue budget. The Committee noted that an inflationary-linked award could not be made in 2025/26, since no additional in-year budget existed.

The Committee noted further that an options' funding paper had been submitted for consideration by LVRP and officers would, in the interim period, continue to liaise with representatives of that organisation and to signpost them to other funding opportunities.

**Operational Issues**

**Belfast Boxing Strategy 2025/26**

The Committee noted the contents of the six-monthly update report in relation to the above-mentioned strategy.

During discussion, a Member referred to the findings of a recently-published report by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland relating to discrimination within amateur boxing in Northern Ireland. That report had made several recommendations to the Irish Amateur Boxing Association and the Ulster Boxing Council, which were partners in the delivery of the Council's strategy. It was proposed and seconded that, until formal assurances had been received that the Equality Commission's recommendations had been implemented by the aforesaid bodies, the Council should withhold any further funding linked to the strategy. In response, a Member pointed out that it would be prudent to seek legal advice prior to considering such a course of action. It was suggested that the matter be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for clarity and legal opinion.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the proposal with a view that legal advice be provided at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 21st November.

**Commonwealth Games NI –  
Request for Financial Support**

The Committee considered a request from Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland for financial assistance to help support the team competing in the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

The Committee agreed that a contribution of £10,000 be made for the purpose outlined.

### **Stadia Community Benefits Initiative**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in the above-mentioned matter regarding the progress achieved to date in the initiative. It was agreed that an invitation be extended to representatives of the Irish Football Association to present an overview of the present grounds' criteria applied to clubs seeking to progress within local league structures.

### **'School Streets' - Air Quality Monitoring Report**

The Committee considered a report in the above-mentioned matter.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Council officers would convene a meeting with representatives of Sustrans, the Department of Education, the Education Authority, the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (to which interested Elected Members would be invited) to apprise them of the results of the project and to seek support for the retention of the existing 'school streets' air quality monitors and/or their relocation to other schools as deemed appropriate.

### **Resources and Fleet Waste – Update**

The Committee considered a report in the above-mentioned matter which included, amongst other things, an update on the introduction of the 'Bin Safety Campaign', which had commenced in early-August. The section of the report in that regard is set out below:

**On Monday 4 August 2025, the campaign started with amber tagging (bedding in period) for 8 weeks. Collections continued as normal (i.e. overfilled bins and bins with liners were still collected) with amber warning tags placed on bins and reported by crews. Resource Advisor Teams were on the ground raising awareness.**

**Whilst the Report it App (RIA) was initially to be used to report and gather data on tag use and areas/rounds where the issues are more pronounced, that approach encountered operational challenges including the fact that many of the containers presented for collection do not have an identifiable address. RIA was used for non-collection instances, but amber tag usage was instead summarised based on crews reporting the number of tags issued.**

**For the amber period the number of tags issued over the course of the eight weeks. The percentage of collected bins which were tagged during the period was less than 2% overall.**

**Monday 29 September 2025, saw the commencement of the red tag phase - collecting to policy. Overfilled containers have been tagged, not collected, and instances reported through RIA. Temporary, additional, Special Collection Teams (SCTs), Resource Advisors, OSS staff and Enforcement Officers are now deployed in the targeting of areas that remain persistently non-compliant with policy.**

**Additional Resource Advisors have been deployed since Monday 21st July. In terms of direct communications, they covered 1,650 streets, equating to 58,000 households with each household receiving communications regarding the campaign, centred around bin safety and recycling. These temporary Resource Advisors will be maintained throughout the bin safety campaign and also to deal with some business-as-usual issues which have been highlighted during the course of the campaign and outlined below.**

**A temporary collections resource has been established in the form of Special Collection Teams (SCT) to support the campaign and deal with cases where the issuing of a red tag has been caused by an operational issues e.g. vehicle breakdown, rather than excess waste presented by the resident. In such instances, a crew will be dispatched to remove excess waste from the bin in order for it to be collected. From 29 Sept – 24 October (two full collection cycles) the SCT was deployed on 71 occasions. The requirement for this resource will be monitored as the campaign progresses.**

**The campaign has magnified some of the business-as-usual issues at certain collection sites and areas e.g. overfilled euro bins and lidless/damaged euro bins at apartments. These issues are relatively small in number and being noted in the issues log and managed on an individual case basis by the Service.**

**The communications and engagement on the ground is having an impact. Resource Advisor visits to conduct assessments for additional bins increased significantly as have orders for containers. For example, in the seven weeks leading up to the start of the bin safety campaign, the average number of recycling box orders per week was around 240 units. In the twelve weeks since the start of the campaign this has risen to around 418 units per week. Increases in orders and requests for service suggest a positive trend around better recycling messaging and hopefully in due course this will translate into increased recycling tonnages.**

**In total, 1,484 red tags were issued during the first two full collection cycles (4 weeks). Table 2, Red Phase Key Metrics, provides further breakdown of this figure. Issues to highlight are:**

- non-collection due to bin liners is a relatively minor issue in terms of number of cases reported.**
- the percentage of red-tagged bins to overall bins collected, is around 0.5%.**
- only 37 bins received their second consecutive red tag after the first two, full collection cycles.**

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The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report be submitted for consideration that would outline, within the context of the revised bins' collection policy, the process and timescale set out for declaring an unemptied bin 'abandoned' and that the Council would liaise with housing management companies and other affected agencies and bodies in this matter.

**Request for the Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields**

The Committee considered two requests which had received for the hosting of circus events at the Boucher Road Playing Fields over the Easter periods in 2026, 2027 and 2028.

The Committee approved the hosting of a circus event in the playing fields over the Easter period in 2026. However, given the possible implications of any new Council Pitches' Strategy, it was agreed that the hosting of the events in 2027 and 2028 be considered on a year-by-year basis.

**Management of Invasive Species**

Further to a request which had been made at the meeting on 9th September, the Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the Council's management of invasive plant species, particularly Himalayan Balsam, and the opportunities that might be afforded in involving local communities to assist in work of this nature at a future date.

**Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs**

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Brookhill Avenue, Whitehall Parade, Cricklewood Park, Old Bakers Court, Ashton Avenue and Azalea Gardens.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Environmental Health Service - Staffing and Capacity**

At the request of the Chairperson, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted for consideration that would outline the current staffing and capacity levels relating to Environmental Health Officers, particularly regarding roles associated with responding to planning consultations; and that the report would include reference also to the role of the Building Control Service in enforcement matters.

**Leaf Clearance from Roads and Pavements**

Councillor McKeown referred to the recent flooding which had occurred throughout the City and which had been exacerbated by a build-up of autumn leaves. He indicated that there existed a level of uncertainty as to which organisation, that being, the Council or the Department for Infrastructure, was responsible for the clearing of leaf litter, particularly during the autumn period.

Several Members concurred with the comments made and, after discussion, the Committee agreed that officers would seek to establish – and/or obtain legal clarity - as to

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where the legal responsibility lay (be that with the Council or the Department for Infrastructure) for the clearing of leaves from roads and pavements across the City.

**Pedestrian Crossing at Knockbreda Road**

At the request of Councillor Abernethy, the Committee agreed that officers would liaise with representatives of the Department of Infrastructure and provide an update on the projected commencement date for work on the pedestrian crossing at the above-mentioned location.

**Donegall Pass Community Association**

The Committee agreed to receive, at the request of the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, a deputation from the Donegall Pass Residents Association on 2nd December to outline a range of issues regarding the Reverend Robert Bradford Memorial Playground.

**Last Meeting**

Councillor R. Brooks referred to the fact that it was her last monthly meeting in her position as Chairperson. She thanked Members and officers for their help and assistance throughout her tenure. A number of Members thanked Councillor R. Brooks for the manner in which she conducted the business of the Committee throughout her period as Chairperson.

Chairperson

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 18th November, 2025

## SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bradley,  
Bunting, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly,  
Doran, Flynn, Magee and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor & Director of  
Legal and Civic Services;  
Mr. D. Bone, City Services Manager; and  
Mr B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Bower, Cobain and McLaughlin.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **Northern Ireland Housing Executive – Belfast Housing Investment Plan**

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. G. Long (Chief Executive), Mr. L. Gunn (Regional Manager) and Ms. F. McGrath (Head of Place Shaping Belfast), who were representing the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), and who were in attendance to provide the annual update on the Housing Investment Plan for Belfast 2023/26.

Ms. Long reported that NIHE had invested a total of £340.45 million within the Council area during the financial year 2024/25. Of that total, £38.23 million had been provided through planned maintenance and stock improvements. Regarding investment in new-build homes, she explained that 1,797 housing association units had been 'on-site' as of March, 2025, with 318 housing units having been completed during the 2024/25 financial year. However, she outlined the financial constraints which had impacted upon overall capital investment and indicated that those constraints had continued into 2025/26, with a result that fewer new-build houses would be completed than originally anticipated. She added that only one in seven of those considered to be in 'housing stress' – that being applicants who had been awarded 30 or more points under the social housing selection scheme – had been allocated a home in 2024/25, despite that figure standing at 11,203.

The Committee was informed work to support the most vulnerable in society had continued throughout 2024/25, with £24.22 million invested through the 'Supporting People Programme', which had enabled 218 services to be provided by partner organisations. Across the Belfast area during 2024/25, 3,292 people had presented as homeless and the budget provided in 2025/26 had enabled NIHE to focus on homelessness prevention and

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delivering support services. She reported that the total homeless population across Belfast during the 2024/25 period had stood at 5,079.

On the subject of good relations, she reported that the themes of building cohesive, thriving and supportive communities had remained a key area of focus in 2024/25. A sum of £460,000 had been allocated to support local communities through the provision of community grants and programmes. Ms. Long concluded by advising the Committee that the 2024/25 update coincided with the commencement of NIHE's three-year corporate strategy, entitled, 'Our Promise to Our Communities'. That strategy, she added, committed NIHE to invest in the health and wellbeing of its clients, build cohesive neighbourhoods, drive sustainable change and provide further growth opportunities.

In response to a Member's question, Ms. McGrath provided an update on the future plans for the demolition of existing tower blocks located in the Cregagh and Finaghy estates and undertook to provide further clarity. In addition, the representatives of NIHE undertook to provide further information to a Member in respect of the housing need figures within the Greater Shankill area.

The Committee noted that representatives of NIHE would respond formally to additional Members' questions which had been posed at the meeting and to those which had been forwarded in advance. The Chairperson thanked the representatives of NIHE for attending the meeting and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Issues Raised in Advance**

**International Day for Persons with Disabilities –  
Chairperson to Raise**

The Committee noted information which had been provided regarding the Council's plans to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December.

**Archaeological Excavation at Woodvale Park**

At the request of Councillor Verner, the Committee agreed to receive a presentation in respect of the recent community archaeological excavation at Woodvale Park, which had been carried out in conjunction with The Queen's University of Belfast.

Chairperson

## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 5th November, 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, Hanvey, Lyons, McCabe, McCallin, McCormick,  
McKay, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan,  
Murray, Nelson and O'Neill.

Also attended: Councillor Smyth.

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 Manager;  
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;  
Ms. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager; and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor Groogan.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th October, 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 3rd November, 2025, subject to the minute under the heading "International Engagement" being amended to provide that:

- the Council writes to the Department of Education asking it to remove the content posted on its communication channels regarding the Minister's trip to occupied Palestine and declaring that the Council has no confidence in the Minister of Education; and to write to the Minister of Education to inform him of the Council's position; and
- the Council, in acknowledging that Ireland will assume the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in July, 2026, for six months, writes to the Irish Government and to the President of the EU Council to advise that the Council wishes to deepen its engagement with the European Union and that it would encourage European representatives to visit Northern Ireland during that six month period.

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**Declarations of Interest**

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to item 5(b) 'Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements - Council Response', in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

**Schedule of Meetings 2026**

The Committee approved its schedule of meetings for 2026, as set out below:

- Wednesday 14th January at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 28th January at 5:15pm (Special);
- Wednesday 11th February at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 11th March at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 25th March at 5:15pm (Special);
- Wednesday 15th April at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 13th May at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 27th May at 5:15pm (Special);
- Wednesday 10th June at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 12th August at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 26th August at 5:15pm (Special);
- Wednesday 9th September at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 7th October at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 21st October at 5:15pm (Special);
- Wednesday 11th November at 5.15 pm;
- Wednesday 25th November at 5:15pm (Special); and
- Wednesday 9th December at 5.15 pm.

**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.

**Restricted Items**

**Presentation - St George's Market Traders**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. C. McLaverty, Mr. P. Lynn and Mr. S. McCann, representing St George's Market traders, to the meeting.

Ms. McLaverty highlighted the importance of St George's Market to the city's economy, tourism and small businesses. She outlined to the Committee the representatives' key issues which included:

- communication and engagement between the Markets management team and the traders;
- Market standards and facilities;
- the potential impact of the proposed Market Storage Policy on traders; and
- the protection of traders rights.

In respect of the proposed Market Storage Policy, Ms. McLaverty highlighted the potential impact of the policy and associated fees on traders and requested that further consultation be undertaken with traders in relation to the proposed policy. She also requested that formal communication structures be put in place to improve engagement and relations between management and the traders.

During discussion, the representatives answered a range of question from the Members on the issues raised within the presentation including communication and engagement between management and the traders, and the proposed Market Storage Policy.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and presentation, and they retired from the meeting.

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

**St George's Market Update - Storage Proposals**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the feedback received following recent engagement with St George's Market traders in relation to the proposed introduction of a new storage policy for the Market; provided an overview of the draft policy's key elements; and recommended the introduction of the new policy and associated fees from 1st April, 2026, subject to the finalisation of the policy in conjunction with Legal Services and ongoing engagement with traders in respect of specific operational requirements.

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During discussion, the Director of Economic Development, the Senior Manager, Economy and the Markets Development Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the draft Market Storage Policy, engagement and communication with the traders, updated trader documentation, and the support for officers responsible for carrying out the operational management activities of the market.

In response to a Member's request, the Senior Manager, Economy, advised that further detail in relation to the stall fee benchmarking exercise would be provided to the Committee.

After lengthy discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the feedback provided following recent engagement with the St George's Market traders in respect of the introduction of a new Market Storage Policy;
- ii. noted the key elements of the draft Market Storage Policy; and
- iii. agreed, in principle, to proceed with the introduction of the new Market Storage Policy and associated fees from 1st April, 2026, subject to the finalisation of the policy in conjunction with Legal Services; the ongoing engagement with traders regarding specific operational requirements; and further information being brought back to the Committee in respect of future engagement and communication with the traders.

## **2 Royal Avenue Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in October, it had agreed not to progress with the recommended proposal for the future use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor, and that a further report be submitted to provide further detail and options.

Accordingly, the Director submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which recommended that a new Expression of Interest exercise be undertaken in respect of the future use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor. She advised that, following the completion of the EOI exercise, a further report would be submitted in relation to the next stage of the process.

The Committee:

- i. agreed for a new two-stage Expression of Interest process to be commenced for the long-term future use of the ground floor of 2 Royal Avenue; and
- ii. noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting following the initial Expression of Interest (Stage 1) exercise.

**Vacant to Vibrant Programme**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and the upper floor vacant spaces aligned to an emerging Homes On Upper Spaces for Everyone (H.O.U.S.E) Programme.

The Committee was reminded that the Vacant to Vibrant city centre and citywide grant programmes were now closed to further applications due to the full expenditure of the available funding and that, at its meeting on 1st October, 2025, the Council had agreed to write to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for the Economy to request additional funding for the Vacant to Vibrant Programme. The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew Members attention to correspondence that had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Minister for the Economy in response to the Council's funding request.

She advised the Committee that a funding application, submitted to DfC to extend the citywide scheme, had been agreed in principle subject to a business case appraisal and sign-off by DfC and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee's approval of a further allocation of Council funding.

The Committee was provided with an update on the work that had been undertaken to reactivate vacant upper floor spaces within the city centre and advised that further information in respect of this work and the wider H.O.U.S.E grant programme would be brought back for the Committee's consideration in due course.

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development and the Senior Development Manager answered questions from the Members in relation to the potential extension of the Vacant to Vibrant Citywide scheme. A Member suggested that, should the Vacant to Vibrant citywide scheme be extended, drop-in information sessions should be held across the city.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted correspondence received from the Department for Communities and the Minister for the Economy in response to the Council's request for additional funding for the Vacant to Vibrant scheme;
- ii. agreed to extend the Citywide Vacant to Vibrant scheme, as set out within the report, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and approval of the business case by the Department for Communities;
- iii. agreed that drop-in information sessions would be held across the city in relation to the extended Citywide Vacant to Vibrant Scheme; and
- iv. noted the update on upper floor vacancy; the overview of schemes to address similar vacancy issues in other areas; and the emerging

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Homes on Upper Floor Space for Everyone (H.O.U.S.E) programme, with further detail to be brought back to the Committee in the near future.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Notice of Motion - Bike Bunker Trial**

(Councillor Smyth attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd October, 2025, the Standards and Business Committee had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor Groogan, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for its consideration:

“This Council notes the progress being made by Dublin City Council in regard to the Bike Bunkers Scheme and their recent trial of this project. They are a way to securely store bikes for those who don’t have easy access to off street storage, particularly in terrace housing.

This Council will seek to commit to carrying out a trial to find where demand is across Belfast and where people can register their interest. As well as working collaboratively with our partners such as the Department of Infrastructure and cycling advocacy groups, as we look to find way to support and expand practical sustainable city living.”

Councillor Smyth outlined to the Committee that the purpose of the motion was to, in the first instance, ascertain the demand for, and the viability of, a potential Bike Bunkers Scheme.

During discussion, a Member welcomed the motion and highlighted the potential to explore opportunities through existing Belfast Bike docking stations.

After discussion, the Committee noted that the motion had been received and agreed that a report would be brought back which would outline a detailed consideration of the motion including potential costs implications.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 To advise Members of recent changes to Housing Association Grant (HAG) rates announced by the Department for Communities (DfC) and outline the potential implications for the delivery of social housing within Belfast.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee are asked to:**

- I. note the recent changes to Housing Association Grant (HAG) announced by DfC;
- II. note the potential challenges these changes present for the delivery of social housing in Belfast; and
- III. note that a more comprehensive report will be brought back to Committee at a later stage following detailed review of this announcement and further engagement with the statutory partners and delivery agents.

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 The Minister for Communities has recently announced changes in grant funding for the delivery of new social homes across Northern Ireland. The Minister confirmed that the proportion of Housing Association Grant funding (HAG) provided by the Department for Communities (DfC) for new social housing starts will decrease, with the average grant reducing from 54% to 46% of total costs. The benchmark costs will increase by 13.7 percentage points on average to take account of changes to construction costs, inflation, rent levels and interest rates and will apply from 1 December 2025 until the end of the 2026/27 financial year. However, the grant associated with the development of new social housing will reduce by 7.7 percentage points on average. What this means is that the calculation has taken account of relevant recent changes to costs and concluded that against these higher costs, and anticipated higher income from rent, the grant can reduce slightly.**
- 3.2 The Minister explained that, given the challenging financial context, the changes are intended to secure the maximum number of new homes from the Department's £177.5 million budget this year.**
- 3.3 The Department has confirmed that the revised framework will reduce the average level of grant support available to housing associations, with the stated aim of ensuring consistency across the region and maximising the number of schemes that can be supported within existing budgets.**
- 3.4 The Minister acknowledged that meeting the Programme for Government target of 5,850 new social homes within this mandate will be difficult. However, he emphasised the need to 'achieve more, for less' and expressed confidence that**

housing associations will continue to deliver for those most in need.

- 3.5 Under the previous funding model, Belfast received an average grant level of around 54% of scheme costs. As previously discussed with Members, this level of grant funding presented viability challenges for delivery of certain housing products within the Belfast Boundary area. These challenges were particularly acute in the City Centre where the Local Development Plan identifies significant housing growth as a strategic priority.
- 3.6 Following the announcement, the regional average grant rate has now been reduced from 54% to 46%, a decrease of 8 percentage points. Belfast is set to receive an even lower rate of 42.5%, which is 11.5 percentage points below its previous level. For Belfast, this represents just over 21% reduction relative to the original regional average, placing Belfast at a distinct disadvantage compared to other areas. Housing Associations will need to secure more private finance or absorb higher costs to deliver the same schemes.
- 3.7 While the Department has emphasised the need for efficiency, the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) has expressed serious concern about the impact of these changes. NIFHA warned that *'the budget for the Social Housing Development Programme is already insufficient to meet need, and that the reduction in grant rates will render many schemes financially unviable, particularly in Belfast where costs are higher'*. Analysis carried out last year *'indicated that, at a 48% regional grant rate and 44.5% for Belfast, 70% of 75 sites examined were unviable and unlikely to progress. With the Belfast rate now expected to fall further to 42.5%, notably below the new regional average, the consequences are expected to be more severe, with a significant proportion of planned developments at risk of delay or cancellation'*. NIFHA have also expressed concerns that *'as the funding gap will have to be met by housing associations, this will require longer repayment terms and higher borrowing costs which in turn could have the potential to impact rents. For Housing Associations, pursuing schemes where rents become unaffordable is simply not viable'*. NIFHA also advise that the *'initial investigation into the impact of the rate changes suggest new build developments appear to be more viable in regional and rural areas outside of Belfast'*.
- 3.8 At this stage, the full impact of the Department's announcement is yet to be fully understood. However, following the joint meeting of the City Regeneration & Growth

and People & Communities Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2025 when NIHE presented on the city centre waiting list, officers had already commenced work to assess the viability challenges associated with delivering homes within the city centre under the then-existing Total Cost Indicators (TCI) and Housing Association Grant (HAG) levels. The relationship between these calculations in determining the level of grant funding is outlined in Appendix 1. These rates were already perceived as insufficient to support delivery in high-cost urban areas. Work to date has included engagement across the sector to consider the cost basis specific for city centre housing development and explore how housing associations, the private sector and Council might advocate for a more refined, market sensitive approach, particularly in progressing a dedicated city centre TCI. This would reflect the Local Development Plan's demographic assessment and the strategic importance of housing in the city centre.

- 3.9 With this recent announcement of further reductions to the grant rate, it is now critical to understand the full impact of these revised grant levels, which seem to have the potential to exacerbate existing viability concerns and pose greater risks to housing delivery especially given the current housing need of 13,599 people across the city ( as at June 2025, NIHE data), spanning families, young people, and the elderly. Of these, 11,371 have been identified as being in housing stress.
- 3.10 Whilst further analysis will be required there are concerns that lower grant rates are likely to slow the pace of new social housing delivery, reduce the number of schemes that can proceed, and make it harder to meet housing targets.
- 3.11 Council officers will continue to engage with DfC, the Housing Executive, Housing Associations, Developers and NIFHA to understand the detailed implications for Belfast-based schemes. A fuller report will be brought back to Council in due course, setting out the scale of the impact, options for mitigating risks, and any recommendations for Council engagement or advocacy.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

None associated with this report.

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

**There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.”**

During discussion, several Members expressed concern regarding the recent announcement by the Minister for Communities and highlighted the potential impact that the reduction to the Housing Association Grant (HAG) rate would have on the delivery of social housing, particularly in relation to the city centre.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that officers would continue to review the changes announced by the Minister to fully understand the impact on social housing delivery within the city. She highlighted that, in order to inform a comprehensive review of the changes, further detail from the Department for Communities (DfC) in respect of the new Total Cost Indicator (TCI) and HAG rates would be beneficial.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to invite the Minister for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to attend a future special meeting of the Committee to discuss the rationale for the recent changes to the Housing Association Grant (HAG) and the potential impact of those changes on the delivery of social housing within the city.

**Further Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Nelson,  
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Communities to request further detail in respect of the Total Cost Indicator (TCI) and Housing Association Grant (HAG) rates, in order to inform a detailed review of the changes announced and the potential impact on the delivery of social housing within the city.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the recent changes to the Housing Association Grant (HAG) announced by DfC; the potential challenges those changes would present in respect of social housing delivery within the city; and that a more comprehensive report would be brought back to Committee at a later stage following a detailed review of the announcement

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and further engagement with statutory partners and delivery agents;

- ii. agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request further detail in respect of the Total Cost Indicators (TCI) and the Housing Association Grant (HAG) rates, in order to inform a detailed review of the changes announced the potential impact on the delivery of social housing within the city; and
- iii. agreed to invite the Minister for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to attend a future special meeting of the Committee to discuss the rationale for the recent changes to the Housing Association Grant (HAG) and the potential impact of those changes on the delivery of social housing within the city.

**Department for Infrastructure Consultation on  
Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian  
and Cycling Improvements - Council Response**

The Committee considered a report in respect of a Department for Infrastructure (DfI) consultation on Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements.

The Senior Development Manger advised the Committee that DfI had developed proposals for Sailortown and Ulster University pedestrian and cycle improvements which would aim to provide new high quality active travel infrastructure to connect York Street Station to Ulster University and the Cathedral Quarter.

He outlined a draft Council response to the consultation for the Committee's consideration, as set out in Appendix B of the report, which stated that the Council supported the proposed pedestrian and cycling improvements given their alignment with the ambitions and targets set out in the Belfast Agenda, the city's Community Plan, 'A Bolder Vision' and the emerging development landscape, however, requested that DfI:

- continue to engage with the local communities to address the safety concerns highlighted with the Dock Street Underpass arrangement through effective design within the scheme;
- continue to engage with the Under the Bridges design team to optimise the key connectivity links that both schemes would bring to the area, including maximising the desire lines between City Quays/Sailortown and the city centre along Gamble Street;
- support the creation of a two-way cycle lane through the Under the Bridges site to connect Corporation Street with Donegal Quay;
- continue to engage with the Under the Bridges and the Corporation Street housing-led regeneration design teams to optimise the locations of the proposed crossings; and

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- take cognisance of the proposed 'Sailortown/Titanic Quarter Bridge' to ensure alignment with future active travel provision within the area.

The Senior Development Manager advised the Committee that the consultation would close on 14th November, 2025, therefore, it was recommended that a draft response be submitted to DfI by the deadline stating that it would be subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, 2025.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Black,  
Seconded by Councillor McKay,

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure in respect of the potential to reimagine the Westlink Footbridge, which links Cullingtree Road to Durham Street.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report in relation to the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements;
- ii. agreed the Council's draft response, as set out within the report, to the Department for Infrastructure consultation on the proposed Sailortown and Ulster University Pedestrian and Cycling Improvements;
- iii. noted that the draft response would be submitted to the Department for Infrastructure by the deadline of 14th November, 2025, stating that it would be subject to Council ratification on 1st December, 2025; and
- iv. agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure in respect of the potential to reimagine the Westlink Footbridge, which links Cullingtree Road to Durham Street.

**Positioning Belfast to Compete**

**International Engagement –  
Update on Proposed Approach**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update in respect of the proposed approach to the Council's engagement in international activity for the coming three-year period following discussion at the August and October Committee meetings.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the draft International Relations Framework for 2025-28 and the International Relations Delivery Plan for 2025/26 to enable an updated draft Framework to be submitted to reflect the decisions agreed at the Committee meeting on 8th October, 2025, in relation to international engagement.

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

In addition, a Member suggested that the updated draft Framework be submitted to the next special meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 26th November, 2025.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the draft International Relations Framework 2025-28 and the International Relations Delivery Plan 2025/26 to its special meeting on 26th November, 2025, to enable an updated draft Framework to be submitted which would reflect the decisions agreed at its meeting on 8th October, 2025, in relation to international engagement.

**Major Events Update – Christmas  
Animation Programme 2025**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a programme update on the 2025 Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On & additional animation throughout the festive period.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the Switch On Programme and additional Christmas animation.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Belfast Christmas Lights Switch On**

**Planning is well advanced for the Switch On event to be delivered on Saturday 15 November 2025. Officers continue to work with internal and external stakeholders on a range of matters to ensure the successful delivery of this signature project.**

The Christmas Lights Switch On event will be a free of charge ticketed event, with the stage providing family-oriented entertainment including local musicians and performers culminating in the switch on of the lights by our Lord Mayor.

Members will be aware that a report to committee in June 2023 recommended several adjustments to the Christmas light switch on to mitigate identified health and safety risks - these included:

- Event build in the early hours involving staggered road and lane closures
- The careful co-ordination of deliveries of equipment and stock of the Christmas market to facilitate an appropriate cut off to allow for the build of the stage and rig.
- The stage and all associated equipment and infrastructure should remain in situ following the event to allow roads to reopen immediately after the event. This will allow of a de-rig to take place on Sunday morning during a less busy period.

Members should be aware that the mitigation outlined above has increased some costs related to equipment rental and security. Any expenditure will be found from existing corporate budgets.

This year's Switch On programme will be presented by Cool Fm on Saturday 15 November 6.00 -7.30 pm. Donegall Road Primary School will open the show, leading into festive performances from local acts that include Avenue Arts Academy, The O'Hara Sisters and St Agnes's Choral Society to name a few. Two local inspirational personalities will be appearing, champion boxer Lewis Crocker and West End/TV actress/singer Rachel Tucker. The evening guarantees a great show for the City of Belfast.

### **3.2 Additional Christmas Animation Programme**

As in recent years, 2 Royal Avenue will provide a programme of Christmas themed activities across the six weeks of Christmas to supplement the Switch On and provide a focus throughout the festive period. The programme will be delivered by the operators of the venue, MayWe Events.

The Winter Den programme, hosted at 2 Royal Avenue, offers a diverse array of festive events and activities for all ages, running from Saturday, 15 November, through to New Year's

Eve on Wednesday, 31 December. Highlights include musical performances, craft workshops, storytelling, a seniors tea dance, and special events tailored to different audiences, beginning with a 'Quiet Christmas Tree Switch On' for those with sensory needs. While the programme encompasses classic Christmas celebrations sustainability and inclusivity themes are addressed. The annual Santa's Post Office is available throughout, and the programme culminates on New Year's Eve with a festive 'NYE Ceili' celebration. The programme provides a comprehensive schedule of holiday entertainment and community engagement throughout the winter season.

Officers have, through a competitive procurement process, engaged two organisations to curate and programme further animation throughout the festive period in the City Centre; one programme has a live music focus, whereas the second specifies other types of animation such as street performance. These programmes will ensure that a full range of animation is showcased throughout the city centre during the busy festive shopping period.

### **3.3 Marketing and Communications Activity**

Council will operate a digital campaign with online advertising to promote the fact that there is an event taking place on 15 November, as well as festive animation across the city centre after the switch-on and seasonal activities in 2 Royal Avenue. There will also be a post-switch-on digital campaign with a slight variation on artwork to highlight the fact that other activities are taking place across the city throughout the Christmas period.

For the switch-on ad campaign, council will be directing people to the Visit Belfast website where tickets will be available from 4 November. For all press and social media activity and post-switch on promotion, council will be directing people to the [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas) URL. This URL will display all Christmas activity and the switch-on event information will be displayed prominently on the page. As information is finalised on the event schedule, online messaging will be strengthened.

Promotion will take place across digital platforms and via key partners including BID One and Visit Belfast. City Matters went to print before ticket release details were confirmed, but a generic update was provided to highlight the switch-on date and other Christmas activity including Winter's Den at 2 Royal Avenue, the Christmas Market and post switch-on animation.

The winter edition will be circulated to just under 160k homes throughout the first week of November. A press release will also be issued to promote the ticket release and the confirmed details of the event schedule.

Members should note that the ticketing of the event involves two releases – one at 10am and a second at 7pm.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

Financial resources will be met from within existing departmental budgets.

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

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

During discussion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the Christmas lights switch-on event, engagement on the potential to expand the Christmas Market and the corporate communication of additional Christmas activities within the city centre. In response to a Member’s question, the Senior Manager agreed to provide further detail in respect of the breakdown of ticketing for the Christmas lights switch-on event.

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

**Growing Business and the Economy**

**Enterprise Support Service Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that is being led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils as well as sector-based activities being supported by the Enterprise and Business Growth team.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to:**

- **Note the update on progress at regional and Belfast level on the Enterprise Support Service**

- Note the current funding challenges to the service post-March 2026 and agree to receive a further update report in the coming months to identify potential next steps
- Agree to provide funding of £25,000 to HIRANI to support delivery of the year two programme of work under the Launchpad initiative.

### **3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 At the April 2025 meeting of this Committee, members were provided with a performance update on the Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed). The service began operation in November 2023 and has supported thousands of potential entrepreneurs and existing businesses across Northern Ireland in that time.
- 3.2 By way of background, members will recall that Belfast City Council led on a successful funding application to the UK Government's Ministry for Community, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) for UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies (SPF) to support delivery. This provided £17 million of support for the period to March 2025; £12 million programme delivery and £5 million for small grants.
- 3.3 Belfast City Council, as lead for the service, subsequently secured a further tranche of funding via an application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) of £9.2 million for the 2025/2026 financial year, ensuring continuity of the service. The focus of our activity for this year has been on ensuring the effective delivery of the service, while also exploring a more sustainable financial model beyond the March 2026 date. The current financial year is considered a 'transition' year for Shared Prosperity Fund and the 11 June 2025 budget statement included high level details of a new approach to funding in the form of the 'Local Growth Fund', to take effect from March 2026.
- 3.4 The service aims to be the go-to source for expert business advice across the region. It represents the councils' collective response to our statutory responsibility and offers a set of connected enterprise support services where individuals, entrepreneurs or businesses can access a continuum of support to meet their needs, depending on their stage of development.

The concept is that the service will help people get the right support at the right time – and will also help maximise other

available funding streams by helping businesses to navigate the complex support ecosystem.

- 3.5 The service has been established to deliver across three core areas – Start, Grow and Scale – with tailored support for clients aligned with their growth ambitions. In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £3,000 (up to 50% of capital costs) are available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.

3.6 Regional Performance Update

Performance in the first two quarters of this financial year across the region includes:

- More than 4,000 individuals 'reached' through community outreach activities
- More than 2,200 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
- More than 1,800 businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
- More than 380 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants, attracting around £2million in support which is matched by a similar contribution from the businesses themselves. Note that the final call for grant funding in this year is currently live and will close on 5 November 2025.

3.6 Belfast Performance Update

At a Belfast level, activity planned for the coming financial year includes:

- Significant programme of outreach and engagement support covering under-represented groups. Examples of activities are:
  - Sector specific events for those in the hair and beauty industry including delivery of aspirational workshops and a masterclass with successful entrepreneurs from the sector
  - Hosting a female-focused 'Inspiring Entrepreneurship Conference' event for over 300 school-aged emerging female leaders on the regional SistersIN mentorship programme and

- providing practical support to starting or growing their enterprise
  - Working with apprenticeship providers across Belfast to deliver aspirational workshops to 100s of 16–18-year-olds encouraging entrepreneurship (especially in trades) as a very real and achievable pathway
  - Facilitation of the 'Young Entrepreneurs to Watch' initiative, designed to unearth, recognise and fast track 20 exceptional potential entrepreneurs
  - Planned conference on disability and entrepreneurship to take place in February 2026 advocating for disability inclusion in business whilst sharing entrepreneurial journeys and insights and providing aspiring disabled entrepreneurs with tangible support at each stage of their journey
  - Supporting those who are economically inactive to access specialist support alongside financial incentives to address barriers to starting a new business
- 360 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
  - 346 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
  - 48 Belfast businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024, drawing down over £1 million. These grants have enabled businesses to purchase capital and/or revenue items which will support their future growth plans.

**3.7 Critical to the service is the ability to deliver place-based activity and to be responsive to the needs of local businesses. In Belfast, key areas of focus in the current year include:**

- Establishing, and building upon, relationships with key stakeholders across the city to put in place targeted interventions to engage with under-represented groups and work to overcome the barriers to starting or growing a business for those groups
- Continuing to raise awareness of the Social Economy sector, including driving investment to support the acceleration of new social enterprises
- Partnering with the council's Employability and Skills team to target self-employed sectors, including

childminding, and delivering bespoke academies to break down barriers to self-employment

- Developing a programme of support to businesses to raise awareness of opportunities arising from major events such as Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and helping them to maximise revenue generation through these events
- Building strong local supply chains through Meet the Buyer events, including working with the construction sector (public housing focused opportunities) and food to go sector. Companies will be directed to targeted support to improve their chances of accessing public sector procurement opportunities as well as access new supply chain opportunities with private sector partners.

3.8 Given the substantial interest in and uptake of the service, there is some concern at recent commentary from UK Government that the Local Growth Fund is likely to be heavily capital-focused (likely split 66% capital; 34% revenue funding). This will, undoubtedly, have a significant impact on any future allocation to support this type of activity, given that the current funding breakdown is 24% capital (mainly for grants) and 76% revenue funding.

3.9 Officers have been seeking to engage with officials from MHCLG, NIO and the regional government departments to understand the likely impact of these changes on the support for local businesses. At this stage, there has been very limited formal communication from any of the agencies although it is understood that the NIO team is planning a series of engagement sessions in November 2025 (no details forthcoming currently). We have also made all councils aware of the current situation and have been looking at a range of scenarios to minimise the impact on service delivery including leveraging resources from elsewhere (DfE, Local Economic Partnerships etc.). In reality, it is very difficult to plan with any degree of certainty given both the lack of official information being circulated and the potentially endless range of scenarios, depending on the final funding decision from the UK Government. The added complication is that the delay in any formal communication makes it difficult to manage customer and stakeholder expectations as well as creating operational challenges for the Programme Management Office, given that our roles are fixed-term and therefore reliant on funding availability.

**3.10** Officers will continue to seek clarity from the various government agencies and departments with a view to maximising the overall resources available to support enterprise and local business growth. A report will be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee to update on progress and to set out the likely approach at a Belfast and regional level.

**3.11** Sector support activities

In addition to the 'core' business support interventions through Go Succeed, the Council's Enterprise and Business Growth Team also works with partner organisations to support targeted activities across a range of key business sectors that are critical for the city's economic growth.

**3.12** One of the key growth sectors in Belfast is life and health sciences. At a regional level, the sector supports high value roles in companies such as Almac. In Belfast, the universities are driving sectoral excellence in areas such as diagnostics, clinical trials and medical instruments and City Deal investments such as Ulster University's Centre for Digital and Healthcare Technology at the City Hospital and QUB's iREACH Centre at City Hospital will support the further development of this sector – along with the associated societal and health-related benefits for the local population and beyond.

**3.13** In May 2024, this Committee agreed to support the life and health sciences cluster organisation HIRANI, providing a financial contribution of £25,000 towards a new 'Health and Life Sciences Launchpad' in Northern Ireland. The Launchpad is a mentoring and investment initiative for small businesses in the health and life sciences sector, focusing on helping them to commercialise investments, attract funding and explore new market opportunities. It is a two-year project, and the principal funders are Invest NI and Innovate UK.

**3.14** To date, the Launchpad has provided funding to 14 projects (12 SME-led and 2 collaborative R&D), and an additional 18 SMEs have received direct financial support to facilitate help progress product commercialisation work. Planning for year two activities is well advanced. It will involve the recruitment of at least 40 new participants who will avail of support such as matching them with mentors from clinical, academic, industry, and investment backgrounds, accelerating innovation readiness and commercialisation. A specific area of focus this year will be include artificial intelligence (AI) applications in health, digital transformation, and regulatory

readiness, given the advances in this space. In keeping with the commitments in year one, it is proposed that a budget allocation of £25,000 is made towards the operation of the Launchpad in Year 2. Officers will work closely with HIRANI in the course of the year to maximise referrals from other council support and engagement activities. We will also explore the 'exit strategy'/next steps following the launchpad, with a particular focus on understanding implications for the new City Deal projects in this sector.

**4.0 Financial & Resource Implications**

**NISS:** Belfast City Council is currently acting as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we have established a delivery and management team which is fully resourced through the SPF funding. The overall indicative SPF budget for the 2025/26 financial year is in the region of £7.2 million revenue, with around £2 million in capital funding available across the funding period for grant support.

**HIRANI:** Funding request is for a contribution of £25,000 to year two activities as part of the Launchpad initiative.

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

**An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.”**

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on the progress, at both regional and city level, of the Enterprise Support Service;
- ii. noted the current funding challenges to the service post-March 2026;
- iii. agreed to receive a further update report in the coming months to identify potential next steps; and
- iv. agreed to provide funding of £25,000 to Health Innovation Research Alliance Northern Ireland (HIRANI) to support the delivery of the year two programme of work under the Launchpad initiative.

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**Strategic and Operational Issues**

**City Growth and Regeneration  
Committee Plan – Mid-Year Report**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided a mid-year progress update on the keys actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) as outlined within the 2025/26 Committee Plan, agreed at its meeting on 4th June, 2025.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy and the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, answered questions from Members in relation to the mid-year progress update on the next round of Cultural Multi-Annual Grants (CMAG) for 2025-28 and the performance against target in respect of the percentage of female participation in the Belfast Go Succeed programme.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the mid-year report and the progress against agreed actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as set out within the 2025/26 Committee Plan.

**Minutes of the Belfast Stories  
Working Group – 18th September 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Belfast Stories Working Group of 18th September, 2025.

**Minutes of the City Regeneration  
Members' Working Group – 13th October 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the City Regeneration Members' Working Group of 13th October, 2025.

Chairperson

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# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 26th November, 2025

## SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson);  
Alderman Lawlor; and  
Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite, S. Douglas,  
Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, Meenehan, McCabe  
McCallin, McKay, R. McLaughlin, 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. C. Persic, City Regeneration Development Manager;  
Ms. N. Mulrine, Regeneration Project Officer;  
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer, Climate; and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) and Councillors McCormick and Murray.

### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted a report which provided an update on the Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) project and set out a final UP2030 Belfast Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework for the Committee's consideration. It was reported that, subject to the Committee's approval of the Framework and ratification by the Council, the Framework would be submitted to the UP2030 Horizon Europe Consortium in December.

The Director reminded the Committee that the Council had been involved in the three-year Horizon Europe consortium programme, UP2030, which aimed to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions, and that Belfast was one of eleven pilot cities within a large consortium of forty-seven partners across fourteen countries. She informed the Committee that the project would support the Council's NZ Roadmap, the city's Resilience Strategy, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, and the city's ambition to become net zero by 2050.

She advised the Committee that the joint project, between the City Regeneration and Development team and the Climate team, developed the Framework with a focus

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based on the three thematic areas of active travel, greening and retrofit, and that those themes were underpinned by the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience. It was reported that during the development of the Framework, communication, engagement and capacity building were identified as critical areas that required additional focus.

She highlighted the significant engagement that had been undertaken with local communities, city partners and Members to help shape the final framework. She highlighted that, although the geographic area of the UP2030 pilot, which was agreed at the Committee meeting in March 2023, had covered the Linen Quarter and surrounding city centre communities of Barrack Street, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Markets, the Framework had been developed to be transferable and used to assist in other areas and communities.

The City Regeneration Development Manager, the Regeneration Project Officer, and the Climate Project Support Officer presented the Committee with a detailed overview of the Belfast NZ Neighbourhood Framework's seven main sections:

1. **Climate change in Belfast** - The role of cities in achieving net zero, climate and health, climate and urban design, the Local Development Plan and climate measures;
2. **The Neighbourhood** – engagement with community stakeholders within the pilot area to understand the lived experience of residents and the challenges that exist;
3. **Vision, Themes and Pillars** – The vision would be to create a net zero neighbourhood that adapts and mitigates climate risks through increased greening, better active and sustainable transport, and more energy efficient low-carbon buildings. Three interconnected themes of Retrofit, Active Travel and Greening would be underpinned by the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience;
4. **Communication and engagement in the Neighbourhood** – key findings from communication and engagement with local communities to support a fair and just transition and to help communities understand climate change through a horizontal priority approach of engaging, educating, elevating, enabling and embedding;
5. **Carbon emissions data study in the neighbourhood** – detail of the work with the University of Cambridge (UCAM) to estimate the carbon footprint of the UP2030 project area;
6. **Net Zero enablers in Belfast** - how ambitions sit within the context of the citywide climate efforts such as major projects, governance, data, strategic partnerships and capacity building; and

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7. **Opportunities for the Way Forward** – opportunities to move the work forward and highlight the need for cross-sectoral collaboration, a data-driven approach, and embedding climate action into decisions, policy and projects.

During discussion, the Members thanked the officers for the significant work that had been undertaken throughout the project to develop the final framework, in particular the engagement and co-design of the framework with local communities. The Members also highlighted the benefit of the research's extensive range of data collated in order to inform future interventions.

The City Regeneration Development Manager, the Regeneration Project Officer, and the Climate Project Support Officer answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the potential to extend low carbon district heating to residential and other non-central locations, how the learnings and findings could be shared, retrofitting Council buildings, the role of local communities, and the Walking Bus Programme for Schools.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved the UP2030 Belfast Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework;
- ii. noted that the Framework would be submitted to the UP2030 Horizon Europe Consortium in December, subject to Council ratification;
- iii. noted the contents of the report and the process to develop the Framework around the three main themes of Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project could be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities in respect of net zero; and
- iv. noted the opportunity to use the Framework to integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the area planning approach, climate-related work programmes, the housing led regeneration programme and how it would align with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.

**Presentation**

**Department for Infrastructure Roads – 2025/26 Annual Report**

The Chairperson welcomed the following Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Roads officials to the meeting:

- Mr. S. Wells, Divisional Roads Manager;
- Mr. P. King, Network Development Manager; and
- Mr. J. Torney, Belfast North Section Engineer.

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The DfI officials submitted for the Committee's information the 2025/26 DfI Roads Annual Report on the works completed across the Council area during 2024/25 and the initial proposals for schemes to be undertaken in 2025/26.

Mr. Wells highlighted that funding continued to be the main challenge for DfI in maintaining and improving road infrastructure. He highlighted the 2019 Review of Structural Maintenance Funding, which recommended that DfI Roads required £140m (approximately £200m today) per annum for structural maintenance. He reported that the opening 2025/26 Capital budget for structural maintenance of the road network was £68m, which would enable the delivery of the highest priority resurfacing, roadside stability and drainage projects.

He advised the Committee that, in addition to the schemes outlined within the report, DfI had identified other resurfacing schemes within the Council area, and that should additional funding be made available, those schemes would be prepared for delivery.

In relation to revenue funding for essential maintenance operations, Mr. Wells stated that, regrettably, DfI has had to continue with a limited maintenance service policy and in combination with funding constraints, this has resulted in a gradual deterioration in the condition of the road assets. He assured the Committee that the DfI Roads team would continue to manage the road network in the most efficient and effective manner.

The Committee was provided with a brief overview of the works completed in 2024/25, which included the resurfacing of 31 lane-km of road and 21.5km of footways, with the most significant scheme being that of the Sydenham Bypass resurfacing. Mr. Wells reported that, for 2025/26, DfI would soon have completed 23.3 lane-km of resurfacing roads and 14.7km of footways, and that the two remaining projects to complete with the allocated funding were the resurfacing of Sydenham Avenue and Norglen Parade.

Mr. Wells also provided the Committee with an update on the following:

- the establishment of a multi-agency City Centre Task and Finish Group to address issues within the city centre;
- the extension of bus lane hours on key routes within South Belfast affected by congestion;
- the progress of Active Travel Schemes including Lagmore Avenue, Island Street and the first phase of the West Belfast Greenway;
- the £2.4m junction improvement at McKinsty Road/Derriaghy Road/ the Cutts to improve safety for car users and pedestrians;
- the new 20mph zones at primary schools within the city;
- the Belfast Rapid Transport Phase 2;
- the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge;
- The Transport Strategy 2035; and
- The Regional Strategic Transport Plan.

During discussion, the DfI officials answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the following issues:

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**Knockbreda Road Crossing**

A Member expressed frustration regarding the delay in its delivery. In response, Mr. Wells acknowledged the delay and advised that, due to an adjacent residential planning application, the crossing had been delayed to enable a redesign to be undertaken. He reported that once the redesign was completed, the crossing would remain a priority for Dfl to deliver.

**Ravenhill Park and Onslow Parade Traffic Calming Scheme**

Mr. King advised that Dfl had received objections to the proposals for the traffic calming scheme and that the next stage would involve engagement with public representatives to agree a way forward.

**Eastern Transport Plan (ETP)**

In response to a number of questions from the Members on the ETP, Mr. Wells advised that the ETP was in the final stages of preparation and should be due for publication in early 2026.

**Residents' Parking Schemes**

In response to a number of questions from the Members on Residents' Parking Schemes, Mr. Wells reported that this was currently under development by Dfl and that, in parallel with the ETP, he would expect a Parking Strategy to be developed to identify areas that would particularly benefit from parking schemes.

**Climate Crisis and Flooding**

In response to a Member's question on how Dfl dealt with the climate crisis and flooding, Mr. Wells advised that, for 2025/26, additional funding had been allocated to deal with drainage works and that Dfl would continue to engage with the Council to be proactive in dealing with issues more efficiently.

**Pedestrianisation of Hill Street**

Mr. Wells advised that Dfl had received an objection in respect of the scheme and that, once this had been addressed, Dfl hoped to have the scheme in place as soon as possible.

**Resurfacing of Tennent Street and Townsend Street**

Mr. Torney stated that both Tennent Street and Townsend Street remained a priority for resurfacing. He advised that, due to other development works in the area, the resurfacing of Townsend Street could not be fully completed. He reported that, once those development works were

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finished, Dfl would prioritise the completion of resurfacing on Townsend Street. In respect of Tennent Street, Mr. Torney advised that the current surface of the road presented challenges in terms of the preparation work needed before resurfacing, however, this work remained a priority.

The Dfl officials also answered questions in relation to the City Centre Task and Finish Group, utility works and maintenance, active and sustainable transport and the Island Street Active Travel Scheme.

In relation to communication, several Members acknowledged the Department's resource pressures, however, expressed frustration in respect of its communication with elected representatives and highlighted the lack of responses to queries and issues raised.

In response to the following additional issues raised by the Members, the Dfl officials agreed to investigate and submit further information to the Committee in due course:

- an update on whether a road survey had been carried out by Dfl on the A55, Milltown Hill junction, in respect of potential options, including the installation of traffic lights or other appropriate measures, given the road safety issues and traffic congestion;
- an update on the resurfacing of roads on Sicily Park and Locksley Park, given the poor road conditions;
- an update on the installation of traffic calming measures on Carnanmore Park and Tildarg Avenue, which had been previously surveyed a number of years ago, given the increased traffic on those streets;
- an update on the implementation and delivery of the Residents' Parking Schemes and the potential to explore a citywide approach;
- an update on the potential to reimagine the Westlink Footbridge;
- an update on the installation of traffic calming measures on Distillery Street;
- an update on the potential to extend the double yellow lines on Orby Street;
- an update on the timeline for the Sailortown and Ulster University pedestrian and cycling improvements and whether there were plans to consult in respect of the Limestone Road; and
- an update on the timeline to complete the works to the Victoria Park underpass.

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

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, Dfl would provide further information on the issues raised.

**International Engagement – Update on Proposed Approach**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**The purpose of this report is to share an updated version of the draft approach to council’s engagement in international activity for the coming three-year period following discussion at the August, October and November committee meetings, and to propose a new framework for engagement, taking account of the comments received.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**Members are asked to:**

- **Note the amendments to the previous version, set out in section 3.5 of the report**
- **Approve the proposed approach to council activity in international engagement work for the coming three years, as well as the annual action plan for the current financial year.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 At the August and October 2025 meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, members received draft versions of the proposed International Relations Framework 2025 – 2028 along with an action plan for 2025/26 activity. At both meetings, there was discussion that led to specific proposals for amendments to the draft document. It was agreed that officers would incorporate those amendments into a revised version of both the framework and action plan and that these would be shared at a future meeting.**

**3.2 At the October 2025 meeting of the Committee, the specific decisions included:**

- **Agreement to continue Belfast City Council participation in the Eurocities network**

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- **Agreement to explore opportunities for collaboration with 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**
- **Agreement to establish an EU stakeholder group**
- **Agreement to extend invitations to attend international engagement stakeholder groups to Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.**

**3.3 Members also asked that the framework was updated to specifically identify how ethical and environmental considerations were taken into account in international relations activity. Finally, they noted that they wished 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.**

**3.4 In November, Members again agreed to defer as although the framework had been updated in relation to ethical and environmental considerations and the action plan had been amended to reflect the above decisions in relation to the EU, the framework had not been updated to reflect the decisions on EU matters.**

**3.5 Taking account of the points raised above, the revised draft approach to council-led international engagement activity for the coming three-year period is set out in Appendix 1 and the supporting delivery plan for year one (2025-26) is set out in Appendix 2. The three-year “framework” document is intended to be a supporting document to other key strategies and plans such as the Belfast Agenda, the Corporate Plan and Local Development Plan – setting out how priority objectives and ambitions in those documents can be supported through international connections, networks and opportunities. Its purpose is to identify areas of collaborative advantage and help focus resources on opportunities that can maximise return on investment, in keeping with city priorities. Specific changes to the content of the documents now include:**

- **Updating the framework to identify specifically how ethical and environmental considerations will be taken into account in the planned activity. This includes references to “environmentally sustainable and inclusive economic growth” as part of the vision; additional references to sustainable growth under the key work pillars and commitment to support mission-**

driven innovation actions focused on addressing social and environmental challenges faced by communities and individuals across the city

- Updating the framework on trade and investment, innovation and knowledge exchange and funding and partnership to reflect the decisions on the EU as outlined at para 3.2.
- Updating the action plan to include agreed deliverables as identified in 3.2 including network participation and work to develop additional engagement opportunities, including the EU Cities and Regions Work.

#### **4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

4.1 The EU and International Relations budget was approved as part of the 2025-26 estimates setting process. Budgets for individual activities are the responsibility of the respective teams.

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

No specific equality or good relations implications. Activities will focus on support for Belfast-based organisations and companies.

#### **6.0 Appendices**

Appendix 1: [Draft International Relations Framework 2025-28](#)  
Appendix 2: [International Relations Delivery Plan 2025/26](#)"

During discussion, the Members stated that they were content with the updated draft International Relations Framework for 2025-2028, as set out in Appendix one of report, however, a Member raised an issue in respect of the draft Delivery Plan for 2025/26.

#### **Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson),

That the Committee approves the International Engagement Activity Delivery Plan for 2025/26, as set out in Appendix two of the report.

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

Accordingly, the Committee:

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- i. noted the amendments to the previous version of the draft approach to the Council's engagement in international activity for the coming three-year period, as set out in section 3.5 of the report; and
- ii. approved the International Relations Framework 2025-2028; and
- iii. approved the International Engagement Activity Delivery Plan 2025/26.

**Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes**

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

Chairperson

## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 19th November, 2025

### MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

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

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

### Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer).

### Declarations of Interest

Alderman McCullough declared an interest in item 2a – Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority, in that he was a Member of the North Belfast Orange Memorial Hall which was linked with the Alexandra Social and Recreation Club, but he confirmed that he was not associated with the Social Club.

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest under item 3c - Guidance for Students and Landlords in respect of their Rights and Responsibilities regarding HMOs, in that she worked for Queen's University Belfast.

It was noted that the Members were not required to retire from the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

### Schedule of Meetings 2026

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings and agreed to meet on the following dates in 2026, with all meetings to commence at 5.15pm:

- Wednesday, 21st January
- Wednesday, 18th February
- Wednesday, 18th March
- Wednesday, 22nd April
- Wednesday, 20th May
- Wednesday, 17th June
- Wednesday, 19th August
- Wednesday, 16th September

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 19th November, 2025**

- Wednesday, 14th October
- Wednesday, 18th November
- Wednesday, 16th December

**Delegated Matters**

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

**Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority**

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

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

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

**Application for the Variation of 7-Day Annual  
Entertainments Licence for The Spaniard,  
3 Skipper Street**

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that an application had been received from JK Pubs Limited, for the variation of its 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence based on the Council's standard conditions, to provide music, singing, dancing or any other entertainment of a like kind.

The Members were advised that the days and hours during which entertainment may be provided under the current Entertainments Licence were:

- Monday – Saturday      11:30am to 2.00am the following morning
- Sunday                      12:30pm to 2.00am the following morning.

She outlined that the variation applied for, was to extend the hours during which entertainment may be provided to 3.00am the following morning, every night of the week.

At present entertainment was provided in the form of DJ's and live bands on Friday and Saturday nights.

The Committee was advised that public notice of the application had been placed in the newspaper and no written representation had been lodged. The Police Service of Northern Ireland had been consulted in relation to the application and had confirmed that they had no objection to the variation. The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue service had been consulted and had confirmed that they had no objection to the application. Additionally, no noise complaints had been received by the Building Control Service in respect of the venue in the past 12 months.

**Licensing Committee,  
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The applicant, Ms. J. Kane, was welcomed to the meeting. She stated that she was requesting the variation to extend the permitted hours until 3.00am, as they felt that the premises was an integral part of Belfast's nightlife and that an increase in operating hours would allow them to compete within the sector, which was essential for the commercial success of the business. She emphasised that they were not planning on utilising the 3am close on every occasion.

Moved by Councillor McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved – that the Committee approves the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence, to vary the hours during which entertainment may be provided as requested, to 3.00am the following morning on every night of the week.

**Non-Delegated Matters**

**Notice of Motion - Unite's Work Safe Home Safe Campaign**

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented the following motion which had been referred to the Licensing Committee, by the Standards and Business Committee, on 23rd October:

**“Unite’s Work Safe Home Safe Campaign**

Unite’s Work Safe / Home Safe campaign is a direct response to the harassment, violence, and unsafe travel faced by hospitality and night-time economy workers in Belfast. Research shows that over 90% of hospitality workers experience sexual harassment at work. Unite’s 2025 survey in Northern Ireland found:

- 42% of workers walk home after shifts due to lack of transport,
- 77% receive no employer support for safe travel,
- 53% have witnessed or experienced harassment or assault on their way home after a shift,
- 68% of women routinely witness or experience sexual harassment in the workplace.

This Council notes:

1. That harassment, spiking and gender-based violence remain widespread in hospitality and the night-time economy, disproportionately affecting women, young, migrant and LGBT+ workers.
2. That hospitality and the night-time economy are major employers and economic drivers for Belfast and Northern Ireland, supporting tens of thousands of jobs and contributing over £1 billion annually to the regional economy.

**Licensing Committee,  
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3. That the Northern Ireland Executive, has announced funding for a one-year pilot of late-night public transport services in Belfast, with Belfast City Council co-funding the scheme. This is a welcome step that will help customers and the public get home safely, strengthen the night-time economy, and improve the city's connectivity. However, it does not remove the responsibility on employers to provide safe, paid transport home for staff who finish work after public services end.
4. That under the Licensing (NI) Order 1996 and Entertainment Licensing (NI) Order 1985, the Council has powers to promote public safety and prevent crime and disorder through licensing policy.

This Council resolves to:

1. Amend Belfast City Council's licensing and entertainment policy to require venues seeking late-night opening to:
  - Adopt and enforce zero-tolerance anti-harassment and anti-spiking policies;
  - Display clear reporting procedures for staff and customers;
  - Provide safe transport home, paid for by the employer, for staff finishing after hours where public transport is more limited or unavailable.
2. Adopt a Belfast Charter against harassment in hospitality, based on Unite's Work Safe / Home Safe campaign, including:
  - Scrapping sexist dress codes;
  - Visible anti-harassment and reporting posters;
  - Free, discreet spiking test kits in venues;
  - Funding and mandating training on harassment and workplace safety developed with the involvement of, and full access for, trade unions and women's groups.
3. Work with Unite, the Department for Infrastructure and Translink to ensure the late-night transport pilot:
  - Prioritises passenger and staff safety through staffing, CCTV and lighting;
  - Covers public demand without being used as a substitute for employer-funded transport for staff;
  - Is reviewed with input from hospitality workers, including transport workers, and their unions.
4. Lobby the Northern Ireland Executive, the Department for Communities and MLAs to introduce stronger protections and minimum standards so that all workers can travel home safely after

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late and unsocial hours, and so that employers play their full part in funding safe and fair transport.

5. Report annually on progress, consulting with workers, unions and transport staff, and publish findings on safety, compliance and the impact on harassment and violence in the night-time economy.”

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Groogan, the proposer of the motion, and Councillor Collins, the seconder of the motion, to address the meeting. Together, they outlined the reasons behind the motion, highlighted that it was a particularly gendered issue and requested that the Committee would consider inviting Unite Hospitality NI to a future meeting to discuss the motion.

The Committee noted that the Notice of Motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report would be submitted to the Licensing Committee, outlining a detailed consideration of the practicalities of the implementation of the Motion and the potential costs implications.

Furthermore, the Committee agreed to invite Unite Hospitality NI to present to a future meeting in respect of the motion.

**Request for the Exhibition of Unclassified Films**

The Director of Planning and Building Control reported that a request had been received from the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland to permit the screening of unclassified films produced by A-Level and GCSE students at Cineworld. The films were intended to be showcased as part of a screening event. The films had not been classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), the independent body responsible for film classification in the UK. CCEA had proposed that the films be treated as equivalent to a 12A classification, which permitted children under the age of 12 to view them, if accompanied by an adult. The audience for the screenings would primarily consist of students aged 15 and older, along with teachers, principals, and representatives from the film industry.

The Council had the authority to impose conditions on cinema licenses, including restrictions on the admission of children to films deemed unsuitable. While the BBFC typically classified films shown in commercial cinemas, the Members were advised that the Council could approve the screening of unclassified films under specific circumstances, provided it was satisfied with the proposal and attached appropriate conditions.

The Committee was advised that the films had been reviewed by schools, examination bodies, and a judging panel. The applicant, CCEA, had assured the Council that the films were appropriate for the intended audience and were representative of a 12A rating.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. I. Arthurs, CCEA representative, to the meeting. She provided the details of the event, which was now in its seventh year, with approximately 500 students attending, representing 20 different schools.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 19th November, 2025**

After discussion, the Committee agreed to permit the screening of the unclassified films in accordance with an age classification of 12A which had been specified by CCEA.

**Guidance for Students and Landlords in respect of their Rights and Responsibilities regarding HMOs**

The HMO Manager presented the following report to the Committee:

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

**1.1 At your meeting on 22 January 2025 Councillor McKay requested that officers would seek to provide students who were attending universities and regional colleges with information on their rights in relation to leasing a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).**

**1.2 After discussion the committee agreed that officers would:**

- 1. engage with Corporate Communications (Communications, Marketing and External Affairs) in order to update the Council’s website with additional and specific guidance for students and landlords in respect of their rights and responsibilities regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation;**
- 2. post links to that information through a social media campaign, linking in with the universities, regional colleges and Students’ Unions;**
- 3. provide guidance, with a QR code linking to the information online, highlighting the rights and responsibilities, to be circulated to landlords for them to provide to their new tenants;**
- 4. consider the budget requirement for an enhanced information campaign from financial year 2025/26 onwards; and**
- 5. seek to provide information on HMOs across Northern Ireland, rather than just for the City of Belfast.**

The purpose of this report is to update members on the information campaign

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to note the content of the report**

**3.0 Main report**

**Campaign background**

**3.1 The NIHMO Unit produced an information guide for HMO tenants, following a request from Licensing Committee in**

January 2025 that officers would seek to provide students who were attending universities and regional colleges with information on their rights in relation to leasing a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO),

- 3.2 The NIHMO team engaged with Communications, Marketing and External Affairs team to publish the guide on the Belfast City Council website and promote it.

Campaign aims

- 3.3
- Raise awareness of the tenants' information guide, as a useful resource for both prospective tenants and tenants already in HMO accommodation.
  - Provide information to landlords, who can pass this on to their tenants.
  - Target secondary audiences such as parents of students and University Students' Unions, who offer advice on accommodation.

Key audiences

- 3.4
- Students from universities and regional colleges
  - Renters of Houses in Multiple Occupation
  - Parents of students
  - HMO landlords and managing agents
  - Student accommodation advisors

Communication approach

- 3.5 The campaign began week commencing 15 September 2025, to coincide with the start of the university year.

- 3.6 Communication channels included:

- Belfast City Council website ([www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk))
- Press
- Belfast City Council social media accounts ([Facebook](#) and [X](#))
- Belfast City Council intranet (Interlink)
- City Matters residents' magazine (winter edition 2025)
- Communication through partner links – universities and National Students' Unions and Landlords Association.

**Campaign by channel**

**3.7 Belfast City Council website**

- [Know your rights – a guide for HMO tenants](#) was published on the Belfast City Council website on 15 September 2025. Content and keywords were optimised for search engines, making information easier to find on the website.

So far, the guide has been viewed over 140 times, and we will continue to promote it in the coming months.

- [Information for tenants](#) webpage and [Information for students](#) webpage was updated with content and a call-to-action button to the information guide. <http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/HMOtenants> web address was used in press release to direct to the information.

Views of the [information for tenants](#) webpage have more than doubled since the launch, compared to the previous month.

- The guide was promoted on the Belfast City Council website homepage.
- The guide was added to Belfast City Council A to Z page on website.

**3.8 Press**

A press release was issued on 15 September 2025, which led to media coverage in the Irish News, Belfast Live, U105 and 4NI.

The image included the Deputy Chair of Belfast City Council's Licensing Committee and representatives from Queen's Students' Union, Ulster University Students' Union's Belfast branch and National Union of Students NI.

Link to press release on Belfast City Council website:

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/News/New-guide-on-tenants-rights-launched-ahead-of-Fres](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/News/New-guide-on-tenants-rights-launched-ahead-of-Fres)

### **Social media**

- 3.9 Posts from Belfast City Council's social media accounts supported the web content and press release, by encouraging students to access the guide.

The posts included a video featuring the HMO Manager and the President of the National Union of Students NI.

### **3.10 Internal communications**

An article was added to Belfast City Council's intranet, Interlink, on 18 September 2025.

The content was aimed at parents or guardians of young people looking to rent HMO accommodation and featured the social media video.

The article received 168 views and was also displayed to frontline staff on 54 screens based at locations across the council.

### **3.11 City Matters**

An article about the role and responsibilities of HMO tenants and landlords, including a link to the guide, was featured in the latest edition of City Matters.

This was distributed to over 160,000 Belfast homes at the start of November.

### **3.12 Other forms of promotion**

- Leaflets were designed, which the NIHMO team could distribute to landlords for their tenants' information packs or noticeboards. The leaflet gave a summary of the guide's content and a QR code with link straight to the guide on the website.
- The Marketing and Communication Coordinator spoke to Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University social media teams to encourage them to share messaging.
- The HMO Unit engaged with and provided copies of the campaign material to the Landlords Association for Northern Ireland, Housing Rights, Renters Voice and each of the other 10 Northern Ireland Council. Additionally, the campaign information was shared with the Department for Communities Housing Team.

**3.13 Future communications**

- Further promotion, including advertising, is being considered for January – February 2026. These have been identified as the months when students start to look for new accommodation again.
- A budget of £3,000 has been set aside from licence fee income towards the costs of the campaign in January / February. With a provisional budget of up to £10,000 for the financial year 2026/27

**4.0 Financial & Resource Implications**

**4.1 NIHMO Unit operates on a cost neutral basis**

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

**5.1 None.”**

A number of Members thanked the officers who had worked on the very successful campaign, which had already proved to be beneficial to students seeking accommodation for the upcoming academic year.

The Committee noted the report and, at the request of a Member, agreed that officers would provide statistics on the public level of engagement with the website on a quarterly basis.

Chairperson

## Planning Committee

Tuesday, 11th November, 2025

PRE DETERMINATION HEARING  
HELD IN A HYBRID FORMAT AT 5.00 P.M.

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;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development  
Management);  
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;  
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in relation to item 2 - LA04/2024/0626/F, in that she had prior engagement with the developers, and she left the meeting while the item was being considered.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to item 2 – LA04/2024/0626/F, on the basis that he had previously worked with the Housing Association.

**Pre-Determination Hearing in respect of  
LA04/2024/0626/F - Erection of 104no. social  
rented residential units (comprising a mix  
of General Social Housing and Category 1  
over 55's accommodation) across two  
detached blocks [ranging between 3 and 5 storeys]  
, landscaping, communal and private amenity  
space, ancillary cycle and car parking provision,  
and other associated site works - 1 Havelock  
House Havelock Place**

The Planning Manager explained that the application for full planning permission had first been considered by the Committee at its meeting in December, 2024 when the Committee approved the application, subject to conditions, and on the basis that all

**Planning Committee,  
Pre Determination Hearing,  
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104 residential units would be provided as social rented housing, to be secured by a Section 76 planning agreement.

He reminded the Committee that a Pre-Action Protocol letter had been issued in February, 2025, that set out a range of concerns in relation to the decision making process, in that objections from local residents had not been adequately reported to the Committee and the Council's interpretation of planning policy and procedural matters. He reported that the application was again approved by the Committee at its meeting in March, 2025 where the Committee affirmed its decision of 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2025, to approve the application subject to conditions and on the basis that all 104 residential units be provided as social rented housing and that subsequently, the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) issued a holding direction that prevented the Council from determining the application until it was further advised in writing by DfI.

He explained that DfI had released the holding direction on 3rd October, 2025, by way of letter, and advised that the application did not warrant the use of its call-in powers and the Council could continue to determine the application.

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of housing in the location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Community cohesion and good relations;
- Security and design;
- Open space;
- Space standards;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection and climate change;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste management;
- Natural heritage;
- Employability and Skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement;
- Pre-application Community Consultation; and
- Matters raised in representations.

He reported that a further Pre-Action Protocol letter had been received on 9th April, on behalf of a local resident which set out concerns with regard to the Councils' application of Policy HOU5 (affordable housing) and Policy HOU7 (adaptable and

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accessible accommodation) and that officers were satisfied that the issues raised had been considered.

He stated that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. F. McGrath, NIHE, to the meeting, speaking as an objecting statutory consultee.

Ms. McGrath explained that NIHE was committed to working in partnership with the Council, developers, and housing associations to deliver high-quality, sustainable homes that meet the diverse needs of local communities, however, the NIHE could only support the provision of social housing on the Havelock House site on a mixed tenure basis.

She stated that whilst the NIHE acknowledged and respected the decision of the Department for Infrastructure not to call in the application, the Housing Executive strongly believed that the outcome could set an undesirable precedent and could risk worsening existing housing pressures. She added that it was vital that such decisions should reflect the strategic housing need and long-term community impacts.

She stated that the NIHE fully endorsed the original recommendation for a mixed tenure development—comprising 84 social rented units, with the remaining 20 units delivered through another tenure and that this position had been consistently communicated throughout the application process.

Ms. McGrath explained that, as the Strategic Housing Authority for Northern Ireland, NIHE had a statutory responsibility to ensure that housing delivery was balanced, sustainable, and aligned with established policy and stated that the current proposal did not comply with Policy HOU5 of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035, nor with the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing and Housing Mix and that it was a mono-tenure scheme that did not reflect the mixed tenure approach, essential to building inclusive, resilient communities.

She advised the Committee that approving the application in its current form risked setting a concerning precedent that could undermine the integrity of both adopted and emerging Local Development Plans, not only in Belfast, but across other council areas, and could also compromise the implementation of affordable housing policy, which had been designed to promote tenure diversity and long-term sustainability.

She pointed out to Members that the NIHE data had shown that the Ormeau area already had a 35% social housing stock which was significantly higher than the Belfast average of 26%, and that the owner-occupied rate in the area stood at just 20%, compared to a citywide average of 51%.

She stated that the NIHE was not aware of any evidence submitted to substantiate concerns with regard to viability and that it was important to recognise that funding for the Social Housing Development Programme had not yet been fully secured and that

**Planning Committee,  
Pre Determination Hearing,  
Tuesday, 11th November, 2025**

the NIHE had been working closely with the Department for Communities through the monitoring rounds process to identify and secure the additional resources required.

She pointed out that the NIHE was proud to be a lead partner in delivering the Belfast Agenda's commitment to high-quality, sustainable homes and that tenure diversity and innovative housing models were required to address significant housing challenges.

She stated that the NIHE would urge the Committee to uphold the principles of the Local Development Plan and support a tenure mix that reflected the needs of the city and its communities.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. E. Purvis, Donegall Pass Residents Association, and Mr. P. McDonald, Donegall Pass Community Forum, to the meeting, speaking in objection to the application and in representation of local residents.

Mr. Purvis stated that he wished to convey to the Committee the strong opposition from the local community to the proposed development and pointed out that a petition in opposition to the proposal had been signed by 462 local residents.

He stated that two public consultation meetings had been held in January, 2024, but that no further engagement had taken place between the developer and the local community.

He stated that the proposed development potentially breached privacy entitlements under European Human Rights Legislation and was evasive and overlooking to existing traditional one-storey social housing in the adjacent Walnut Street and Vernon Street areas, and was therefore inconsistent with its surroundings.

He referred to a Policy Exchange housing report of January, 2013 which reported that multi-storey apartment blocks created crime, stress, delinquency and social breakdown.

Mr. Purvis provided a breakdown of points raised by the Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group (LORAG) to Clanmil Housing in December, 2024 and asked the Committee to give due regard to the concerns of the last remaining residents of the city centre communities in Belfast.

Mr. McDonald explained that the residents of Dongall Pass were in favour of social and affordable housing, however, the proposal was for purpose-built accommodation for profit.

He stated that the information provided to the Committee was flawed and misleading and he summarised statistics within the report which he felt had been cherry-picked to support the proposal.

He stated that the proposal was 400% larger than the previous building and would be visually intrusive on the landscape, he then quoted health statistics which supported his inferences that being surrounded by tall buildings produced a substantial negative impact on mood.

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He concluded by outlining the following areas of major concern:

- Design and Placemaking Policy DES2;
- Residential impact on local amenities;
- Community cohesion and good relations;
- Transport; and
- Carparking.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. T. Stokes, TSA Planning, Ms. J. Sloan, Clanmil Housing, and Mr. A. Couston, the applicant, to the meeting.

Mr. Stokes highlighted key points he wanted the Committee to consider in addition to the detailed officer presentation. He stated that, following the refusal of a previous proposal from another developer, the applicant had acquired the site with the objective of taking forward a much more realistic and pragmatic scheme in conjunction with Clanmil Housing and had done so with the application before the Committee.

He stated that the proposal had evolved throughout the application process and had taken into account the input from interested parties. He explained that, initially, the suggested housing mix had contained a sizable proportion of one-bed units, however, through active engagement, it was significantly reduced through the design development.

He informed the Committee that the application site was on a prime city centre site on a key transport route and that the proposal represented a housing scheme that would cater for a mix of needs groups.

He stated that the proposal for 104 units within five distinct blocks and set within generous landscaped amenity courtyards for active and passive enjoyment of residents and sensitively addressed the adjacent resident areas through several key design features.

He explained that, in terms of density, the scheme was 142 dwellings per hectare which was lower than the target density as per the Local Development Plan for the area and was a further indication that the scheme had been sensitively designed.

He highlighted the extent of housing need in the area and stated that the applicant's intention to deliver the scheme as 100% social housing and represented an amazing opportunity to redevelop a key brownfield site during a time of chronic housing shortage.

The Chairperson asked the Committee if they had any questions for the speakers who had made representations.

A Member asked Ms. F. McGrath, NIHE, to explain her statement that approval of the proposal would be in breach of Policy HOU5.

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Pre Determination Hearing,  
Tuesday, 11th November, 2025**

Ms. McGrath explained that Policy HOU5 discussed 20% minimal affordable housing and that the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) advised against mono-tenure schemes over 12 units.

The Member clarified, in light of Ms. McGrath's response, that the application was therefore not actually in breach of Policy HOU5.

The Planning Manager clarified that there was no conflict with Policy HOU5 and that the Supplementary Planning Guidance did refer to mono-tenure, stating that large areas of mono-tenure social housing was not deemed to deliver sustainable and balanced communities, however, he informed the Committee that the SPG did state that, in all cases, whether or not a proposal for mono-tenure social housing was deemed to deliver sustainable and balanced communities would be assessed on a case by case basis, and he outlined the assessment factors.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the large number objections from local residents, Mr. Stokes stated that the applicant felt that scheme was an appropriate response to the application site and whilst the views of the local residents was appreciated, the application site was a city centre site and the proposed development fell beneath the target density for the area. He added that the scheme had been sensitively designed, and it was hoped that the future residents would integrate with the local community.

The Chairperson thanked the speakers for their contributions.

Chairperson

# Planning Committee

Tuesday, 11th November, 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;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management);  
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;  
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th October 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November, 2025.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in relation to item 8a- LA04/2024/0626/F, in that she had prior engagement with the developers, and she left the meeting while the item was being considered.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to item 8a – LA04/2024/0626/F, on the basis that he had previously worked with the Housing Association.

Councillors D. Douglas and S. Douglas declared an interest in relation to item 9a - LA04/2025/0556/F and LA04/2025/0557/DCA, in that a family member was an employee of the applicant and they left the meeting whilst the application was being considered.

### Schedule of Meetings for 2026

The Committee noted and agreed the schedule of meetings for 2026.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 11th November, 2025**

**Correspondence – Dfl: Hill Street Pedestrianisation**

The Committee noted the correspondence received.

**Committee Site Visits**

**Pre-emptive Site Visit**

The Committee agreed to undertake a site visit to the following application site:

- LA04/2025/0574/F - Erection of eight storey building comprising seven floors of grade A office accommodation, ground floor retail / business units together with car parking (15 no. spaces), cycle parking and plant areas: and public realm improvements including dedicated drop-off area to front of building - Surface level car park at lands to east of Lanyon Place Station, Mays Meadow.

**Planning Appeals Notified**

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

**Planning Decisions Issued**

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in October, 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**

**Consultation on Planning Fees**

The Planning Manager explained that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) was consulting on its review of planning fees, namely, the proposed introduction of fees for non-material changes and discharges of condition applications.

He reported that DfI was also seeking views on whether any other application types that were currently not charged for, should attract a fee.

He outlined the current and proposed planning fees and asked the Committee for comment ahead of consideration by the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the proposed consultation response and agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that consideration be

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 11th November, 2025**

given to including a proposal for increasing fees for retrospective planning applications to deter development or works being carried out without the necessary permissions in place.

**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 previously considered**

**LA04/2024/0626/F - Erection of 104no. social rented residential units (comprising a mix of General Social Housing and Category 1 over 55's accommodation) across two detached blocks [ranging between 3 and 5 storeys], landscaping, communal and private amenity space, ancillary cycle and car parking provision, and other associated site works - 1 Havelock House Havelock Place**

Following a suggestion by the Planning Manager, the Committee agreed that it did not require a summary of the application, having undertaken a detailed presentation at the Pre-Determination Hearing prior to commencement of the meeting.

The Planning Manager stated that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson offered those speakers who had attended the Pre-Determination Hearing, as part of a deputation, an opportunity to add to those representations previously made.

Ms. F. McGrath, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), speaking as an objecting statutory consultant, stated that NIHE support for other mono-tenure housing schemes had been because of ongoing work with the housing associations on those schemes for many years prior to the adoption of the Local Development Plan, however, going forward, any schemes of a similar scale, the NIHE would be of the view that it would need to be a mixed tenure scheme.

Mr. T. Stokes, TSA Planning, speaking as an agent acting on behalf of the applicant, stated that he was content with the information provided and was happy to answer any questions from Members of the Committee.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the possibility of the applicant amending the application to a mixed tenure scheme, following the advice of NIHE, he stated that the application before Committee was for a scheme that would provide 100% social housing which had been assessed by planning officers on that basis.

Mr. P. McDonald, Donegall Pass Community Forum, speaking on behalf of objecting local residents, stated that south Belfast had the highest percentage of rental accommodation

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in Northern Ireland, inclusive of private rentals and social housing, and the need for affordable housing was not being addressed.

The Planning Manager, in response to a request from a Member, clarified that Policy HOU5 and the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) stated that there might be issues of concern with regard to mono-tenure schemes which did not generally represent sustainable and balanced communities, and it advised that, with regard to larger schemes of 12 units or more, the Council should have regard to a number of factors when considering whether or not a mono-tenure was appropriate. He added that the SPG did not state that larger schemes could not be mono-tenure and would be assessed on a case by case basis.

**Proposal 1**

Moved by Councillor Magee,  
Seconded by Councillor McCann,

“That the Committee approves the officers’ recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement to require all 104 apartments to be delivered as social housing and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they are not substantive.”

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

The Chairperson advised the Committee that, as the proposal to approve the application had fallen, dissenting Members were required to propose to refuse the application and state the grounds on which the refusal would be based.

**Proposal 2**

Moved by Councillor T. Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor Harvey,

“That the Committee refuses to grant planning permission on the basis that the scheme was a mono-tenure scheme consisting of 100% social housing and contrary to the Supplementary Planning Guidance and NIHE advice.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Alderman McCullough,  
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

“That the Committee refuse the application on the basis of a lack of community engagement, insufficient amenity and parking, and due to the size, scale and overshadowing of the proposal.”

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

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The proposal, standing in the name of Councillor T. Brooks was put to the Committee and on a vote, four Members voted for the proposal and fifteen against and it was declared lost.

**Proposal 3**

Moved by Councillor McCann,  
Seconded by Councillor Magee,

“That the Committee approves the officers’ recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement to require all 104 apartments to be delivered as social housing and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they are not substantive.”

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

**LA04/2024/1576/F - Demolition of existing buildings  
at no. 733 & 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**

The Planning Manager explained that the application had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in October, subject to conditions and that Condition 24 required the submission and approval of details of wastewater disposal prior to commencement of development.

He reported that NI Water had indicated, prior to the Committee’s decision, that it believed that a solution could be found to address its objection relating to insufficient network capacity in order to accommodate the proposal, however, the applicant’s subsequent Wastewater Impact Assessment had been rejected by NI Water. The applicant was therefore unable to accept Condition 24 and the application was before the Committee for reconsideration.

He summarised the application for the Committee and provided visuals of the site location plan and proposed site layout and elevations.

He stated that NI Water, prior to the meeting of the Committee in October, had advised that, subject to further engagement with the developer, there was a solution to its objection through stormwater off-setting, as the storm water currently discharged into the combined sewer overflow network and the developer had proposed to separate foul and surface water drainage.

He explained that the applicant’s Wastewater Impact Assessment, submitted following the decision of the Committee at its meeting in October, had been rejected by NI Water due to

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the high polluting nature of assets with the potential to pollute the environment and that there were no tactical solutions available. NI Water further advised that a more in-depth review of the network was required which the applicant believed could take several months to complete.

He reported that NI Water had been asked to provide its updated position following the submission of the Wastewater Impact Assessment but had not yet responded.

The Planning Manager outlined the following points in the applicant's case for the removal of Condition 24:

- The previous advice given to the Council by NI Water which indicated a solution could be found;
- The planning history of the site;
- The proposal was for 100% social housing scheme in north Belfast where there was a significant unmet social housing need;
- The technical report from the applicant's engineer demonstrating the stormwater off-setting proposal; and
- Updated technical drainage drawing from the applicant.

He reported that a further objection had been received from a resident to the rear of the application site which referred to the applicant's drainage proposals having been rejected by NI Water and raised concern that insufficient drainage could lead to consequential flooding of their property, and that previous objections from local residents had not been addressed

He stated that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the agents, acting on behalf of the applicant, were in attendance and available to answer any questions that Members might have.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the advice received from Shared Environmental Services, Mr. B. Owens, S4S Group, explained that the applicant had worked with NI Water on a wastewater solution to produce the current proposal with Radius Housing with the intention of withdrawing the renewal of an existing extant permission to which NI Water had not objected and that the current application was in line with what was presented by a senior NI Water official following the meeting of the Planning Committee in October.

Following a question from a Member, the Planning Manager advised the Committee that if it was minded to remove Condition 24, the Committee would be required to replace it with an alternative condition to facilitate appropriate stormwater offsetting, as proposed by the applicant.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Magee,  
Seconded by Councillor Brennan,

"That the Committee grants planning permission with the removal of Condition 24, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and

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delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, to explore, in consultation with the applicant, a condition that would provide for a sufficient drainage solution, and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they are not substantive.”

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

“That the Committee grants planning permission with, subject to conditions, including Condition 24, and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they are not substantive.”

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

Accordingly, the proposal standing in the name of Councillor Magee was put to the Committee and passed.

**New Planning Applications**

**LA04/2025/0556/F & LA04/2025/0557/DCA –  
Proposed change of use from restaurant,  
public house, 2 no retail units and office use  
to public house, restaurant, hotel and 1.no  
retail unit with an additional 2no.storeys  
associated with the hotel use, and all external  
façade alterations. Demolition to include; ground  
floor facades remodelling, removal of window  
detailing to upper floors, removal and replacement  
of windows and doors, creation of new door and  
window openings, removal of roof to rear return  
and internal wall and roof demolition to accommodate  
reconfiguration of buildings and associated  
development for proposed change of use –  
Lands at no’s 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including  
8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry)**

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

- Principle of proposal;
- Design and placemaking;
- Built heritage;
- Impact on amenity;
- Access and transport;

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- Climate change;
- Environmental protection;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste storage; and
- Natural heritage.

She stated that the proposed extension was considered to be subservient to the existing building and was sympathetic to both the character of the Conservation Area and the setting of the surrounding listed buildings. She added that it was considered that the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be enhanced.

She reported that HED, NIEA and Environmental Health had responded advising no objections, subject to conditions and that Internal Conservation Advice had raised concerns, which had been addressed within the report. She added that NI Water had recommended refusal due to waste-water network capacity issues which would be addressed by way of condition.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and all relevant material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee granted planning permission and Conservation Area Consent, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, to deal with the outstanding consultation responses from SES, DFI Roads and DFI Rivers, and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Chairperson

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

Monday, 10th November, 2025

### MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Harvey (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Bell, Brennan, R. Brooks,  
Canavan, de Faoite, Ferguson, McCabe,  
McCann, McCormick, McDowell, McKay,  
Ó Néill, Verner and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;  
Mr. R. McConnell, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast  
Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.);  
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate  
Services, ICC Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.  
(BWUH Ltd.); and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Flynn and Bower.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, extended congratulations to Councillor Bower on the recent birth of her daughter.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 15th 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.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **Schedule of Meetings 2026**

The Committee approved its schedule of meetings for 2026, as set out below:

- Monday 19th January at 5.15 pm;
- Monday 16th March at 5.15 pm;
- Monday 15th June at 5.15 pm;
- Monday 10th August at 5.15 pm; and

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- Monday 16th November at 5.15 pm.

**Request to Present - International Association  
of Convention Centres (AIPC)**

The Committee considered a request for the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC) Chief Executive, Sven Bossu, to present to the Committee on the convention centre industry and provide an independent view in relation to the International Convention Centre (ICC) Belfast.

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from the Chief Executive of the AIPC at its next meeting.

**Restricted Item**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

**2025/26 Quarter 2 Performance Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.'s (BWUH Ltd.) performance for Quarter 2, 2025/26, which covered the period 1st June to 30th September, 2025.

The Chief Executive, BWUH Ltd., reported that Quarter 2 had been quiet, as expected, and provided a snapshot overview in relation to occupancy levels, events and delegates. He outlined the financial figures for Quarter 2, which included a breakdown of BWUH Ltd.'s overall actual income and expenditure against targets.

He then presented the Committee with a business update, which included detail on BWUH Ltd.'s work in relation to:

- Multi-year deals and site visits;
- VIP memberships;
- Commercial revenue;
- Entertainment events;
- Conferences;

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**  
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- Grassroots and legacy initiatives;
- Local community engagement;
- Sustainability;
- Apprenticeships; and
- Event curation.

The Chief Executive also provided the Committee with an update in relation to the Oireachtas na Samhna 2025, which was recently held in the city across multiple venues including the Waterfront Hall, ICC Belfast and the Ulster Hall. He reported that the events held across the three venues were a huge success and highlighted the positive feedback received from attendees and the event organisers. The Chief Executive advised that the Oireachtas na Samhna would help prepare each of the venues for hosting events as part of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026.

During discussion, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services, BWUH Ltd., answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to BWUH Ltd.'s financial performance for Quarter 2, community engagement and BWUH Ltd.'s preparation for the upcoming Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026.

In response to Members' questions in relation to targets, the Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services, advised that the report contained updated targets for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30, following agreement of the Business Plan by the BWUH Ltd. Board. The Strategic Director of Place and Economy advised that further clarity would be provided in relation to conference and delegate targets for 2025/26.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update provided on BWUH Ltd.'s performance for Quarter 2 of 2025/26.

Chairperson

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## Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 6th November, 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, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas,  
Ferguson, Groogan, Lyons, Magee,  
McCann, Meenehan, Murray and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate); and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

#### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Collins and Groogan.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 9th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **Schedule of Meetings 2026**

The Committee agreed to meet on the following dates and times in 2026:

- Thursday 15th January at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 12th February at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 12th March at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 16th April at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 14th May at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 11th June at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 13th August at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 10th September at 5.15 pm;
- Thursday 8th October at 5.15 pm;

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- Thursday 12th November at 5.15 pm; and
- Thursday 10th December at 5.15 pm.

**Restricted Item**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 six 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 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.

**Single Use of Plastics - Policy and Implementation Action Plan**

(Mr. C. Quinn, Customer Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that officers had been working in partnership with the contractor Eunomia to develop an initial Single Use Plastic (SUP) Policy and Action Plan for the Council. That process had been undertaken by analysing data to identify the actions that would form the basis of the Policy and Action Plan, which had been overseen by a corporate working group in accordance with best practice.

The Customer Development Manager outlined the principal aspects of the Policy and Action Plan and indicated that the specific actions were aimed at reducing the use of single use plastic across the organisation. The Action Plan, he explained, had been structured in accordance with three strategic themes, that being, to reduce the Council’s reliance on single use plastic; the objective of working with suppliers and contractors to address the issue; and how the Council could work with the community in this regard. In addition, he pointed out, each of the strategic themes contained ten core objectives with associated actions to measure the effectiveness of the Policy and Action Plan.

The Committee commended officers on the work which they had undertaken and, after further discussion, approved the Single Use Plastic Policy and Action Plan and:

- noted the progress of the cross-departmental working group, with the initial focus on Council use/working with suppliers and contractors;
- noted that future workstreams would require action to be undertaken by event organisers and organisations using Council facilities;

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- noted that consideration would be given to undertaking a public consultation exercise in advance of the implementation of future workstreams;
- noted the indicative cost implications in progressing the SUP Action Plan in the 2025/26 financial year; and
- noted that the working group had submitted a response to DAERA's Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland, which had been placed on the agenda for the Committee's approval.

**Notice of Motion Update - Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th June, it had deferred consideration of a report relating to the above-mentioned motion to enable a further report to be submitted that would outline the cost implications to the Council should the motion be adopted in full. The further report mentioned above is set out hereunder:

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

- 1.1 To respond to the Notice of Motion referred to this Committee by the Standards and Business Committee on 22nd May 2025 in relation to Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and the request to investigate cost implications made at Climate and City Resilience Committee on 12th June 2025.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure or fall within the remit of a particular Committee must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.**

**At this time Members are asked to note the outline consideration of the Notice of Motion and potential cost implications.**

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 The following Motion was referred to the Climate and City Resilience Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2025**

**Motion: Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**

**“Recognising Northern Ireland’s commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, (and Belfast City Council’s previous motion**

recognising a climate emergency), Belfast City Council will endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, an initiative to secure an international and legally binding treaty to phase out fossil fuels and will write to the Northern Ireland Executive as well as the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero urging them to support this initiative.”

Proposer: Councillor Anthony Flynn  
Secunder: Councillor Brian Smyth

The Motion calls upon the Council to endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and to write to the Northern Ireland Executive, the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero urging them to support this initiative.

**3.2 Consideration of the Notice of Motion**

The Notice of Motion to endorse the Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuel Treaty has been considered by officers within the Climate team in terms of its effectiveness and potential cost implications.

**3.3** Endorsing the Treaty means supporting the three central commitments: that being, ending the expansion of fossil fuel production; setting and equitable path to phase out existing coal, oil and gas; and ensuring a just transition for communities and workers affected by the energy shift.

**3.4** Under The treaty, as a developed economy, Northern Ireland will be expected to phase out faster than less developed countries. The commitments in the Treaty compliment the obligations in the Paris Agreement. As of October 2025, sixteen countries and more than 130 cities (including 8 UK cities) and sub-national governments have officially endorsed the Treaty. The UK and Ireland have not officially endorsed the Treaty.

**3.5** The Notice of Motion is aligned with the Council’s ambition of achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050. The ending of fossil fuel expansion is considered to be highly beneficial for the global climate and efforts made by nations, governments and organisations to decarbonise their activities with renewable technologies at the forefront of moving toward net zero. Aside from their impact on climate change, there are other significant co-benefits associated with a move away from fossil fuels as their continued use contributes significantly to air pollution and associated human health impacts, water quality (from spills,

wastewater discharges etc), land degradation, and the displacement of communities.

**3.6 Implications of endorsing the Treaty**

Endorsing the Treaty signals support for a global phase-out of fossil fuel production and a just energy transition. The implications are mostly political, reputational and advocacy based rather than legal and financial.

**3.7** Politically, endorsement places Belfast among other cities advocating for rapid climate action and builds pressure for the UK government to endorse the Treaty. It also signals to local communities the Council's commitment to social justice and an equitable transition. Endorsement would increase global visibility and help to build momentum for the phase out of fossil fuels.

**3.8 Potential financial and legal implications**

As the Council's existing climate ambitions align with the Treaty no additional Council resources, reporting or legal changes will be required. There are therefore no direct financial or legal obligations as the Treaty aligns with ongoing local climate ambitions. However, there could be higher costs for BCC and City residents as the NI economy transitions away from fossil fuels. Members should be aware that there are cost implications to decarbonisation, both to Council operations, especially where fossil fuels are still used by the Council's fleet and to heat its buildings, and at city level as transport and heating are increasingly electrified.

There may be some indirect cost implications for the Council through staff time for writing additional briefing notes, stakeholder engagement, communications or policy alignment checks. There may also be cost implications for bringing the wording or principles of the treaty into the procurement, strategies or plans of the Council.

**3.9 Next steps if Council decides to endorse the Treaty**

Endorsing the Treaty is essentially an advocacy gesture and there is no requirement to take any further action after endorsement. However, members may wish to consider the following possible actions:

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- **Publish the endorsement and make a public announcement through the BCC website and local media.**
- **Use the financial planning and rate setting processes as an opportunity to review and strengthen commitment to climate-related policies and those plans which prioritise fossil fuel phase out and adoption of renewable energy (e.g. Sustainable Procurement, decarbonisation of BCC estate and operations, installation of EV chargers, Bolder Vision etc.)**
- **Advocate for an increase in the level of financial support available to enable vulnerable households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and transition to low carbon heating solutions.**
- **Support renewable energy projects and community energy schemes including an assessment of the suitability of Council assets to host renewable energy and community energy schemes.**

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

**4.1 There is no immediate resource or financial ask of the Council.**

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications**

**5.1 There are no immediate implications regarding equality, good relations and rural needs aside to say that the cost of transitioning from fossil fuels will be disproportionately more challenging for low-income households.**

The Committee noted that there would be no immediate cost implications to the Council in endorsing the motion.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the motion, subject to the following:

- that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the indicative costs that might be incurred by the Council and the City in transitioning away from fossil fuel usage;
- that a letter be forwarded also to the Republic of Ireland's Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment, Mr. D. O'Brien, seeking his support for the Council's stance on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty; and
- that the Council would be mindful of the infrastructural and transitional needs of all communities in achieving net zero by 2050.

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**Consultation on Setting of Northern  
Ireland's Carbon Budget (2038/42)**

The Committee endorsed a response to the above-mentioned consultation exercise. The response can be accessed within the [attached link](#).

Chairperson

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## Standards and Business Committee

Thursday, 20th November, 2025

### MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer);  
Aldermen Lawlor and McCullough; and  
Councillors Bower, Bradley, Carson, de Faoite,  
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Long, Lyons,  
Magee, McCallin, McCormick, McDonough-Brown,  
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  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

There were no apologies.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd October, 2025, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd November, 2025.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to item 2(d) 'Notice of Motion – Definition of Victim' in that his wife was the Minister for Justice and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

### Schedule of Meetings 2026

The Committee approved its schedule of meetings for 2026, as set out below, and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5:15 pm.

- Tuesday 6th January;
- Tuesday 27th January;
- Tuesday 24th February;
- Tuesday 24th March;
- Tuesday 28th April;
- Tuesday 26th May;

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- Tuesday 23rd June;
- Tuesday 25th August;
- Tuesday 22nd September;
- Tuesday 27th October; and
- Tuesday 24h November.

**Motions**

The Committee considered the following four motions which had been received in advance of the Council's meeting on 1st December:

**Notice of Motion - Provision of Sustainable Burial Options**

The Committee noted that the motion, proposed by Councillor Abernethy and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks, would be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee.

**Notice of Motion - Priority for our Local Traders**

The Committee noted that the motion, proposed by Councillor Doran and seconded by Alderman McCoubrey, would be referred, in the first instance, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant**

The Committee noted that the above-mentioned motion had been withdrawn from the agenda.

**Notice of Motion - Definition of Victim**

**Proposal**

Moved by the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer),  
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown

That the Committee rejects the motion.

**Amendment**

Moved by Alderman McCullough,  
Seconded by Councillor McDowell,

That the Committee agrees to refer the motion to the Council meeting for debate, with no restrictions on the number of speakers.

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

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The original proposal, standing in the name of the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) and seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown, was thereupon put to the Committee. On a vote, thirteen Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to reject the motion.

Chairperson

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