

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



**Belfast  
City Council**

29th April 2025

## **MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The above-named Committee will meet in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Thursday, 1st May, 2025 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

## **AGENDA:**

1. **Summons**
2. **Apologies**
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Minutes of the Council** (Pages 1 - 12)
5. **Official Announcements**

- (a) Request to Address the Council - Cairde Palestine

A request to address the Council has been received from representatives of Cairde Palestine (Friends of Palestine) in relation to the motion re: 'U.S. War Planes Out of Belfast' (agenda item 13a refers).

- (b) Request to Address the Council - Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association

A request to address the Council has been received from Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association regarding the minute within the People and Communities Committee of 4th April under the heading 'Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens' (page numbers C573 to C574 refer).

(c) Request to Address the Council - Retail NI

A request to address the Council has been received from Retail NI regarding the minute within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th April under the heading 'Pilot Sunday City Animation Project' (page numbers B1069 to B1070 refer).

6. **Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee** (Pages 13 - 56)
7. **Minutes of the People and Communities Committee** (Pages 57 - 78)
8. **Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee** (Pages 79 - 104)
9. **Minutes of the Licensing Committee** (Pages 105 - 122)
10. **Minutes of the Planning Committee** (Pages 123 - 134)
11. **Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience** (Pages 135 - 142)
12. **Minutes of Standards and Business Committee** (Pages 143 - 146)
13. **Notice of Motion**
  - (a) U.S. War Planes Out of Belfast (Pages 147 - 148)

## **Council**

### **MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

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

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

### **Summons**

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) and Alderman McCoubrey.

### **Declarations of Interest**

#### **Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Councillors Bradley, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and R-M Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item "Minutes of the Shared City Partnership" in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS, in that they were employed by organisations which had applied for funding.

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, Duffy, Groogan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item "Social Supermarket Fund", in that they were employed by, or were associated with, organisations which had received, or applied for, funding.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item "Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25", in that she was employed by an organisation which had applied for funding.

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Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the item “Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25”, in that his partner was employed by Save the Children.

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to the item “Support for businesses affected by the August riots”, in that his wife was Justice Minister.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in relation to items “Update on Hardship Fund” and “Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund”, in that she worked for an organisation which had applied for funding.

As the above-mentioned matters did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Brennan further declared an interest in relation to the item “Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments” in that she was employed by an organisation which had applied for funding and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

**Minutes of the People and  
Communities Committee**

Aldermen Copeland, McCullough and Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brennan, M. Donnelly, Doran, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item “Funding Awards for 2025/26 (Capacity Building and Revenue Grants and Generalist Advice)”, in that they were associated with organisations which were in receipt of revenue grants.

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, Duffy, Groogan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets”, in that they were employed by, or were associated with, organisations which had received, or applied, for funding.

Councillors McKeown and Smyth declared an interest in relation to the item “Pitch Partnership Agreements”, in that they had children who played for Rosario Football Club.

As the above-mentioned matters did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

**Minutes of the City Growth and  
Regeneration Committee**

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to the item “Vacant to Vibrant Scheme”, in that he worked for an organisation that had applied to the scheme. As the item did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, he was not required to leave the meeting.

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Tuesday, 1st April, 2025**

**Notice of Motion - Paramilitary Transition  
Scoping and Engagement Exercise**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item “Notice of Motion – Paramilitary Transition Scoping and Engagement Exercise”, in that she worked for an organisation in receipt of funding from the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC).

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to the same item, in that his wife was Justice Minister.

The Members left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

**Minutes of the Council**

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 3rd March, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct subject to the amendment under the heading “Requests to Address the Council – Action to Address Empty Homes” to reflect that Mr. S. Doherty, rather than Mr. S. Gibson, had addressed the Council as a representative of the Community Action Tenants Union.

**Call In – Newington FC Football Fund Application**

The Council was provided with a copy of the legal opinion which was obtained in relation to the call-in of the Council decision of 3rd March, 2025, regarding an application to the Football Fund on behalf of Newington Football Club.

The Council noted:

- the contents of the legal opinion;
- that the call-in was not considered to have merit on community impact grounds; and
- that officers had made an application to the Football Fund on a protective basis suitably caveated as such.

**Official Announcements**

The Lord Mayor informed the Council that Mr. Stephen Hewitt, Building Control, had recently retired after thirty-five years’ service with the Council, and wished him well in his retirement.

The Lord Mayor highlighted the recent announcement that Belfast would be the host city for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026, the world’s biggest celebration of Irish music and culture, which would take place from 2nd August, 2026 to 9th August, 2026.

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Alderman McCullough referred to a recent statement from Belfast Pride in respect of the Belfast Pride parade.

Alderman Lawlor commemorated the 125th anniversary of the Irish Guards and paid tribute to all Irish Guards past and present.

Councillor R. Brooks welcomed the installation of communication boards in the Council playground on Grampian Avenue, Titanic, and highlighted that further boards would be installed in playgrounds located within the Taughmonagh and Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Parks. She stated that the installation of communication boards was a positive step in creating accessible and inclusive spaces for all children.

Councillor Bunting highlighted that April was World Autism Acceptance month and praised the work of Belvoir ASD Family Support Group in helping to support children and their families.

Councillor Flynn highlighted International Transgender Day of Visibility, which took place on 31st March, 2025.

Councillor Collins welcomed the installation of a new pedestrian crossing at Upper Dunmurry Lane. He also expressed his solidarity with members of the 'Mothers Against Genocide' group who had been arrested following a protest outside the Dáil Éireann, Leinster House, Dublin, on Sunday 30th March, 2025.

**Condolences**

The Lord Mayor expressed his sorrow, on behalf of the Council, on the recent passing of staff member Mr. Edward (Ted) Long, City and Neighbourhood Services Department, who had served with the Council for thirty-five years.

The Lord Mayor extended his condolences, on behalf of the Council, to staff member Ms. Sandra Robinson, Office of the Lord Mayor, on the recent passing of her mother.

Councillor Bunting extended sympathy, on behalf of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), to all those that had lost loved ones in the past month.

Councillor M. Donnelly offered his condolences to former Councillor Marie Cush and her family, following the recent passing of her husband.

**Congratulations**

The Lord Mayor congratulated, together with Councillor Groogan, the Council's Belfast 2024 and Digital Services teams on receiving their recent Northern Ireland Local Government Association Awards (NILGA) awards. The Digital Services team were awarded the "Best Use of Data and Technology Award" for their bespoke Customer Relationship Management (CRM) digital solution for Regional Enterprise, and the Belfast 2024 Team were awarded the "Engaging Communities Award" for their Belfast 2024 Programme.

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The Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated Braniel Primary School on their recent success in winning Division Two of the South Belfast Primary School Football League. He extended his thanks to Mr. Tomes of Holy Rosary Primary School for his work in organising the league and ensuring its success.

The Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated Ormiston (DEA) constituent, Elijah Saunders, on his selection to the Irish Ice Hockey Association's U13 Saints team, who competed in the SEDMHA ice hockey tournament in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Councillor Kelly congratulated Linfield Football Club on its recent success in winning the Northern Ireland Football League Premiership title for the fifty-seventh time in the club's history. The Lord Mayor acceded to a request from Councillor Kelly that he send a letter of congratulations to Linfield Football Club.

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated the Ulster Tower Street Community Development Association on being awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

Councillor Ferguson congratulated Clonduff Football Club and Cregagh Wanderers Football Club on reaching the final of the Northern Amateur Football League Cochrane Corry Cup and wished both clubs well in the final.

**Change of Membership –  
Committee Membership and Position of Responsibility**

**Committee Membership**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Doherty with Councillor de Faoite on the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee.

The Council noted the change.

**Position of Responsibility –  
North Belfast District Policing  
and Community Safety Partnership**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Green Party indicating that it wished to vacate its position on the North Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

In accordance with the d'Hondt order of choices, the vacancy had been offered to the next Party on the list, namely, the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV). Accordingly, it was reported that Councillor McDowell would be appointed for the remainder of the Council term.

The Council noted the appointment.

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**Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 27th and 31st January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Summer Community Diversionary  
Programme Assessments**

The Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments', be amended to include that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in respect of the 2025 Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum**

At the request of Councillor Long, the Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum', be amended to provide that a report be submitted to a special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the closure of Connswater Shopping Centre, and that delegated authority be granted to the Committee in respect of support for businesses and charities affected by the closure.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the above-mentioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st March, 2025, were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of People and Communities Committee**

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

**Amendment**

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

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March 2025, under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs –



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Proposed Mechanism for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South and Wellington Park Terrace', be rejected and, accordingly the Council agrees that no further surveys be carried out on the aforementioned streets and the applications be closed.

At the request of Councillor Long, the proposer and seconder agreed to the following amendment:

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March 2025, under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Proposed Mechanism for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South and Wellington Park Terrace', be rejected and, accordingly the Council agrees that the applications are deferred.

The proposal, as amended, standing in the name of Councillor R. Brooks was put to the Council and on a recorded vote, twenty-six Members voted for the amendment and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

For (26)	Against (31)
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, I. McLaughlin, Nelson and Verner.	Councillors, Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brennan, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, O'Neill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

**Dual Language Street Signs – Proposed Mechanism  
for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue,  
Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South  
and Wellington Park Terrace**

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that, in addition to the decision under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Proposed Mechanism for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South and Wellington Park Terrace', a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that would explore options in respect of funding the provision of communication boards for Council playgrounds in 2025/26.

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**Council Allotment Provision**

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Council Allotment Provision', be amended to provide that Beechvale Farm be included in the review of allotment provision.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March, 2025, were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

Moved by Councillor Nelson,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Groogan

That the decision of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th March, 2025 under the heading "International Engagement Approach", in relation to New York–New Belfast event, be referred back to the Committee to enable further consideration.

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

**Adoption of Minutes**

The minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th March, 2025, were approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Licensing Committee**

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,  
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

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**Minutes of Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Carson,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 18th March, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee**

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,  
Seconded by Councillor Verner, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee of 10th March, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee**

Moved by Councillor R-M Donnelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Long, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 13th March, 2025, be approved and adopted

**Minutes of Standards and Business Committee**

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,  
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 25th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

**Notice of Motion**

**Paramilitary Transition Scoping and  
Engagement Exercise**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Nelson,  
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

“That this Council categorically opposes proposals from the UK and Irish Governments to appoint an independent expert to scope out a new process of engagement seeking to bring about paramilitary group

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transitions to disbandment; agrees that, more than 25 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there is no place for paramilitarism in our society, and that such groups should either immediately disband or face a robust law enforcement approach like other organised crime gangs; welcomes the work of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime; and agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach calling on them to abandon plans for this paramilitary transition scoping and engagement exercise and reinvest the associated funding in law enforcement approaches to paramilitary activity."

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Canavan,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Nelson and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks be amended as follows:

**Delete:** 'categorically opposes' and **insert:** 'notes the'. **Leave out all after:** 'Paramilitarism and Organised Crime;' **and insert:** 'and calls on the UK and Irish Governments to set out a short and strictly limited timeline for the scoping and engagement exercise.'

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

"That this Council notes the proposals from the UK and Irish Governments to appoint an independent expert to scope out a new process of engagement seeking to bring about paramilitary group transitions to disbandment; agrees that, more than 25 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there is no place for paramilitarism in our society, and that such groups should either immediately disband or face a robust law enforcement approach like other organised crime gangs; welcomes the work of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime; and calls on the UK and Irish Governments to set out a short and strictly limited timeline for the scoping and engagement exercise."

The amendment was put to the Council and on a vote, thirty-seven Members voted for the amendment, fourteen against, one no vote and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the amendment was put to the Council as the substantive motion and was passed.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson

# **Council**

## **SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL**

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,  
on Thursday, 24th April, 2025 at 5.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

### **Summons**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Copeland.

### **Tribute to Pope Francis**

The Council stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect on the death of Pope Francis.

Members of each of the Parties present then paid tribute to Pope Francis and, on behalf of their Party Groups and constituents, extended sympathies to all those who mourned his passing.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson

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## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th April, 2025

### MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and  
Alderman McCoubrey;  
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,  
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,  
Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,  
R. McLaughlin, Nelson and Whyte.
- In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director  
of Corporate Services;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood  
Services;  
Ms. S. Murtagh, Portfolio Manager, Property and Projects;  
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and  
Development;  
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;  
Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, Belfast Stories; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance  
Manager.

### **Apologies**

An apology was received from Councillor Groogan.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st April.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in item 7(a) Minutes of the Shared City Partnership in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

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Councillor Groogan declared an interest in item 2(c) Update on Hardship Fund, in that she worked for or was associated with an organisation which had applied for funding and left the meeting while this item was under consideration.

Councillor Long declared an interest in item 2(b) Support for businesses affected by the August riots, in that his wife was Justice Minister, and he left the meeting while these items were under discussion.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in items 2(c) Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments and 5(b) Asset Management – St. John Vianney Youth Club: Lease arrangement, in that she worked for or was associated with organisation which had applied for funding or involved in the lease and left the meeting while these items were under consideration.

Councillors Beattie and Councillor Duffy declared an interest in item 2(b) Social Supermarket Fund in that they were associated with organisations which applied for funding and left the meeting while this item was under discussion.

**Restricted Items**

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the 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.

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.

**Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments**

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the assessments undertaken by officers and seeking approval to award funding for the 2025-27 Summer Community Diversionary Programme.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the Committee agrees that funding be awarded as follows:



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	<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Awarded</b>
1	Féile an Phobail	£100,000.00	8th August Diversiory Dance Night	£126,277.00
2	Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG)	£75,000.00	Féile na hAbhann	£75,000.00
3	Ashton Community Trust	£98,723.00	Féile an Tuaiscirt 2025	£98,723.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£273,723.00</b>		<b>£300,000.00</b>

	<b>Organisation Name</b>	<b>Amount Requested</b>	<b>Programme Title</b>	<b>Awarded</b>
1	Twaddell and Woodvale Residents' Association	£100,000.00	Woodvale Festival	<b>£98,383.89</b>
2	Lower Oldpark Community Assoc (LOCA)	£26,957.00	Connected Communities: Together We Thrive	<b>£20,433.41</b>
3	EastSide Partnership	£73,676.80	EASTival	<b>£55,847.01</b>
4	C.H.A.R.T.E.R for Northern Ireland (Charter NI)	£65,684.00	Increasing Cultural Confidence and Tolerance Amongst Young People 2025- 2027	<b>£49,788.47</b>
5	Greater Village Regeneration Trust (GVRT)	£99,666.52	South Belfast Cultural Consortium	<b>£75,547.22</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£395,634.32</b>		<b>£300,000.00</b>

On a vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and none against, with five no votes and it was declared carried.

The Committee further:

- Noted that any funding awarded was subject to further engagement with groups and analysis of projects and associated budgets in line with Council due diligence procedures, this would include any outstanding financial and monitoring returns with regards to other Council funding; and that funding would not be awarded until approved contracts were issued and signed;
- Approved permission for those organisations which had been successful to use Belfast Parks for their event or activity and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to ensure the following:
  - Negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor,

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including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' & take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:

- The completion of an appropriate management plan;
- The promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- The promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service, including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence.

It was agreed also:

1. That the delivery of the programme in 2025 would be for 1 year;
2. To review the criteria in November 2025 for delivery of future programmes; and
3. Engagement be undertaken with Dr Jonny Byrne for further review of the programme.

**Social Supermarket Fund 2025/26**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the open call for applications and asked the Members to consider potential options for allocation funding awards to applicants.

**Proposal**

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,  
Seconded by Councillor Brennan,

That the Committee agrees:

- not to proceed with the current process but to reissue the applications for the social supermarket programme;
- to review the criteria beforehand and ensure that there was weighting added for organisations within areas of multiple deprivation;
- to add into the criteria that those organisations applying must be able to demonstrate that they have experience of managing a scheme of this nature providing support to those struggling financially as a result of the cost-of-living crisis;
- as best we can, we will seek to ensure there is not proliferation of services close together; and that the scoring criteria be presented to party group leaders in advance of the applications opening or a special meeting of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee if needed.

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**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Maghie,  
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to adopt option 1, that is, to provide 100% of the required budget to fund the 18 top scoring projects.

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

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor Garrett was put to the meeting, with ten Members voting for and six against and it was declared carried.

In addition, it was agreed that, in the interim period, bridging funding be provided to those groups which had been in receipt of funding in the previous financial year.

**Support for businesses affected  
by August disorder – update**

The Committee considered the information on options for direct support to the businesses set out in the report and agreed an approved approach as suggested at paragraph 3.9 as a basis for engagement with eligible businesses.

**Medium Term Financial Plan  
Update 2025/26 – 2028/29**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which provided an update on the work underway to implement a robust approach to longer term financial planning in compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

The Committee noted the work required in three areas to support the implementation of a 4 year MTFP as part of the 2026/27 rate setting process:

**Governance**

- Update Scheme of Delegation
- Update Financial Regulations 2015
- Agree to a workshop in May to consider the following:
  - Consultancy Spend Analysis
  - Format of Meetings
  - Initial Workplan
  - Timetable for 2026/27 rate setting

**Corporate and Financial Planning**

- Review and integrate corporate and financial planning cycles
- Review existing and emerging priorities

**Investment Planning**

- Undertake capital thematic sessions with Members

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- Approve 8-10 year capital programme
- Establish funding models to deliver costed strategies

**Organisational Reviews and Change Programme**

The Committee noted:

- the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change portfolio and timescales going forward.

And approved:

- An increase to the City and Neighbourhood Services establishment headcount.

**Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers**

The Committee noted a report which provided information on the number of employees on temporary contracts, secondments and the number of agency assignees and which outlined the steps being undertaken to reduce the reliance on temporary contracts and agency assignees and approved the creation of 10 peripatetic General Operative posts.

**Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition – Update**

The Committee noted the update:

- on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, including the emerging proposed asks from Government; and
- on forthcoming engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, Irish Government in Dublin, and the Northern Ireland Executive, as part of a comprehensive engagement plan aimed at securing additional funding and powers to unlock regeneration and development in Belfast.

**Bonfire Update**

The Committee considered a report in relation to proposals for interventions at a number of bonfire sites.

Moved by Councillor Bunting  
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the Committee agrees to the following interventions at 3 Council sites:

1. Inverary / Tommy Patton Park – Sand Base - **£350**
2. Flora Street – Request for Fencing - **£568 + VAT**
3. Benmore Drive - Request for Fencing - **£1850 + VAT**

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4. Pitt Park – Request for Sand and Fencing — **£1050** + VAT (Sand £500 + Fencing £550)

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

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 37 (a), the Committee had delegated authority for decisions in relation to the Bonfire Management Programme where the Chief Executive, or in her/his absence the Deputy Chief Executive, determine that a decision which would otherwise be taken under an officer's delegated authority requires political direction.

**Belfast Stories Outline Business Case Update**

The Committee considered a report, the purpose of which was to:

- Update the Committee on the Belfast Stories programme and progress 2025;
- Provide an overview of the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC);
- Provide the Committee with a timeline for the OBC submission and approval; and
- Seek approval to submit the OBC in May 2025 to the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) for £65m funding.

The Committee:

- noted the programme and design progress to April 2025;
- noted the overview of the Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC), 5 case model as set out in this report and the timeline for the OBC submission and approval;
- agreed to submit the Outline Business Case (OBC) to the Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD); and
- agreed that a further report and presentation on the RIBA stage 2 concept designs and consultation findings will be brought to SPR in June 2025.

**Animation activity to support  
the Open Championship 2025**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable further information to be provided.

**Extended Cultural Support Programme**

The Committee considered a report in relation to proposed arrangements for 2025/2026 in relation to the extended cultural programme which was established following a request from members in relation how they might address under representation of certain groups within previous rounds of funding.

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The Committee:

- noted that £100,000 was approved for events to mark the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st February 2025. This incorporated a proposed programme of events to be organised by the Council for 8th May 2025, together with the associated costs of up to £30,000 and establishment of a small grant scheme up to the value of £70,000 for local communities to organise street parties to mark VE day.
- Approved up to £300,000 towards an Extended Cultural Programme and to develop and issue Funding Agreements for 2025/26 as detailed below in relation to:

The Committee also approved the retention of underspends from 2024/2025 for both Ulster Scots Agency and Pride due to operational challenges faced by those organisations and to extend the timeframes for the 2024/25 funding agreements.

It was further agreed that officers work with Belfast Pride and Visit Belfast to produce an assessment of the impact of Belfast Pride on the city, not limited to but including the economic impact in terms of spend in the arts, culture, hospitality and accommodation, and the promotion of the city as a safe, welcoming and inclusive place to live, work, study and visit.

**IFA DCMS Grassroots Funding Applications**

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to a special meeting.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Council Banking Arrangements/  
Ethical procurement framework**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members in relation to the work to date on the Council's Ethical Procurement Policy and, pursuant to the decision of SP&R meeting of 21st February 2025, provide details in relation to the Council's banking arrangements.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to:**

- note the update in relation to the work on the Council's Ethical Procurement Policy;

- consider the proposed policy approach;
- agree that an interim Ethical Procurement Policy is developed pending a review of the Social Value Policy to include wider ethical procurement considerations; and
- agree that the Council goes out to tender for a new banking provider pending adoption of the interim Ethical Procurement Policy.

3.0 **Main report**

3.1 **Key Issues**

**Ethical Procurement Policy**

At its meeting on 23rd February 2024, SP&R Committee agreed that a report would be brought to Committee on the following Notice of Motion:

*“This Council deplores those corporations that profit from protracted armed conflict and systematic violations of human rights, particularly in the context of Israel’s continuing brutal assault on the people of Gaza and escalating settler terrorism in the West Bank, Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and other conflicts around the world. With this motion, the Council encourages companies to meet their obligations to avoid contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and to prevent or mitigate human rights abuses linked to their operations.*

*The Council is aware of the crucial role of local authorities and their public procurement procedures in ensuring respect for human rights by companies, as well as their obligations under widely accepted business and human rights norms – as laid down in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the Global Sullivan Principles (1999) – to promote respect for human rights by companies with which they do business.*

*The Council affirms that every endeavour is made to ensure that councils tender processes are consistent with the above principles, including under the Fourth Geneva convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary*

*international humanitarian law, prohibiting the importation or sale of goods or services originating in occupied territories.*

*This Council resolves to adopt a rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy (EPP) that takes fully into account existing obligations and standards. The EPP will incorporate widely accepted and precisely formulated international standards and explain clearly how the policy will be implemented. The primary aim of the EPP is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged, observed and respected at all stages of the procurement process.”*

- 3.2 Members will be aware that the phrase ‘ethical procurement’ covers a wide range of issues relating to the ethical and sustainability goals of an organisation. It is effectively a company’s Code of Conduct which sets out the principles which guide a company to proactively eliminate unethical practices throughout its supply chain.
- 3.3 The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights outlines the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, including due diligence in supply chains, ensuring ethical procurement by preventing human rights abuses and providing remedies when violations occur.
- 3.4 Therefore, whilst the Notice of Motion specifically refers to human rights abuses in conflict, ethical procurement is a much wider concept and its intrinsically linked to the Council’s existing procurement policies (procurement policy and social value procurement policy) and how suppliers are already tested in relation to organisational behaviours.
- 3.5 Members will also note that there are significant legal constraints in relation to matters which can be taken into account when undertaking procurement exercises. For example, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 precludes councils from taking into account what it defines as non-commercial matters. These include:
- a) the terms and conditions of employment by contractors;



- b) any involvement of the business activities or interests of contractors with irrelevant fields of Government policy;
- c) the country or territory of origin of supplies to, or the location in any country or territory of the business activities or interests of, contractors;
- d) any political, industrial or sectarian affiliations or interests of contractors or their directors, partners or employees;
- e) financial support or lack of financial support by contractors for any institution to or from which the council gives or withholds support.

- 3.6 The Procurement Act 2023 ‘the Act’ includes mandatory and discretionary exclusionary grounds for suppliers who have been convicted of a range of offences including money laundering, fraud, corporate homicide and human trafficking and other similar type dishonesty offences. The Council has procurement procedures in place to ensure these exclusion grounds are considered for all relevant procurements in accordance with our obligations under the Act.

#### Next Steps

- 3.7 Given the other broader matters which relate to ethical procurement are already included in existing procurement policies, it is proposed that a review of the social value procurement policy is undertaken to potentially expand on current ethical procurement provisions i.e. human rights. Such a review would be timely as it would also allow for the policy to be updated in light of the developing low carbon procurement policy.
- 3.8 This review would ensure an aligned ‘sustainable procurement policy’ is put in place setting out clear expectations of standards for suppliers regarding ethical, social value and environmental/ low carbon considerations, having regard to the international guidance set out in this report, and how this might be factored into tender evaluations.
- 3.9 A paper will be presented to the Social Policy Working Group in May 2025 setting out in more detail what this review will entail, potential timescales etc. Pending that overarching piece of work, officers will bring forward proposals for a potential interim policy in the coming months should it appear that this would address members concerns quicker than the

overall review. This will be considered by the Social Policy Working Group in the first instance, the minutes of which are reported to SP&R Committee.

Committee is asked to consider whether it is content for this approach.

**Banking arrangements**

- 3.10 Having banked with Northern Bank/Danske bank for numerous years, to achieve value for money, and in line with procurement guidance, the council issued a tender for its banking services in March 2011. However, due to the Minimum Financial Rating required, none of the tenderers were successful.
- 3.11 Having reviewed the specification, the tender was re-issued in June 2011. Following the conclusion of the tender process the contract was awarded to Barclays Bank with a contract start date of January 2012, a contract length of 3+1+1 and a go live date of 20th February 2012.
- 3.12 The contract was then retendered in 2016, again in line with procurement guidance, and was awarded to Barclays, with a start date of January 2017 and a contract length of 3+1+1.
- 3.13 During the financial year 2021/22 the council was in the process of tendering for a new financial system. Due to the potential impact of changing banks during the implementation of a new finance system, a 2-year extension of contract for banking services awarded to Barclays Bank was approved at SP&R in January 2022.
- 3.14 It was also noted at that time that Banking services were exempt under the Public Contracts Regulations and therefore not a procurement activity but continued use of Barclays Bank for banking services was required whilst the new financial system was being implemented. The Procurement Act 2023 has narrowed the exemption for banking services so the Council can no longer avail of this exemption.
- 3.15 Members approval will be sought in May SP&R contracts report to go out to tender for a new banking provider whilst the ethical procurement considerations are developed as described above. As part of that tender process, officers will consider how Council can include additional appropriate

requirements in relation to ethical procurement, particularly around the international guidance discussed in this report and the issue of gross human rights violations.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

**4.1** There are no implications associated with this report.

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

**5.1** There are no implications associated with this report. Any draft policy will be subject to equality and rural needs screening.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that consideration be given to removing the ethical framework from the scoring matrix and applying it as essential criteria.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Consultation Domestic rating measures**

The Committee approved the Council's response to the Department of Finance's consultation on the Domestic rating measures.

**Smart Belfast: City Innovation programme**

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration the undernoted report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1** To seek approval to accept a Contract for Funding to deliver Phase 2 of Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme; and to update on a number of inclusive innovation opportunities.

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1** The Committee is asked to:

- 1.** Approve that Belfast City Council's acceptance of a £1.3 million contract for funding from the Dept for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) to deliver Phase 2 of Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme and to note the related work strands.

2. Note Belfast City Council's proposed contribution to a bid by Newcastle University's i30 team to the Economic and Social Research Council to deliver a £85,000 programme to inform approaches to inclusive innovation by City Deal and similar innovation investments.

**3.0 Main report**

- 3.1 The Smart Belfast Urban Innovation programme encourages collaboration between government, industry, SMEs, academia, and communities. The aim is to harness digital innovation to address public policy challenges, while at the same time encouraging greater investment in innovation to stimulate economic growth. The approach seeks to leverage significant third-party funding.

**3.2 Contract for Funding to deliver Phase 2 of the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme**

The Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) has offered a Contract for Funding to Belfast City Council for £1.3 million to deliver phase two of the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions programme.

- 3.3 Members will recall that under Phase 1, Belfast City Council was awarded £3.8m to deliver a twelve-month programme. The majority of this funding was issued by Belfast City Council as grants to third-party organisations to deliver a range of 5G projects which were showcased at City Hall on 5 March. In addition, £50,880 was contracted via the G-Cloud public procurement framework for grant design services, while a further £401,400 was procured via the NI Dept of Finance's Public Shared Services Network to deliver programme management and Enablement Services for Phase 1.

- 3.4 For Phase 2 a revised approach has been accepted by DSIT that will include:

- Funding for a Belfast City Council programme manager a 12 month period.
- £650,000 for 'Public Services innovation hub' based at Cecil Ward / 9 Adelaide which will deliver a small number of 5G-enabled projects focused on issues such as dynamic occupancy management, energy management, environmental monitoring, etc. Work is underway to identify those projects most likely to contribute to Council's efficiency programme.

- A £300,000 grant scheme for Belfast region organisations (including SMEs and local councils) to deliver their own 5G-enabled use cases. The City Innovation Office are also engaging with Belfast Region City Deal partners to consider leveraging additional funding from the Digital pillar to increase this total.
- The DSIT funding will also fund 'Solution Designer' services for organisations and companies to identify project proposals for the grant scheme.

- 3.5 Members are asked to approve acceptance of the Contract for Funding. Following signing of the contract the programme will run through to 31 March 2026.

**Towards an Inclusive Innovation approach**

- 3.6 In January, in collaboration with the Innovation Commissioner, Adrian Johnston, the City Innovation Office hosted a workshop for Members and city stakeholders to consider approaches to inclusive innovation. Following that event CIO has continued to engage with local and national experts and practitioners in order to inform future Council, City Deal and ICB approaches to inclusion.
- 3.7 The Council has been approached by one of the participating organisations at the conference. 'i30' - a collaboration between Newcastle University, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Oslo and EAFIT University. i30 has been particularly interested in how 'City Deal'-type investments have supported inclusive innovation ambitions in cities in the UK and elsewhere. Their work is helping Newcastle City Council to shape its social inclusion strategy, while their work with Pittsburgh is ensuring that that their city's innovation district is having wider social impact.
- 3.8 i30 has submitted a £85,000 proposal to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) that seeks to build on their existing work to deliver a range of tools, policy guidance and practice that can support cities in delivering their inclusive innovation outcomes. i30 is keen for Belfast to be part of this bid and has requested a £2,999 financial contribution to their bid plus officer time from both Belfast City Council and the Innovation Commissioner. Funding for this has been identified in the City Innovation Office budget. Members are asked to note that a decision from ESRC is expected in late April and, if successful, further information on the i30 programme will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.9 Resources for the initiatives have been identified within the existing departmental budgets.**

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

- 3.10 Not at this stage.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**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.

**Horizon Cities@Heart Project**

The Committee was advised that the Council had been approached to work with QUB and Belfast Healthy City to bring forward a joint funding submission to the Horizon Europe and Innovative Health Initiative grant funding call. The intention of the overall €15million funding bid across seven cities (named Cities@Heart) would be to enable work to be undertaken with the WHO Health Cities Network and innovative technology to reduce recognised cardiovascular risk factors (Hypertension, High cholesterol, obesity and inactivity) in order to more effectively manage risk and prevent future cardiovascular events.

Cities@Heart would focus on obesity, hypertension, dyslipidaemia and diabetes as key drivers of cardiovascular disease and poor health. The intention would be to identify effective public health activities which offer potential to scale-up. It would also seek to develop and deploy as well as strategies to leverage engagement and citizen empowerment, raise awareness of cardiovascular disease, effective prevention, early detection and optimal management.

The emerging bid would involve 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.

Together with citizen and industry co-creation, the cities would apply a structured, multi-sector methodology that includes:

- i. city-level approaches to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease;
- ii. a digital ecosystem that would 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

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- iv. sustainability at its core using an implementation framework that could apply across the 1800+ cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.

Cities@Heart would build connections and capacity across our broad array of stakeholders, including citizens, patients, municipalities, healthcare providers, policymakers and industry, and support the next generation of health technology to address critical barriers in cardiovascular disease across Europe. The Members were reminded that addressing health inequalities was a priority set out in the Belfast Agenda. The funding proposal might enable related work to be taken forward at a local level and officers were engaging with QUB, BHC, PHA and BHSCCT to explore opportunities for Belfast.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised the Members that the Council had been asked to be a partner in the submission and the emerging programme of work. Further clarity was being sought on the role of Council in the project, the level of officer involvement, the scale of project funding available to local government and the role of industry partners. Any future request for resources would be subject to the Committee's consideration and agreement.

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that the Council continue to engage with QUB and Belfast Healthy City (BHC) to explore a possible role for the Council in the Cities@Heart project; and noted that any future financial or other implications would be brought back to the Committee for consideration and approval.

**Summer Schemes additional needs**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 To provide information on promotion and assessment of the Summer Scheme for Additional Needs grant and seek approval to award funding to successful applicants.**
- 1.2 The People and Communities committee on 2 February 2025 agreed to offer a grant to enhance provision within the sector and to support participation for those who cannot access any other summer scheme programmes or services during the summer months due to support needs. A fund of £80,000 was agreed with a total amount of £20,000 allocated per area, north, south, east and west Belfast. Strategic Policy and Resources committee of 21 February 2025 agreed an additional £40,000 with £10,000 allocated per area, north, south, east and west Belfast.**
- 1.3 To advise members of the outcome of the open recruitment process and for members to agree upon an allocation model.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note the contents of the report and agree an allocation model for the additional needs summer scheme.

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 A co-ordinated campaign to advertise and promote the grant was launched on 7 March 2025. The information was disseminated widely to community and voluntary contacts, Belfast Health and Social Care and Health Trust locality planning groups, Department of Education Special Educational Needs schools and was also promoted across Belfast City Council website and social media platforms.**

**3.2 53 application forms were issued. 16 were returned with two of the applications failing eligibility checks. Of the 14 applications passed for assessment and moderation, there were five from organisations whose facilities are in South Belfast, four from North Belfast, three from East Belfast and two from West Belfast, although the children which most applicant organisations reside are from across the city. The total amount requested by eligible applicants was £116,249.82 which is within the £120,000 financial limit. The amount requested by providers in some areas exceeds the £30,000 allocation, whilst the amount requested from other areas is less than the £30,000 allocation.**

**Applications received**

**3.3 Table 1 details the amount requested by each organisation and the area where their facility is located, table 2 summarises the amount requested based on where the providers' facilities are located, table 3 summarises the number of children which the funding will support based on where they reside.**

**Table 1.**

<b><u>Provider</u></b>	<b><u>Amount</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>
Arts for all	£5,305	North
Cedar lodge	£11,753.5	North
174 Trust	£18,548.6	North
you 2 me	£2,700	North
Rumbles	£1,100	North



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<b>Fleming Fulton</b>	<b>£19,950</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Sólas</b>	<b>£9,622.25</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Belvoir ASD</b>	<b>£2,245</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Eager Belvoirs Special Olympics</b>	<b>£884</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>SEN space</b>	<b>£16,495.47</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Mitchell House</b>	<b>£3,500</b>	<b>East</b>
<b>Hanwood Down Syndrome football club</b>	<b>£3,900</b>	<b>East</b>
<b>Kids Together Belfast</b>	<b>£9,896</b>	<b>West</b>
<b>Shine</b>	<b>£10,350</b>	<b>West</b>
	<b>£116,249.82</b>	<b>14</b>

**3.4 Table 2.**

<b>Location of provider's facility</b>	<b>Amount requested</b>
<b>North</b>	<b>£39,407.10</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>£49,196.72</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>£7,400.00</b>
<b>West</b>	<b>£20,246.00</b>
	<b>£116,249.82</b>

**3.5 Table 3.**

<b>Location of children's residence</b>	<b>Number of children supported</b>
<b>North</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>277</b>
<b>East</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>West</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>Outside Belfast</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>776</b>

**Assessment**

- 3.6 Officers scored each eligible application against the set criteria as outlined in the guidance notes. Each of the applications was then moderated by another member of staff to ensure that consistency and fair marking had been applied. Once staff were satisfied with the scoring and application of the criteria for the grants, the unit then made recommendations for awards as shown above in table 1.
- 3.7 It is important to note that the diverse range of applicants demonstrates the underlying diversity of needs within the sector. The nature of each proposed project is highly dependent on the specific support needs of their children. Delivery organisations often cite the challenge of accessing appropriately trained and qualified staff during the summer period. Accordingly, delivery is diverse, with differing supervision ratios, levels of specialist/voluntary supervision, numbers of children supported, nature of programming, duration of each session and number of days provided by the schemes evidenced within the applications.

**Next Steps**

- 3.8 Members will note that both North and South Belfast have been oversubscribed and West and East Belfast have been undersubscribed. Members are asked to consider two options for funding of the initiative which are:
1. The amount requested by providers in some areas exceeds the £30,000 allocation, whilst the amount requested from other areas is less than the £30,000 allocation. Members consider moving under-allocated amounts to support programming in over-subscribed areas which will maximise the impact for children with additional needs across the city within the budget envelope.
  2. Members give delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to work with the groups in North and South Belfast to reduce their budget to the maximum of £30,000 each. Members give authority for officers to engage across the area and with the groups who applied in the previous year to see if they have capacity to offer a summer scheme in 2025 to the maximum the area budget of £30,000.
- 3.9 Following approval of the grant awards by committee, organisations will be notified of decisions and sent a letter of offer. An introductory meeting will be held for organisations

which have not previously received funding from Belfast City Council. They will be informed of, and provided support with, the requirements of monitoring and evaluation.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.10 Delivery of this project is within existing financial estimates.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications**

- 3.11 This report proposes funding a range of projects which are designed to support improved outcomes for under-represented groups, specifically children with additional needs living in Belfast.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agree an allocation model for the additional needs summer scheme as set out in option 1 at paragraph 3.8 of the report.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Physical Programme Update**

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

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- **Physical Programme Half Year Update** - Note the overall update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently under construction at 3.1 to 3.4 below and in Appendix 1; and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

- **Capital Programme Movements -**
  - Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles Service – Note that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £470,000.
  - EV Charging Network - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up.
  - Belfast Zoo Health & Safety Works - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up.
  - 35-39 Royal Ave Health & Safety Works - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up.
  - Victoria Park Basketball upgrade; Ormeau Park Basketball upgrade; West Basketball courts; Loughside Changing Facility; Mobile Changing Places; Makaton Boards; Strangford PF Enabling Works; Musgrave Park Sensory Garden; Woodvale Park Sensory Garden - Agree that the projects are added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow business cases and designs to be developed.
  - Belfast Bikes eBikes – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
  - Under the Bridges – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
  - Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme – Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- **Capital Letters of Offer** – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer.
- **Contracts awarded in Q4 2024/25** – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.

### **3.0 Main report**

#### **Key Issues**

#### **Physical Programme Half Year Update**

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of

investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

The Half Year Update below at 3.2 to 3.4 is a brief summary of projects completed as well as a sample of projects currently underway. The reporting pattern is shifting to align with the financial year instead of the calendar year, so this update only covers three months namely January to March 2025 and will be on a six monthly basis again after that.

**3.2 Recently completed projects:**

- **Fleet Replacement Programme 24/25** – prioritised purchase and replacement of older and/ or poor condition vehicles with Resources and Fleet such as forklifts, medium size panel vans, beavertails, mowers, compact sweepers, dropside trucks and others.
- **Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25** – completion of the improvements to pitches at Henry Jones Playing Fields - ball stops and spectator fencing at GAA pitch and Belvoir Activity Centre MUGA.
- **Playground Improvement Programme 24/25** – improvements have been completed at Grampian Avenue playground by CNS.
- **Covered Cycle Stands** – completion of active travel projects bike stands at various locations across the city.
- **Other enhancements to Council assets include** – Customer Focus Programme- Customer Hub at CWB, Duncrue Eurobin Workshop facility, HWRC Service Bay works at Ormeau (Park Road), pitch carpet replacement at LORAG/ Shaftesbury centre.
- **Rory Gallagher statue** – commemorative statue of legendary composer and musician at the side of Ulster Hall.
- **Bredagh GAC container (LIF)** – delivery and installation of container providing storage facilities for East Belfast clubs.
- **Hosford Community Homes Inclusive Hub (Urban Villages)** – refurbishment of a building in ownership of East Belfast Mission at 240 Newtownards Road into a multi-purpose community and good relations space and accommodation units.

**3.3 Physical projects underway:**

- **City Hall Stained Glass Windows** – the new LGBT stained glass window at City Hall is nearing completion and will be installed shortly, with an unveiling being planned for May.
- **Ballysillan Playing Fields (Urban Villages)** - Works are underway on site at this £8.4m partnership project with DfI's Living with Water Programme, DfC and Urban Villages. Completion anticipated by Autumn 2026.
- **Lagan Gateway Greenway (BIF)** – major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections. Phase 2 procurement exercise is nearing completion for works on the Belvoir side. Completion anticipated by Summer 2026.
- **North Foreshore Development Sites Infrastructure Works** – the landfill gas infrastructure contractor has been appointed. Procurement on the foul pumping station is almost complete. NIE works to upgrade the connections to begin this month.
- **Floral Hall Health & Safety Works** – Contractor appointed, and initial investigations complete on a series of immediate health and safety works to stabilise the building. Completion anticipated by Summer 2025.
- **Strand Arts Centre (BIF)** – works are underway on the £6.4m major refurbishment of the art deco cinema building. The centre will provide educational and skills development workshops, arts, and heritage tours. Completion anticipated by Summer 2026.
- **Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre (NRF)** - contractor has been appointed and works are due to begin in May for the new build community and heritage centre at Davitt's GAC.
- **ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (Urban Villages)** – Phase 2 of the project is on site comprising a community café, boxing club, minor halls, community gym and office space. Phase 2 to be completed in Summer 2025.
- **Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub (BIF and Urban Villages)** – work is progressing on the new build development for creative and digital arts entrepreneurs.
- **Titanic People Exhibition (Urban Villages)** – redevelopment of the courtyard/frontage of the existing building at Westbourne Presbyterian Church. Planned completion anticipated in Summer 2025, and launch expected in September 2025.
- **Corporate projects** – a range of capital IT projects via Digital Services to ensure business continuity; Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme, HWRC

and Civic Amenity Sites Containers, and ongoing delivery of Fleet Replacement Programme 25/26 via City & Neighbourhoods Services.

- Developer Contributions – progressing open space projects via CNS.
- Playground Improvement Programme – Michelle Baird and Balfour Avenue playgrounds are due to be completed by May 2025.
- Alleygating Phase 5 – Progress made with the commencement of the installation of Phase 5a. Members agreed in February to proceed with the gating order for Phase 5b, with an estimated completion timeline following the enactment of four to six months.
- Sporting Pitches Investment – final works at Falls Park, Mallusk Playing Fields and Strangford Avenue Playing Fields are nearing completion.

#### 3.4 Physical projects in development:

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

Capital Programme: Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, Belfast Stories, Reservoir Safety Programme, LTP Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Waste Plan projects, St George's Market – New Stalls, Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery, Access to the Hills – Black Mountain/Upper Whiterock Pathway, Glencairn Park/Ligoniel Park Greenway, City Hall – External Christmas Tree, Wilmont House, Historic Cemeteries and Historic Tiled Street Signs, and recently added schemes including City Hall Preservation, Bridges Improvement Programme, Beacon Programme and a range of health and safety projects.

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

#### Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

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

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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>Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles Service</b>	Smaller collection vehicles to improve collection performance in narrow and restricted streets	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £470,000</b>
<b>EV Charging Network</b>	A publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets	<b>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</b>
<b>Belfast Zoo H&amp;S Safety Works</b>	Improvements to animal enclosures and boundary fencing	<b>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</b>
<b>35-39 Royal Ave H&amp;S Works</b>	Urgent works to listed building.	<b>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</b>
<b>Victoria Park Basketball upgrade</b>	Upgrade to existing court	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Ormeau Park Basketball upgrade</b>	Upgrade to existing court	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>West Basketball courts</b>	New facilities at Blacks Road and Páirc Nua Chollan	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Loughside PF Changing Facility</b>	Modular changing and flexible space facility	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Mobile Changing Places</b>	Modular facility for citywide use	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Makaton Boards</b>	Inclusive communications boards in playgrounds	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Strangford PF Enabling Works</b>	Enabling works for active travel container and gate improvements	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Musgrave Park Sensory Garden</b>	Upgrade to sensory garden	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Woodvale Park Sensory Garden</b>	New sensory facility	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Belfast Bikes eBikes</b>	Introduction of Belfast Bikes eBikes	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Under the Bridges</b>	Connectivity, active travel and public realm enhancements under M3 bridges	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b>	Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>



**3.6 Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles Service**

This project was moved to *Stage 2 - Uncommitted* in March 2025. It forms part of the Council's Waste Collection service and seeks to address issues around difficult to access streets via the introduction of smaller refuse collection vehicles. Following a successful trial utilising lease vehicles it is proposed to procure the small vehicles. The business case has now been completed. Members are asked to agree to move the project to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum budget of £470,000.

**3.7 EV Charging Network**

This project was added to the Capital Programme in January 2025 in line with the LEV Strategy. It will deliver a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets, working with a commercial partner. The Climate and City Resilience Committee noted in March that a cross departmental working group is progressing Step 1 of the LEV Strategy which involves assessing the suitability of land assets for this purpose. Options around the operating model, delivery timelines and cost estimates are being developed, with the timeline being heavily dependent on NIE processes. Members are asked to agree that 'EV Charging Network' is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up.

**3.8 Belfast Zoo Health & Safety Works**

A range of health, safety and welfare works are required at the Zoo including improvements to animal enclosures and boundary fencing works. Members are asked to agree that 'Belfast Zoo – Health and Safety Works' is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up.

**3.9 35-39 Royal Avenue Health & Safety Works**

The property at 35-39 Royal Avenue is listed as Grade B2 and the building requires physical intervention, as well as further consideration on the future model. Health and safety works to the roof are required to be brought forward at pace to secure the building's integrity. Members are asked to agree that '35-39 Royal Avenue Health & Safety Works' is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up.

**3.10 *Victoria Park Basketball upgrade; Ormeau Park Basketball upgrade; West Basketball courts; Loughside Changing***

*Facility; Mobile Changing Places; Makaton Boards; Strangford PF Enabling Works; Musgrave Park Sensory Garden; Woodvale Park Sensory Garden*

Members will recall that capital monies were received from UKSPF for existing schemes last financial year, which freed up resources for additional schemes. These schemes, as listed above, have been considered via the AWGs and will target a range of small scale capital schemes focusing on sporting provision and access and inclusion. A further project, 'Historic Cemeteries', is already on the programme and so the scope of that existing scheme will be widened accordingly. Members are asked to agree that these projects are added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow the business cases to be developed.

**3.11 Belfast Bikes eBikes**

Members will recall that in January 2025 it was reported that a satisfactory tender return has been received for a new Belfast Bikes operator and that capital costs can be met via an existing reserve along with either external funding or a growth proposal. Members will now note at Appendix 2 that the funding has been successfully secured from DfI. Members are asked to agree that the 'Belfast Bikes eBikes' project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow the business case to be developed.

**3.12 Under the Bridges**

This project was noted by Members of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in January 2025 and seeks to improve connectivity through high quality active and sustainable travel corridors, enhanced public realm and amenity space under the M3 bridges. Members are asked to agree that the 'Under the Bridges' project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow the business case to be developed.

**3.13 Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme** Design and delivery will be fully funded by DfC and Linen Quarter BID. The project involves the installation of an LED lighting display on the façade of Ulster Hall capable of changing colour similar to City Hall's Illuminate scheme. Members are asked to agree that the 'Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme' is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow the business case to be developed.

**3.14 Capital Letters of Offer**

Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q4 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

**3.15 Contracts Awarded**

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q4 2024/25 at Appendix 3.

**3.16 Financial and Resource Implications**

*Financial Implications* – Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles Service - a maximum of £470,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

*Resource Implications* – Officer time to deliver.

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Assets Report**

(On the advice of the City Solicitor, the Members of the Planning Committee, that is, Councillors Murphy, Brennan, Ferguson, Garrett and Whyte, left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.)

(Councillor Nelson in the Chair.)

The Committee:

- i) Cromac Street Car Park – Licence Renewal**
  - Approved the renewal of a Licence agreement from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to Belfast City Council in relation to the council operated off-street car park at Cromac Street.
- ii) Station Street Car Park – Licence Renewal**
  - Approved the renewal of a Licence agreement from the Department for Communities (DfC) to Belfast City Council in relation to the Council operated off-street car park at Station Street.

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- iii) **The Lighthouse Building, The Gasworks Estate – Proposed change of use from office use to residential use**
  - Agreed to defer the matter to enable further information to be provided.
- iv) **St. John Vianney Youth Club, River Terrace - Lease assignment**
  - Agreed to defer the matter for further information to be provided on a possible licence to occupy.
- v) **Belfast City Centre Festive Lighting Fittings – Agreements with building owners**
  - Approved entering into agreements between Belfast City Council and building owners within the city centre for the purpose of erecting festive lighting fittings. Terms of the agreements are to be agreed by the Estates Management Unit and Legal Services.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

(Councillor Murphy in the Chair.)

**Contracts Update**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions (STAs) in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3);
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4);
- noted the non-procurement expenditure as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 5);
- approved the award of a project to the International Organization for Migration 'IOM' as per Standing Order 56a and as detailed in section 7 of the report; and
- noted the Quarter 4 24/25 update regarding STA and Contracts <£30k Reporting as detailed in section 8 of the report.

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**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>
Specialist vehicle body work repairs	Up to 3 years	£90,000	S Leonard	Specialist vehicle body work repairs that cannot be completed by Fleet Management workshop
Service and maintenance of Bergmann compactors	Up to 3 years	£60,000	S Leonard	Service and maintenance contract required for the 4 Bergmann waste compactors at recycling centres. Specialist service.
Provision of first aid training courses	Up to 3 years	£60,000	N Largey	Provision of first aid training courses for Council staff.
Development and delivery of the Belfast DPCSP's Older Adults Cyber Safety Project (Fully Funded)	Up to 3 years	£60,000	J Girvan	Belfast DPCSPs have identified the need for community-led, technically competent training to improve cyber safety amongst older adults across Belfast.
Implementation and delivery of West Belfast DPCSP's Community Safety Initiative (Fully Funded)	Up to 3 years 6 months	£166,000	D Sales	West Belfast DPCSP wishes to appoint a contractor to deliver a community led community safety initiative (CSI). The initiative must raise awareness of community safety remedies, support community-based organisation to work in partnership to address those issues and enable the resolution of cases.
AR exhibit and all associated equipment (Fully Funded)	Up to 12 months	£85,000	S McNicholl	Develop the Augment the City use case, utilising the existing small cell indoor public 5G connectivity in Belfast City Hall. This project will run for one year under the agreed trial terms and conditions and support model.
Supply of bottled and mains-fed water with dispensers across BCC offices and sites	Up to 2 years	£47,870	N Largey	This is a continuing requirement as kitchens throughout Council buildings need to be refurbished to provide safe

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				drinking water and public access areas need to have a supply of water.
Undertaking work to support the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition	Up to 18 months	£79,240	D Martin	<p>This work covers a number of interrelated strands relating to the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the development of a full Five Part Business Case, Summary Proposition and supporting negotiating principles</li> <li>Support a tri-pronged approach to engagement aimed at UK / Irish Government and NI Executive to unlock funding for regeneration / development activity (in line with similar funding received by other major cities).</li> </ul>
Provision of coordination of services for delivery of Culture Night Belfast for 2025 with the cultural sector (Recommendation approved by Members at City Growth and Regeneration Committee 09/04/25)	Up to 9 months	£150,000	D Martin	<p>Large scale event management to deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme. This includes the event's delivery model, safety and marketing resources appropriate for an event of this scale. The successful appointee will be required to create an independent committee, as referred to in the Governance section of these recommendations and to lay the foundation for 2026.</p>
Supply of fuel cards for purchasing fuel across Greater Belfast Area	Up to 1 year	£250,000	D Sales	<p>Fuel cards are for vehicles that do not fuel up at Duncrue Complex due to the logistics of their daily working location. Fuel cards enable staff to re-fuel their vehicles at designated petrol stations</p>

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				across the greater Belfast area allowing them to fulfil their daily duties.
Public services hub project delivery (fully funded)	Up to 11 months	£650,000	S McNicholl	<p>Belfast 5G Innovation Region is a DSIT-funded programme that requires Belfast City Council, on behalf of Belfast Region, to deliver economic benefits in key industries.</p> <p>A public services hub at Cecil Ward / 9 Adelaide to deliver two or three projects focused on issues dynamic occupancy management in support of hybrid working, energy and building management, environmental monitoring, etc</p>
Technical support for Belfast 5G Innovation Region funding competition (fully funded)	Up to 11 months	£150,000	S McNicholl	<p>Belfast 5G Innovation Region is a DSIT-funded programme that requires Belfast City Council, on behalf of Belfast Region, to deliver economic benefits in key industries.</p> <p>A funding competition and associated support will be delivered as part of this.</p>

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Provision of content management licensing, site hosting and support for all BCC websites	Up to 2 years	£150,000	S McNicholl	Recent upgrades, new site developments as well as integration with a content delivery network partner in the past 12 months, enhancing all aspects of the websites also	Simply Zesty	7

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				means moving at this stage of the website's lifecycles would be prohibitively expensive and come with significant risks associated.  Note - Retrospective 2 month STA also required to cover spend (March/ April 25).		
Supply and delivery of frozen fish for Belfast Zoo	Up to 35 months	£35,000	D Martin	Tender advertised in February 2025 but no bids received. Current contract expired 31/01/25; retrospective spend for 3 months at £3,000 (Feb, March and April 2025).	Elmore Fish	1

**Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Provision of content management licensing, site hosting and support for all BCC websites	Up to 2 months	£18,746	S McNicholl	Retrospective 2 month STA to cover spend (March/ April 25).	Simply Zesty	7
Supply and delivery of frozen fish to Belfast Zoo	Up to 3 months	£3,000	D Martin	Tender advertised in February 2025 but no bids received.	Elmore Fish	1



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				Note – Current contract expired 31/01/25; retrospective spend for 3 months at £3,000 (Feb, March and April 2025).		
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**Table 4: Modification to Contract**

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Stock control and delivery of waste containers (T1799)	Up to 4 years	Additional 2 months and £30,000	D Sales	An extension is required for up to 8 weeks to support the glass collection project rollout to be finished and the tender evaluation for the new contract to be completed and the contract awarded	Avenue Recycling Ltd

**Table 5: Non-Procurement Expenditure**

Title	Duration	Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
NI agreement; proprietary for mapping requirements & planning	Up to 10 years	£804,000	S McNicholl	<p>This is a license agreement with LPS for use of maps for planning etc.</p> <p>This is considered an exempted contract under the Act in line with Schedule 2, section 3 (1) - horizontal arrangement. Legal advice was for this to be approved through STA process and reported to SP&amp;R</p>	Land & Property Services (LPS) NI

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				as 'non procurement spend	
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**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership  
Meeting on 7th April 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 7th April 2025 including:

**Discussion on the Refresh of the Good Relations Strategy  
and Development of a 3-year Action Plan**

- The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of presentation.

**Asylum Dispersal Programme – Update**

- The Partnership noted the contents of the report in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and recommend that SP & R note the contents of the report.

**PEACE IV – Secretariat Update**

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

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

- The Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed that a six-month extension request (to 30 June 2028) be submitted to SEUPB and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report and agree the above recommendation.

**AOB**

- The Good Relations Manager updated the Partnership following receipt of an email detailing an increased level of funding which would enable full programme implementation of Council's Good Relations Action Plan for 2025/2026

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**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 10th April 2025.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
IFA	2 October 2025	<b>McDonalds IFA Grassroots Football Awards –</b> Celebrating the volunteers who help deliver their programmes; reception, dinner, entertainment and awards.  Numbers attending - 200	C	<i>Charge £1250</i>	
Federation for Ulster Local Studies	6 June 2025	50th year Anniversary Celebration – Reception, Dinner, Speeches, entertainment and dancing.  Numbers attending - 320	C	None	Wine and Soft Drinks Reception as <b>significant anniversary</b>
Belfast MET Boxing Academy	14 June 2025	<b>Boxing Reception and Weigh in</b>	A & B	<i>Charge £175 plus private</i>	

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		<p>prior to Belfast MET v Sheffield University Boxing Event- speeches, photocall and tour.</p> <p>Numbers attending - 60</p>		<i>tour charge</i>	
The Corrymeela Community	16 June 2025	<p><b>Launch of PEACEPLUS Interfaith and Belief Project</b> to build, improve and sustain relationships between and within communities of different faiths and beliefs. A reception with speeches, lunch and networking.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 60</p>	D	None	
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust – Family Nurse Partnership	26 June 2025	<p><b>Family Nurse Partnership Graduation Event –</b> celebratory event to recognise achievements of local service users with the Family Nurse Partnership.</p>	C & D	<i>Charge £450</i>	

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		Numbers attending - 150			
Ulster Beekeepers Association	7 July 2026	<b>International Young Beekeepers Closing Ceremony and Award Presentation</b> to celebrate young beekeepers coming to Belfast from 40 different countries. Reception, dinner, entertainment and awards.  Numbers attending – 400	C	None	

**Use of the Cenotaph for the Irish Guards**

The Committee authorised the Irish Guards 125th Anniversary remembrance service at the Cenotaph on 5th September, 2025, subject to the submission of appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed with the event organisers, to include resolving all operational issues and meeting all statutory requirements, including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Disability Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Disability Working Group of 9th April 2025.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City Hall/ City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 14th April 2025.

Chairperson

**B1067**

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# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Monday, 28th April, 2025

## MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting,  
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,  
Groogan, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown,  
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and Nelson.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director  
of Corporate Services;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood  
Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;  
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and  
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance  
Manager.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor Cobain.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Restricted Items**

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the 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.

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

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information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**IFA DCMS Grassroots Funding Applications**

The Committee considered a report seeking Members' views on whether to support applications to the IFA DCMS Grassroots Investment Fund for projects at a number of identified sites at the Hammer Playing Fields, the soccer pitch at Glen Road Heights, Ormeau Park and the Henry Jones Playing Fields; and which noted the constraints identified at the shortlisted sites which would prevent applications at this stage.

After discussion, it was

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

That the Committee agrees not to support any applications to the IFA DCMS Grassroots Investment Fund for projects at any of the sites which had been identified.

On a vote eight Members voted for the proposal and eight against, with one no vote. As there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson cast his second and casting vote for the proposal and it was declared carried.

**Pilot Sunday City Animation Project**

(The Committee agreed that the restriction on the debate on this item could be lifted and the recording published at a later date.)

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to undertake direct engagement on a proposed Sunday Trading Pilot in the city centre to reflect a notice of motion which had been agreed by the Committee in September, 2024.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committee agrees not to proceed with the pilot scheme but instead look at schemes based on the Open Botanic model and/or car free Sundays.

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

**Further Proposal**

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

That the Committee agrees:



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- to note that work was underway to design a proposed pilot city animation project for Sundays during the summer;
- that there is engagement between the BIDS and the Belfast Chamber to discuss the proposal, with discussions also to take place with local shopping centres, the Trade Unions and Translink; and
- to note that in order to facilitate the pilot, this may require a temporary relaxation of enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Shops (NI) Order 1997. Proposals for such arrangements to be included in a subsequent report for consideration.

On a vote, twelve Members voted for the further proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

**Animation Activity to support  
the Open Championship 2025**

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to support a programme of animation and activation aligned to the 153rd Open Championship which was being held at Royal Portrush in July.

After discussion, the Committee agreed not to support the proposals as outlined but that a further report be submitted to the May meeting with a scheme to support the hospitality industry and other businesses, which would encourage footfall into the city and a possible animation programme.

**Standing Order 14 - Submission of minutes to the Council**

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

Chairperson

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## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 8th April, 2025

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);  
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley,  
Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Doherty, M. Donnelly,  
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie,  
Maskey, McKeown, I. McLaughlin and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and  
Neighbourhood Services;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Mr. S. Leonard, Operational Director of Resources,  
Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene;  
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building  
Control; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

There were no apologies.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April, subject to the amendment of the minute under the heading 'Applications for Dual Language Street Signs' to provide that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the feasibility of funding the instalment of communication boards within the Council parks and play areas in 2025/26. In addition, the minute under the heading 'Council Allotment Provision' was amended to provide that Beechvale Farm be included within the sites to be considered within a review of the Council's future allotment provision.

### Declarations of Interest

Regarding item 5 (g) 'Integrated Advice Partnership Fund', Councillors M. Donnelly and N. Bradley declared interests in that they worked for the organisations which had been referenced within the report. In respect of item 5 (j) Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in that he was a member of the committee of the Denmark Street Community Centre, which had been referenced within the report. Councillor McKeown reported an interest in item 5 (c) 'Installation of 'Sharps' Bin', in that his employer was referenced within the report.

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

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following two 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 two items as due to the nature of the matters 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 Committee was advised that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any associated discussion were to be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information could be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Requests for the Use of Botanic Gardens**

The Committee considered two applications which had been received for the hosting of events in Botanic Gardens in June and July, 2025. The first request had been submitted by CRD Live, seeking to host the ‘Botanic Summer Sessions’, which would consist of three music concerts on 26th, 27th and 28th of June. The second request had been received from JKS for a ‘Fire and Food BBQ Festival’ from 17th until 27th of July.

Discussion ensued in respect of the applications and a Member suggested, given the lateness of the receipt of the requests, coupled with issues raised relating to the ability of the Council to oversee a comprehensive due diligence exercise, that it would be prudent to refuse the applications. A further Member pointed out that any due diligence process would only commence once approval had been granted and the extent of that exercise, as outlined within the report, was comprehensive and robust.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor McKeown,

That the Committee agrees not to grant permission for the hosting of the two events given the lateness of the receipt of the applications and concerns relating to the ability of the Council to undertake a comprehensive due diligence exercise regarding the ability of the applicants to deliver the events.

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

Accordingly, the Committee granted authority for the hosting of the two events and delegated authority to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to oversee

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a robust due diligence exercise, which would include financial due diligence, to ensure that the applicants met with all of the necessary stipulations regarding community consultation, health and safety factors, licencing and contractual obligations.

The Committee noted that, if deemed necessary, the Strategic Director would exercise his delegated authority to prevent the events from proceeding should the applicants fail to meet with any of the obligations set out within the report

**Dilapidated and Ruinous  
Buildings on Arterial Routes**

Further to its decision of 4th February, the Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the above-mentioned matter, which included an update on the survey of dilapidated buildings on arterial routes and work ongoing to address dilapidation.

**Motions Referred From Council  
or Raised at Committee**

**Notice of Motion: 'Dogs in Kennels  
Transfer of Ownership'**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd March, had considered a notice of motion, which was moved by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Verner, entitled: 'Dogs in Kennels – Transfer of Ownership'. That motion related to the Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 and stated that the powers contained within the legislation were 'unnecessarily cruel' in that it had deemed it as an offence to rehome so-called XL Bully dogs. The Council rejected the motion and passed the following amendment as the substantive motion:

"This Council recognises that public safety is of utmost importance and that any dog, regardless of breed or type, may display aggressive behaviour. It is also essential to ensure that animal welfare is not compromised. The restrictions on rehoming outlined in The Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order 2024 is now in place, and its implementation should be assessed particularly regarding outcomes for public safety and animal welfare. A balanced and evidence-based approach is necessary to ensure that both public safety and animal welfare concerns are addressed effectively. Like any new legislation there is an imperative to consider its outcomes. Therefore, this Council will write to the DAERA Minister requesting an assessment of the impact of these restrictions to date."

The Committee noted the contents of a response which had been received on 31st March from the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in respect of the above-mentioned matter.

**Reading Materials for Refugee Children**

Further to its decision of 4th February, 2024, when, at the request of Councillor Bower, the Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting to examine

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the feasibility of the Council providing reading materials to refugee children, the Committee considered a report in this regard. It was reported that officers had consulted with two direct service providers, namely, The Book Trust and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust's Family Help Clinic, both of whom provided support to refugee families.

Accordingly, it was recommended that authority be granted to enter into a formalised agreement with the aforementioned organisations to deliver appropriate reading materials, at a cost not to exceed £2,000.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

**Request to Rename Glenbryn Playpark**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 6th December, 2022, it had considered a motion entitled, 'Corey Jack Aughey Memorial Park' which had been proposed by the former Councillor Pankhurst and seconded by the then Councillor McCullough. The motion had called upon the Council to rename Glenbryn Playpark as the 'Corey Jack Aughey Memorial Park' in memory of Corey Jack Aughey, who had died tragically in Spain in June, 2022. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed to adopt the motion, in principle, subject to a further report being submitted which would consider whether the renaming of the park would be within Council policy.

The Committee was informed that, in the absence of an agreed policy for the renaming of parks, amenities and open spaces, it could be deemed reasonable for Members to exercise discretion and approve the request. Such a decision would be in accordance with recent decisions taken regarding the naming of The Lagan Gateway Bridge and The Ruby Murray Village Green.

The Committee agreed to rename Glenbryn Play Park as 'Corey Jack Aughey Memorial Park' and noted that work to install an associated memorial bench within the park was ongoing.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**Strategic Cemeteries and  
Crematorium Working Group**

The Committee considered and approved the minutes meeting of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 2nd April, and adopted the recommendations within the associated report, that being, to grant approval to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to erect an additional seven headstone markers; and to undertake repair work across the Council's cemeteries to restore 41 headstones and monuments which had been damaged as a result of Storm Éowyn.

**Operational Issues**

**Stadium Community Benefits Initiative  
Update and Work Programme 2025/26**

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(Mr. P. McGrattan, Leisure Development Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report, together with several appendices, which contained performance statistics for 2024/25 and forward work plans for 2025/26 for the Irish Football Foundation and the Gaelic Athletic Association in respect of their participation in the initiative. In addition, the Committee was provided with an overview of an outcomes-based accountability report, which had indicated that there had been a 100% positive feedback received from participants who had partaken in the initiative.

The Committee noted the progress achieved in the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative and approved the initial work programme for 2025/26 as set out.

**Mary Peters Track - Future  
Management Arrangements**

The Committee considered a report which provided an overview of a stakeholders' engagement exercise which had been conducted on the future management options for the Mary Peters Track.

The Operational Director outlined the principal findings of the exercise and reminded the Committee that the Council had a long-standing Facilities Management Agreement with Athletics Northern Ireland (ANI), which was due to end in March, 2026. He pointed out that the current agreement incurred an annual cost of £160,000 and it was suggested that it would be prudent for officers to enter into preliminary discussions with both ANI and Greenwich Leisure Limited to explore several options for the future management of the track. Once that exercise had been completed, he added, a detailed report, based on the outcomes of the discussions, would be presented to the Committee for consideration.

The Committee agreed to adopt Option 1, as outlined within the report, and authorised officers to undertake a pre-market engagement exercise, as outlined, to gauge interest in a future facility management agreement, with a view to either awarding a new arrangement, similar to the one currently operated; or another option that would explore alternative management arrangements.

In addition, the Committee approved the next steps and timeline regarding the future management procurement process.

**Installation of 'Sharps' Bin**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, 2022, had adopted a motion, which had been moved by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor McCusker, agreeing, amongst other things, that the Council would commit to work with relevant partners, including the Public Health Agency, to explore the feasibility of installing needle/drug waste bins (i.e., 'sharps' bins) within the city centre. As such, the Committee was informed that officers had reviewed data across the city centre and two sites had been identified for consideration, i.e., the Council carpark in Donegall Street or the carpark in Corporation Square.

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With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Smyth addressed the Committee. He expressed frustration that Writers' Square had not been considered as an appropriate location, given the extent of the problem within that vicinity. He thanked officers for the work which had been undertaken and suggested that the Committee might consider locating the bin within the carpark in Little Donegall Street as the best option available.

It was moved by Councillor Flynn, seconded by Councillor Maghie, and agreed that the 'sharps' bin be located within the Council-owned carpark in Little Donegall Street.

Arising from discussion, it was agreed that consideration be given to examining best practice methods in the management of 'sharps' bins in other cities, such as Glasgow or Dublin. It was agreed also that an invitation to present to a future meeting in the matter be extended to representatives of the Public Health Agency.

**Static Park Wardens Pilot Scheme**

The Committee was provided with an update on the ongoing Static Park Warden Pilot Scheme, which had been approved at the meeting held on 12th September, 2023. The Members were reminded that the scheme had been introduced as a measure to reduce levels of antisocial behaviour at a number of sites, including the Falls Park, the Dunville Park, the Páirc Nua Chollann and the Woodvale Park.

It was reported that, since 8th October, 2024, when the last report had been considered, there had been a decrease in the recorded instances of antisocial behaviour at three of the aforementioned sites, with a slight increase reported at the Woodvale Park. It was noted that a review and evaluation of the Static Park Wardens Pilot Scheme would be undertaken in conjunction with an overall review of the Park Warden Service.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved a final extension to the pilot scheme and noted that a further report in respect of a revised staffing model would be considered on the completion of the review process.

**Cave Hill Mountain Bike Trail**

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from representatives of the Cavehill Mountainbikers Club seeking permission to establish a 'feeder trail' extension to the existing 'middle trail' within the country park.

It was explained that the proposal, if approved, would formalise the use of an unused woodland trail at the site and help reduce the number cyclists using the main pathways within the estate. It was reported that a pre-assessment had identified no environmental or planning constraints associated with the proposal.

The Committee acceded to the request, subject to an appropriate addendum being incorporated within the existing memorandum of understanding between the Council and the Cavehill Mountainbikers Club.



**Closed Bin Lid Policy / Removal of Liners**

(Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform members of two operational issues which have Health and Safety implications and to seek approval for operational changes / policy enforcement to ensure the Health and Safety of Waste Collection Operatives as they perform their collection duties. The report was discussed at PGLCF on 27th March 2025, and officers were requested to bring this report to the next People and Communities Committee.

These issues centre round

- 1.** The practice of some households of attaching large bin liners to general domestic (black) bins and the safety requirement to prevent their use
- 2.** The overfilling of bins and the subsequent adaptation / modification of bin lifters on the backs of vehicles following a fatality in mainland UK and the subsequent coroner's findings and recommendations.

Whilst necessary both changes have the potential to increase disrupt bin collections and the report also provides details as to how the service plans to mitigate against any potential disruption caused.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1** Members are asked to note the contents of this report and agree to the next steps as outlined in paragraph 3.29.

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1** In January 2014, the Council adopted its 'Waste and Recycling Collection Operation Policy' which covered the policies and procedures concerning the collection of Household Waste. For relevance, in relation to overfilled bins and unsafe bins, section 2.31 states:

'The council may reject for collection, waste and recycling receptacles if the following reasons exist:

- If the bin is too heavy due to, for example, it contains heavy waste such as construction / DIY / soil etc;
- If the bin contains hazardous or other waste material deemed to pose a risk under health and safety;
- If the wrong receptacle has been presented for collection;
- If unapproved multiple bins are presented (point 2.10);
- If the wrong materials have been put into any receptacle (point 2.29);
- *If the receptacle appears to be damaged or is otherwise in an unfit state to be emptied safely;*
- If the receptacle is not compatible with the council's waste collection vehicle;
- If the receptacle contains electrical appliances / items (WEEE). (These should be disposed of through the council's bulky household waste collections, detailed in Section 3 of this policy or at the nearest recycling centre.)
- *If the bin lid is not fully closed and could cause a health and safety problem;*
- If the bin has no lid/damage to wheels, body or axle
- Domestic clinical waste'

#### Domestic Bin Liners – Background

- 3.2 Belfast City Council has an operational protocol, in alignment with the contamination policy, confirming the non-collection of comingled compostable (brown bins) and comingled dry recyclable (blue) bins, which are presented with bin liners. However, this protocol does not currently apply to residual (black) bins and as a consequence there has been a year-on-year increase in the use of bin liners in black bins across the city. It is believed that in the areas with the greatest occurrence, the bin liners are supplied and fitted by companies that provide a black bin cleaning service and examples of bin liners used are illustrated in the pictures below.
- 3.3 It has been recognised by operations that the use of these bin liners had the potential to snag on equipment and bin lifters on occasion and this had a risk of dislodging the bin from the bin lifter as it was being lowered from the collection vehicle. Risk assessments advised operators to stand in safety zones behind vehicles when emptying bins.
- 3.4 Recently a black bin detached from the lifting clamp, injuring an operative. The bin was lined with a liner tied around the clamping edge of the bin. The investigation concluded that the liner between the clamp and the bin contributed to the bin slipping out of the clamp.

3.5 There are currently several serious Health and Safety issues arising from the use of bin liners including:

- Bin liners can impact the lifting gripping force resulting in the bin detaching and falling, placing staff and the public at risk.
- Bin liner usage is not considered in any waste collections risk assessment.
- Bin liners can become entangled in the lifting mechanism causing an unsafe overhead load during collection. This presents a safety risk to the operative to remove the liner.

3.6 In addition, General waste (black) bins often contain sanitary waste, pads, dressings and disposed nappies, along with dog faeces. Instances of needles have also been reported by staff. On review it has been established that bin liners contribute to the splashing/spillage of putrid substances and liquids onto staff and onto the street as the content of the liners are not fully emptied into the collection vehicle and can become entangled with the bin lifter mechanism.

3.7 Waste Collection management are currently dealing with staff impacted by waste materials falling from the bins and liners onto their persons. Putrid liquids, debris, glass, sanitary waste and surgical needles have all been reported.

3.8 In order to clear the snagging of the bin liner, operators have to manually disentangle the bin liner from the lifting mechanism. Although there are Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) in place to allow this to happen, it is not best practice to have this situation occur in the first place as it still exposes the operator to any remaining waste within the liner. Given the accidents that have occurred, and the risks posed to operatives it is felt that removing this risk completely is the correct option.

3.9 Waste Collections Operations have discussed the matter with Health and Safety colleagues. Departmental Health and Safety has conducted some comparisons with other Councils as to their approach to bin liners. They have advised:

*'Bin liners have increasingly been raised as a safety concern across Northern Ireland. The liners have the potential to get caught on lifters or caused bin to detach for lifters which have resulted in a number to incidents and injuries to our operatives. The council has a duty of care to prevent injury to our staff, given that we are aware of the safety issues involve with these liners it would be prudent to put in place measures to eliminate this potential risk to our staff.'*

*Other Councils eg LCCC, ABC, CC&G, Mid & East Antrim and F&O all have put steps in place whereby bins are not collected if there is a bin liner attached to the bin.*

*Failure for us to act on this could result in further incidents/significant injury to our operatives which we could have prevented, therefore we would be liable for any claim or prosecution in light of this.'*

#### **Scale of the issue**

- 3.10 Resources and Fleet, through the Departmental Performance and Improvement Unit, commissioned a survey in August / September 2024 to ascertain the size and spread of the issue of bin liners (alongside overfilled bins detailed below)
- 3.11 The exercise covered a total of 6195 bins<sup>1</sup> across selected routes covering all areas of the city. It was found that a range, from 0% up to almost 33% of presented bins, on surveyed domestic black bin routes, had bins lined with single use plastic bin liners. Overall, a total of 6.6% of presented bins surveyed were lined. The survey would indicate that the issue of lined bins may be concentrated in areas in the West and the North of the City.

#### **Impact upon Bin Cleaning companies**

- 3.12 With the exception of prohibiting the fitting of a bin liner this measure will have no other impact upon Bin cleaning businesses. It does not prevent them from cleaning the bin. It will only prohibit the fitting of the plastic liner.

#### **Background to the Issue of Raised Bin Lids**

- 3.13 Operational crews have been raising for some time the issue of overfilled bins as a both a safety reason and a reason for non or missed collections. As per the Collections Policy mentioned above, section 2.31 states a valid reason for rejection of collection to be

- *If the bin lid is not fully closed and could cause a health and safety problem*

Until now Waste Collections worked in a pragmatic way in that if an individual bin was open slightly then crews would be expected

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<sup>1</sup> The sample size will give a confidence level of 99% with a 2% margin of error

to collect. However, in effect this was running contrary to Council Policy.

**3.14 Fatality in Coventry 2023 and the subsequent findings from the Coroner's report.**

However, unfortunate events have resulted in major safety issues that have a direct impact on the collection or otherwise of bins with open lids.

**3.15 In Coventry in 2022 there was a fatality as a result of the operator being caught by the bin lifter and lifted into the back of the collection vehicle and crushed. As part of the coroner's findings, it was stated that the bin lifter mechanism, under certain circumstances, allowed bin lifts to be raised without differentiating what the bin lifter was actually lifting, causing the operator to be lifted into the back of the Refuse Collection Vehicle and subsequently crushed.**

**3.16 As part of the response and actions following the fatality referenced above, it has been made clear by the Vehicle and Bin Lift Manufacturer (Terberg / Dennis Eagle), that the practice of emptying bins with open lids runs contrary to the Operator's Training Procedure supplied by the Vehicle and Bin Lift Manufacturer, which states as follows**

- *Always ensure that the lids of wheeled bins are closed before presenting them to the binlift*
- *DO NOT attempt to empty overfull wheeled bins, this can lead to spillage and falling objects which could cause personal injury or damage to the bin lift equipment*

**3.17 They have informed Councils that allowing this practice to continue is at the user's risk.**

**3.18 In order to prevent a reoccurrence of the fatality, the bin lifter manufacturer has agreed with the coroner to conduct certain modifications to the lifting mechanism. For 'in service' vehicles there will be a 'Bin lift Compaction Control Upgrade (BCCU)' software upgrade to prevent the compaction (crushing) of items suspected of not being 'bin' waste, which may have been lifted and dropped into the main body of the vehicle (the person may still be lifted but the compacting mechanism will be shut off).**

**3.19 For newly manufactured vehicles, new additional sensors will be attached to the bin lifters. Any object presented to the lifter, or enters within the safety zone of the lifter, which is greater in height than a standard bin (eg an operative or Member of the Public) will not be lifted as the sensor will disable the lifter. As a**

consequence, any bin presented with a raised lid will trigger the sensor and the bin lifter will cut out i.e. the vehicle will not lift overfilled domestic bins. In this instance the person will not be lifted.

- 3.20 This issue is of immediate concern as the Council has already taken ownership of 5 of the modified vehicles with 19 more on order, due to arrive by end of 2026. All subsequent Refuse Collection Vehicles will be designed with this safety feature as standard. If we consider that Waste Collections service currently collect approximately 54 routes per day, then currently 9% of routes cannot lift bins with raised lids and this figure will rise to approximately 48% within 2 years.
- 3.21 In addition, BCC has 38 'in service' vehicles. All of these have now received the software retrofit and drivers and operators are receiving refresher training on the vehicle modifications and their safe operation. As already outlined this training instructs them to operate the vehicle in line with the Operator's Training Procedure supplied by the Vehicle and Bin Lift Manufacturer as detailed in 3.18 above.
- 3.22 In light of these developments, it is essential to plan the cessation of the practice of emptying overfilled bins.

#### Open Lid Data Survey

- 3.23 As outlined above, the Departmental Performance and Improvement Unit conducted a survey in August / September 2024 to ascertain the size and spread of the issue of raised bin lids.
- 3.24 The exercise covered the same 6195 bins across selected routes covering all areas of the city. It was found that an average of 9.5% of bins surveyed presented with raised bin lids, ranging from 2.9% up to almost 18.4% of presented bins. The survey would indicate that the issue of lined bins may be more widespread across areas of the city.

#### Next steps

- 3.25 A Project Team is currently in the process of developing an implementation plan in relation to tackling the two issues highlighted in this report. The draft plan includes a detailed exercise with Marketing and Comms and proposes the following next steps.
1. Phase 1 (March 2025) CMT report & political engagement. Phase 1 would also include TU & staff engagement and updating of Health & Safety documentation.

- 2. Phase 2 (April 2025) On-boarding focusing on Community engagement & Awareness and staff training**
- 3. Phase 3 Bedding in phase 12th May 2025 for 6 weeks - Amber Bin Tags – Notify residents of non-compliance without penalty for three cycles - Monitor Reports & Feedback – Adjust messaging based on common issues.**
- 4. Enforcement of full policy 23rd June 2025 – onwards.**

The Committee welcomed the proposals as set out within the report, given that they sought primarily to protect the health and safety of the Council's staff. Members emphasised the importance of effective community engagement throughout the process.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the four step process (as outlined in paragraph 3.25 above) in the marketing, engagement and implementation process for the proposed new arrangements for the collection of bins.

### **Integrated Advice Partnership Fund**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 The main purpose of this report is to advise members on the outcome of a second call for proposals to deliver activity that will meet the aims of the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund (IAPF) and seek their approval to award funds for delivery until 31st March 2026.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

##### **2.1 Members are asked to**

- approve funding for the bids received from organisations that are part of existing advice consortia; and**
- to consider and agree if the remaining unallocated IAPF budget can be used to recruit a dedicated staff member (who would be employed by one of the Lead Partners) whose role would be to co-ordinate the services offered by all BCC funded advice services.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Members will recall that officers advised in November 2024 of additional temporary funding from DfC through the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund for activity in 2024/26. The objective of**

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the fund is to 'Improve the uptake of free, independent regulated debt advice through a collaborative partnership approach'.

- 3.2 Following committee approval, members sought proposals from existing Lead partners within each advice consortia for projects that would meet the aims of the scheme. Advice Space (formerly Citizens Advice), submitted a project proposal and was awarded funding of £82,497 for delivery of a citywide project in January 2025, which will include delivery in central and east Belfast.
- 3.3 Members agreed that council would invite further applications from all BCC funded advice organisations to allocate the remaining budget of £165,756.62. The deadline for submission of applications was 12th March 2025. The table below shows bids that were received by that date;

Organisation	Amount Requested	Debt Service Provision	DEA
Upper Springfield Development Trust	£45,923	The project will deliver a range of additional debt advice to 640 beneficiaries, including; <b>Income Maximisation</b> , e.g. Benefit Checks <b>Crisis Intervention</b> to ensure those facing immediate hardship have access to basic necessities - Bryson House Emergency Relief, Warm and Well project, Social Supermarket and Food Parcels <b>Referral to other</b> organisations providing access to the most appropriate organisations. <b>Debt Advice</b> via money and debt services <b>Cost of Living</b> Workshops - how to navigate the complexities of managing finances and developing appropriate skills and resources. The provision of a <b>Financial Wellbeing Booklet</b> to 500 families.	Black Mountain, Court
The Vine Centre	£48,867	The project will provide a range of centre based and outreach activities to 365 beneficiaries. <b>Augmenting the capacity of existing debt services to meet an increased level of demand.</b> Increasing service hours	Castle, Oldpark, Court



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		<p>offering specific debt advice available on an outreach basis.</p> <p><b>Developing an extended and enhanced referral network across north Belfast-</b> increasing capacity of organisations to meet the needs of clients in relation to debt management and alleviation.</p> <p><b>20 workshops</b> - focusing on debt and financial management</p> <p><b>Developing in partnership with the Science Shop at the University of Ulster, a website</b> with accessible information and guidance on debt, money and financial management, and direct contact to services.</p>	
South City Resource and Development Centre	£24,864	<p>Provision of services to 468 beneficiaries.</p> <p><b>The recruitment and training of Trainee Debt Advisors-</b> Increase the capacity of the organisations to offer specific debt related services within local areas.</p> <p><b>Provision of additional service hours-</b> increasing access to debt advice in a range of local facilities.</p> <p><b>Enhanced information services-</b> provision of a debt advice and financial management handbook- 20,000 copies.</p> <p><b>Increase the number of organisations and their capacity</b> to provide access to debt advice- including the development of a referral system</p>	Lisnasharragh, Balmoral, Botanic

**Officers have assessed these proposals and recommend that each is awarded funding as they meet the aims of the fund and scored highly against each of the agreed success criteria.**

- 3.4 The total allocation for these projects is £119,652.87. This leaves an amount of £46,103.75 that has not been allocated. All partners within each advice consortia have had the opportunity to present**

proposals and there is no indication that any further proposals will be submitted if a further call was to be opened.

Members may recall that council undertook an independent Review of BCC funded Advice Services which completed in December 2024. One of the key recommendations was that council should explore ways to enhance the current consortia model including efforts to increase co-ordination amongst existing delivery partners.

- 3.5 Members are asked to consider and agree if the remaining unallocated budget from IAPF can be used to recruit a dedicated staff member (who would be employed by one of the Lead Partners) whose role would be to co-ordinate the services offered by all BCC funded advice services. This would meet the key aim of the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund, which is: 'to test proposals which focus on enabling better integration of funding/services, collaboration for early intervention and prevention to increase the reach of debt advice. This approach is grounded in collaborative advice partnerships; connecting services to improve the uptake of debt advice reach via an integrated approach.'
- 3.6 At the time of writing, officers have not concluded consultation with all lead partners and consortia to identify the organisation best placed to employ this staff member, a verbal update on this process can be provided at committee. Funds are currently only available to fund this post until 31st March 2026; if approved it would be introduced on a pilot basis and its effectiveness evaluated with a view to being funded on an ongoing basis through available advice funding if the post proves to be effective.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 The administration of this fund will be conducted by existing staff, there is no financial impact for council as 100% funding is being provided by DfC. The allocation for Belfast is as listed below.

2024/25	2005/26	Total
£160,804.82	£87,448.66	£248,253.48

Members will know that advice funding is allocated on an area basis and members agreed in January that they would use the agreed allocation model for each consortia. The table below shows the percentage of the remaining budget that should be allocated to each area. However, given that no bids from central and east were received and that the entire budget has not been used, it is recommended that members provide the full requested

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**allocation to each of the bids received. It is also worth noting that the Advice Space proposal which has already been funded covers all areas of the city; the north bid will also cover the Court DEA (Shankill) and that the South bid will also include Lisnasharragh.**

Area	% Allocation Model	% To Each Area
Central	£10,768.76	
East	£17,349.67	
North	£31,109.75	£48,867
South	£18,546.19	£24,864
West	£41,878.50	£45,923
Total	£119,652.87	

The Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the funding of the bids received from the organisations within the existing advice consortia; and agreed, in principle, that any in-year underspend be redistributed equally across the four providers identified within the report, subject to officers ascertaining that capacity existed within the aforesaid organisations to deliver the proposed service in 2025/26.

It was noted that an update report in the above-mentioned matter would be submitted for consideration.

**Partnership Agreements**

(Ms. N. Lane, Neighbourhood Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

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

<b>Keep NI Beautiful</b>	<b>£55,000</b>
<b>Mary Peters Trust</b>	<b>£5,000</b>
<b>Bryson Energy</b>	<b>£31,209</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£91,209</b>

The Committee adopted the recommendation and noted that an additional inflationary-linked amount would not be awarded in 2025/26, since there existed no identifiable in-year budget.

### **Requests to Host Events in Parks and Open Spaces**

The Committee considered two requests which had been received for the hosting of events within parks and open spaces. The first had been submitted by the Legacy Network for a Victory in Europe (VE Day) celebration in the CS Lewis Square on Thursday, 8th May. The second request had been received from the charity 'Mary's Meals', seeking permission to host a sponsored walk to highlight world hunger in the Falls Park on Saturday, 14th June.

The Committee granted authority to the applicants to host the events in the parks/open spaces and agreed to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to ensure that the organisers met with all of the stipulations as set out within the report regarding operational issues, community engagement, terms and conditions and statutory requirements.

### **Lower Shankill Park**

The Committee was reminded that officers had been working with the Denmark Street Community Association since the opening of the Lower Shankill Park and had developed a mutually beneficial key-holding agreement to enable access to the park outside normal operating hours. It was reported that the association had requested that the existing arrangement be formalised to enable additional duties to be undertaken. Such duties would support community programming and enhance accessible to the amenity.

It was pointed out that, at its meeting 10th October, 2023, the Committee, in seeking to promote and enhance the usage of newly-established or refurbished parks properties, had agreed to earmark a sum of £15,000 within annual budgets for the purpose outlined. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Committee approve a contribution of £5,000 to the Denmark Street Community Association for overseeing key-holding duties and to enhance and enable further community usage of the park.

That Committee agreed that the Council would enter into a formalised agreement with the Denmark Community Street Association for the undertaking of the duties outlined and that a contribution of £5,000 be approved to enable additional work to promote and enhance community usage of the park.

### **Applications for Dual Language Street Signs**

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate, in Irish, at Grace Street, Sussex Place, Russell Street, Russell Place, Lavinia Mews and Eliza Street Close.

### **Dual Language Street Signs – Potential Adverse Impacts**

The Director of Planning and Building Control outlined the principal aspects of a report which provided details on several applications which had been received for the erection of second street signs, in Irish, at Mount Merrion Avenue, Isoline Street, Onslow Gardens, Lismain Street, Kimberley Street and Loopland Drive. In accordance with the Council's Dual Language Street Sign Policy, the Committee was informed that the

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applications had been submitted for its consideration since it had been deemed that there could be an adverse impact on equality and good relations giving rise to community tensions should surveying of residents be conducted.

It was noted that applications for both Mount Merrion Avenue and Isoline Street had been the subject of written objections by Elected Members

The Director pointed out that, within the context outlined, the Committee could consider two options, in that it could either agree that surveys of the occupiers of the streets be conducted, or rather that no surveys be conducted on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and that the applications be closed.

**Proposal**

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

That the Committee agrees that no surveys be undertaken of residents in Mount Merrion Avenue and Isoline Street and the applications for a second street sign, in Irish, be closed.

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

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that surveys be conducted on the residents in Mount Merrion Avenue, Isoline Street, Onslow Gardens, Lismain Street, Kimberley Street and Loopland Drive regarding the erection of a second street sign, in Irish.

**Dual Language Street Signs**  
**Raphael Street and McClure Street**

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented a report which sought the Committee's views in respect of proposals to erect a second street sign, in Irish, in Raphael Street and McClure Street.

**Raphael Street**

The Director explained that, in relation to Raphael Street, there existed no properties therein, thus a residents' survey could not be conducted in accordance with the policy. She reminded the Committee that, since Raphael Street was located within the city centre boundary, the agreed consultation process had been to place advertisements within local papers seeking views on the proposal.

**Proposal**

Moved Councillor McKeown,  
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

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That the Committee agrees, in the absence of a residents' survey for Raphael Street and taking into consideration the presence of dual language street signs, in Irish, within the adjacent streets and the local area, that the Committee agrees to the erection of a second street sign in Irish.

**Amendment**

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

That the Committee agrees that advertisements be placed in local newspapers seeking views on the proposals to erect a second street sign, in Irish, in Raphael Street.

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

Following discussion, the Committee adopted the proposal as moved by Councillor McKeown and seconded by Councillor Garrett.

**McClure Street**

The Director explained that, in respect of McClure Street, 22 properties had recently been constructed. It was noted that the new residents had not, as yet, been registered on the electoral register, thus there was no information available to undertake a residents' survey. It was anticipated that a revised electoral register would be published in December, 2025, at which point a survey would be conducted.

The Committee agreed that the application and survey for a second street nameplate, in Irish, in McClure Street be deferred to allow sufficient time for the publication of an updated electoral register in December, 2025, thus enabling the normal survey process to be undertaken.

**Issues Raised in Advance**

**Council Dog Warden Service - (Councillor Brooks)**

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the work of the dog warden service and would provide also information on its activity and volume of work. The report would include details on the current staffing levels and an overview of the fines currently levied (including previous decisions in this regard). In addition, information would also be provided on the Council's bye-laws and their effectiveness, across the city and in parks and dog runs; together with an outline of the opportunities for a multi-agency approach being adopted to address the issue of dog fouling; and consideration of several options at a resourcing level.

**One Million Trees Initiative - (Councillor Maghie)**

The Committee noted that, in accordance with its decision of 4th February, a report would be submitted regarding the 'Vital Role of Trees'. It was noted further that the Community and Neighbourhood Services Department would consult with the Council's Climate Unit, in its role as the Council's lead on the 'One Million Trees Initiative', and the report in this regard would include an update on this initiative. It was noted further that the report would include figures relating to the number (and types) of trees planted (and their mortality rates), their sourcing/origin, the feasibility of a cross agency/departmental approach being adopted in the delivery of the initiative and the feasibility of regular updates being provided to the Committee.

**Returning of Black Bins to Properties  
- (Councillor McKeown)**

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the Council's options in addressing concerns arising from the practice of bins not being returned promptly by their owners to properties after they had been collected. The report would include an outline of the Council's powers to enforce the practice and an overview of the community engagement options that could be used in addressing the matter.

Chairperson

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## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th April, 2025

### MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;  
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;  
Alderman Lawlor; and  
Councillors Black, de Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,  
Hanvey, Kelly, Lyons, Maskey, McDonough-Brown,  
McDowell, McKay, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,  
O'Neill and 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;  
Mr. C. McCreery, Culture Development Manager;  
Ms. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager; and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Maskey declared an interest in relation to item 6 (a) "Go Succeed Enterprise Support Service Update", in that he had received support through the service and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

### **Restricted Items**

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

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

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

**Vacant to Vibrant Scheme**

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

She advised the Committee that funding for the city centre portion of the scheme was fully depleted and that it was now closed to applications.

She highlighted the potential for underspends to be realised within the city centre scheme and recommended that a mechanism be put in place to reallocate any underspend to the citywide scheme.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and that it would be supporting up to 57 businesses/organisations to locate or expand into long term vacant units;
- ii. noted that the funding allocated to the City Centre Vacant to Vibrant Grant was now fully committed, and that the scheme was now closed to receiving any further applications;
- iii. noted the decision on application V2V130, as outlined within section 3.20 of the report;
- iv. agreed the recommended city centre grant awards, as outlined within section 3.19 of the report;
- v. agreed the recommended citywide grant awards, as outlined within Section 3.21 of the report; and
- vi. agreed the recommended mechanism to reallocate any potential future underspend realised in the city centre fund to the citywide fund, as outlined within section 3.22 of the report.

**Closure of Connswater Shopping Centre Update**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update in relation to the Council's engagement with the cultural, arts and community organisations that had been affected by the closure of Connswater Shopping Centre.

The Committee noted the engagement to date and the support being offered by the Council to help organisations mitigate the effects of the closure.

**Requests to Present**

**Request to Present - Department for Infrastructure  
- Eastern Transport Plan**

The Committee agreed to receive, at a future meeting, a presentation from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP), and that an invitation be extended to members of the Planning Committee, given the ETP's strategic alignment with the Council's Local Development Plan.

**Request to Present - York Street  
Interchange Alternative Design**

The Committee considered a request from local architect Mr. M. Hackett to present at a future meeting on the proposed alternative design to the York Street Interchange.

The Committee:

- i. noted the request to receive a presentation from Mr. M. Hackett in relation to the alternative design to the York Street Interchange, and that the Department for Infrastructure would be presenting the York Street Interchange Update to the Committee in May; and
- ii. agreed to defer the decision to receive the presentation on the alternative design until after the Department for Infrastructure's presentation in May.

**Request to Present - Blackstaff Residents'  
Association - Proposal for a Workhouse  
Museum and an Interpretive Centre**

The Committee considered a request from the Blackstaff Residents' Association to present at a future meeting of the Committee in relation to a proposal for a workhouse museum and interpretive centre within the grounds of Belfast City Hospital.

The Committee agreed that, in the first instance, the request be referred to the South Area Working Group.

**Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

**Regeneration Tracker**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker which captures regeneration and development activity which took place in the City Centre during 2024, as aligned to the eight core policies of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS). The detail of this report will be provided by way of a presentation at Committee.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note that:**

- i. An overview of regeneration and development activity which took place in Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter during 2024, as aligned to the eight core principles set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy, will be provided by way of a presentation to be made to this Committee on 9th April 2025.**
- ii. This will include identifying challenges and proposed next steps to help unlock the next stage of the delivery of the Regeneration & Investment Strategy priorities in line with the 2024 BCCRIS 10 year stocktake for discussion with Members.**

**4.0 Main Report**

- 4.1 As members are aware the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) sets out our collective ambition for the continued growth and regeneration of the city core and its surrounding areas for the period 2015 to 2030. It contains a road map of policies to guide city centre decision-making and key projects that translate those policies into action, aligned to our overarching ambitions outlined within the Belfast Agenda. BCCRIS seeks to address the universal elements of a thriving city centre as well as challenges and conditions that are unique to Belfast and is underpinned by the following eight core principles:**

- Increase the Employment Population;**
- Increase the Residential Population;**
- Manage the Retail Offer;**
- Maximise the Tourism Opportunity;**
- Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres;**
- Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre;**
- Connect to the City Around, and**

- Shared space and social impact.
- 4.2 To facilitate the implementation of the eight policies for the city centre, BCCRIS identified a series of projects aimed at creating a liveable and economically thriving city, alongside, identifying the following five Special Action Areas:
- Inner North
  - Inner West
  - North East Quarter
  - Transport Hub and South Centre
  - Oxford Street and the Eastern Bank
- 4.3 The city centre provides an important role for Belfast, the Council and the wider region given Belfast's role as the regional driver and the critical role the city centre in particular plays in terms of employment, investment, tourism, education and a place to live and to visit. , The city centre makes up 2.6% of Belfast's spatial area but represents the largest employment base employing over 86,000 workers across the various sectors, representing c37% of Belfast's workforce. Approx 80% of the Councils income comes from the district rate, with the city centre accounting for 41% of Belfast's non-domestic rates income. The sectors contributing greatest to city centre rates are the office sector (66% of city centre non-domestic rate) and retail (17% of city centre non-domestic rate). From 2020/21 to 2023/24 the city centre non-domestic rate has increased year on year going from £41.9m to £49.1m over this 4-year period.
- 4.4 In 2024 a stocktake was taken on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy. the findings of the report are largely in line with the statistics reported in the Regeneration Tracker, focusing on what has been achieved since the Strategies launch in 2015 and to identify work that is yet to be done. After extensive engagement across key city partners and stakeholder, including the CG&R Committee, the Stocktake also identified the key areas of focus to drive catalytic change. These areas of focus include;
- Increase city centre living across all tenures by addressing viability, funding, policy and water infrastructure issues. Recognising the importance of good placemaking and connectivity to creating inclusive and sustainable communities.
  - Deliver A Bolder Vision priority projects including a prioritising a number of infrastructure related capital projects, sustainable and active travel, delivering green and climate resilient public realm and open space.

- **Unlock major regeneration schemes that have stalled and preserving built heritage where possible. This includes a particular focus on the Tribeca site. This will require concerted public and private sector commitment.**
- **A multi-Agency approach to Place Keeping and City Management - ensuring the city centre is well managed, clean, safe, accessible, vibrant and animated, capitalising on Belfast's distinct draw.**

- 4.5 The purpose of the Regeneration Tracker, which will be presented to this Committee, is to provide Members with an overview of regeneration and development activity which has taken place in Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter during 2024 (1st January – 31st December), aligned to the eight core policies outlined within the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.**
- 4.6 A number of the core principles and projects and developments identified within BCCRIS have progressed well since 2015 to date (and in particular during 2024 which will be the focus of the presentation to Committee). This has included retail, office refurbishment, hotel and tourism, purpose-built student accommodation and major developments identified in BCCRIS such as the relocation of the University Ulster, progression of the new Transport Hub and Weavers Cross development, progression of City Deal projects including the Belfast Stories tourist attraction, waterfront development etc. Whilst retail across the UK has remained challenging previous reports to this Committee have shown that city centre ground floor vacancy levels have decreased from 23% to 21% in 2024 and there have been a number of new first to Belfast /first to market brands who have recently located in the city centre.**
- 4.7 It is however recognised that challenges remain around city centre living, place-keeping and public realm, dereliction, and infrastructure investment. As reported to CGR in February 2024 and through the BCCRIS Stocktake the lack of regeneration related funding for Belfast (and the wider region) as compared to other UK city regions has put Belfast at a distinct disadvantage in terms of city competitiveness and addressing issues of viability, place making and progressing development and regeneration including housing and increased city centre living. As highlighted to Committee there are a number of funding streams available in other UK cities that have helped accelerate development inc the Brownfield Infrastructure and Land Fund, Future High Streets Fund, Transforming Cities Fund etc. The experience from other cities has shown that these have been critical in order to realise the full regeneration potential of their city centres and to meet wider city region requirements.**

- 4.8** Notwithstanding the lack of this external funding, the Regeneration Tracker presentation to be made to Committee will highlight positive development activity during the 2024 period across the private and public sectors. In order to deliver the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda to 2035 it has been estimated that this will require c £5.5bn investment and clearly the role of the private sector is critical in this. The Regeneration Tracker details the extensive private sector development delivered in 2024 along with highlighting some of the projects where Belfast City Council are leading on the delivery of addressing some of our key sectors for growth. This includes the Housing Led Regeneration Programme, the Bolder Vision, Strategic Property Acquisitions, Belfast Region City Deal Projects inc Belfast Stories, Cathedral Gardens redevelopment, and the Vacant to Vibrant Programme.
- 4.9** An update on these various areas of work have been brought to both CGR and SP&R Committees. In terms of city centre living specifically it is worth highlighting the update brought to the March 2025 CGR Committee in relation to the housing led regeneration programme. This included an update appointment of Graham as the Council's Delivery Partner for a significant multi-site, residential led mixed use regeneration development opportunity (c £630m GDV). This followed the development of a number of Concept Regeneration Plans for Council and wider public and private sector lands and PADS for each of the cluster sites. Members were also updated on the Inner North West Development Brief which has now been awarded to Clanmil Housing Association. An update was also provided in relation to the city-wide Strategic Site Assessments where planning appraisals and feasibility studies are underway, and a number of sites agreed to progress to exploring delivery options.
- 4.10** It is worth highlighting that there are a significant number of consented residential units / schemes that have come through the planning system in the city centre particularly, and that many of these have not progressed for various reasons including issues around policy, viability, infrastructure etc, most of which are outside Council's responsibility. Notwithstanding this however it is worth noting that there are currently over 950+ homes under construction across 3 city centre sites, and over 1,503 social homes under construction across the city.
- 4.11** The Regeneration Tracker will present an update on the progress of development and regeneration activity within the city centre in 2024 as well as identifying challenges and proposed next steps to unlocking the next stage of the delivery, in line with the BCCRIS Stocktake, for discussion with Members.

**5.0     Financial and Resource Implications**

**None associated with this report.**

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

**None associated with this report.”**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development presented to the Committee a review of the 2024 Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker.

She outlined the role of city centre in attracting private sector investment, creating revenue and enabling the sustainability of Council expenditure, and the contribution that the city centre makes to the wider region, including economic growth, job creation, access to services and cultural and recreational amenities.

She highlighted that the 2024 stocktake of BCCRIS had focused on the achievements of the strategy since its launch in 2015, and identifying key areas of focus to drive catalytic change, as outlined within the report.

The Committee was presented with an overview of the regeneration and development activity that had taken place in Belfast City Centre and the Titanic Quarter during 2024, including identified challenges and proposed next steps, as aligned to the following eight core principles set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS):

- Increase the Employment Population;
- Increase the Residential Population;
- Manage the Retail Offer;
- Maximise the Tourism Opportunity;
- Create Regional Learning and Innovation Centres;
- Create a Green, Walkable, Cyclable Centre;
- Connect to the City Around, and
- Shared space and social impact.

The Committee noted:

- i. the contents of the report and presentation, which provided an overview of the regeneration and development activity which had taken place in Belfast City Centre and the Titanic Quarter during 2024, as aligned to the eight core principles set out in the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS); and
- ii. the identified challenges and proposed next steps to help unlock the next stage of the delivery of the Regeneration and Investment Strategy priorities, in line with the 2024 BCCRIS 10 year stocktake.



**Positioning Belfast to Compete**

**Culture Night**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

The purpose of this report is to:

- Update members on sector engagement and recommendations relating to potential delivery and support models for Culture Night 2025 in Belfast and subsequent iterations.
- Seek approval for recommendations within this report and launch a public procurement exercise to deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme up to the value of £150,000

**2.0 Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to:

- Note the contents of the report and Appendix 1 – ‘Culture Night Sector Engagement and Roadmap for Delivery’
- Seek approval for recommendations within this report and launch a public procurement exercise to deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme including supporting marketing activity up to the value of £150,000

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

At the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 10th April 2024, Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr Groogan, outlined a proposal to support cultural venues in the City to open on the evening of ‘Culture Night’ in September, within the Belfast 2024 Programme of events. The Committee agreed to refer the decision to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration so that further detail of how this could be facilitated, resourced and managed could be provided. After having considered various options, it was agreed that Belfast would not have a Culture Night event in 2024. Reasons included limited officer capacity, limited delivery lead in aligned to budget approval process and recognition of the volume of cultural activity being delivered across the September period as part of the 2024 programme. Papers also presented detail on benchmarking of delivery models in other cities.

- 3.2 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 24th May 2024, members agreed an allocation of up to £30,000 to the facilitation of an engagement programme with the wider cultural sector, key funders, partners and other interested parties in relation to culture night, its purpose and potential delivery models from September 2025 and onwards.

3.3 The Culture Night concept

Established in 2009, Culture Night Belfast was a large scale and free cultural event taking place in the Cathedral Quarter and city centre of Belfast. The concept traces its roots to an initiative of Temple Bar Cultural Trust / Dublin City Council in 2006. The first event in Dublin began as an innovative but relatively modest local event with 40 venues opening free and late in the evening in Dublin's Temple Bar, expanding citywide in 2007, more than doubling in size with 87 cultural institutions participating. From this foundation, the Culture Night concept has grown in scale and profile becoming an established and popular part of the cultural calendar across over 40 towns and cities throughout the island of Ireland alongside events internationally such as in London, Paris, Berlin and New York.

3.4 Culture Night in Belfast

Culture Night in Belfast began in 2009 when a number of arts organisations came together to organise the first Belfast Culture Night in September 2010. In 2012/13, the Cathedral Quarter Trust became the custodians of the event, delivering Culture Night in the city until the final event in 2019.

As the largest free shared cultural event in the city-centre, audiences grew to an attendance of over 100,000 for the 2019 event held across two days in September 2019. This event was delivered by a core team of a Creative producer, a programme assistant, a marketing manager, a freelance production manager, 15 area managers, internship placements and over 100 volunteers.

The budget for Culture Night ranged from £240k in 2016 to over £328k in 2019. Culture Night received £12,000 annually from the councils Core Multi Annual Funding programme from 2016 to 2020. The event received the majority of its support coming from other statutory bodies including the Arts Council NI, The Executive Office, Department for Communities and Tourism NI alongside support from trusts and foundations and the private sector.

- 3.5 The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the suspension of the event in September 2020 – with a digital version staged

instead. In 2020, the Cathedral Quarter Trust and Belfast City Council co-commissioned a Strategic Review and Three-year Development Plan for Culture Night Belfast to be delivered by CQT and retain its footprint within the Cathedral Quarter. This review identified that whilst 'Culture Night Belfast was an extremely well attended, much appreciated and, to some extent, iconic city event, the existing model for Culture Night has become problematic'. The report highlighted various concerns with the previous Culture Night model including:

- The audience for the event has grown exponentially whilst the volume and quality in the programme have not;
- The idea that artists could, would or should give their time for free is no longer a viable delivery model;
- The audience's relationship with the event has changed so that family audiences feel pushed out and unsafe;
- Critically there is confusion over what the purpose of the event in how and what it delivers for the creative sector is and where the responsibility for it effectively achieving that purpose lies

This review was completed in spring 2022 and the Cathedral Quarter Trust did not run Culture Night in 2022, with organisers stating that the event had 'become too big and unwieldy and the original intention of providing a platform for our artistic and cultural communities to connect with a much wider audience had been lost.

- 3.6 In January 2023, the Trust undertook a recruitment process to appoint and employ a Creative Director, to be funded by Belfast City Council, to provide a three-year development and delivery plan for an annual large-scale city-centre cultural event. However, on 6th April 2023, the Cathedral Quarter Trust announced that it is 'has been forced to cease day to day operational activity, including planning any cultural events, with immediate effect and for the foreseeable future, following the withdrawal of core funding by the Department for Communities.'. The statement continued 'Following the withdrawal of its core funding CQT will not be directly involved in the delivery of any future Culture Night and as a Board we will continue to work with Belfast City Council and other stakeholders to explore all options around the future of this popular and important event.' In the operational absence of the Cathedral Quarter Trust, no organisation has taken on the lead organising and delivery role necessary to revive Culture Night in Belfast.

- 3.7 Culture Night in other locations

In the Republic of Ireland, the Culture Night brand is managed centrally by the Arts Council Ireland, in partnership with local authorities and cultural organisations throughout the island of Ireland. As well as providing financial support to local authorities, Arts Council Ireland manage the core brand, website and major media partnerships such as broadcast events with RTE.

Whilst delivery models and challenges vary across different locations, Culture Night is largely led by local authorities in each area. Investment in Culture Night initiatives range from approximately €30k in Cork (led by council staff) to over €190k in Dublin.

As the largest Culture Night, Dublin Culture Night attracts over 100k people over 350 events. The event is shaped through co-design with the arts sector, audiences and the local authority. The event takes place across arts and cultural organisations and venues of all shapes and sizes, from independent studios and art-spaces to national cultural institutions, by extending opening hours to allow increased access for the public. Unique events and workshops are specifically programmed at participating locations and all activities are made available to the public free of charge. Unlike the Culture Night Belfast model, which was largely about converting the streets of the Cathedral Quarter into a pop-up venue with road closures and on street programming, Culture Night Dublin does not involve road closures and is spread across the whole city.

- 3.8 Dublin City Council manage the event through procurement for 'single operator frameworks', a multi annual arrangement which can be utilised for four years. This procurement covers the operator who in turn tender out for an event management company so they can recruit additional staff/assistants. The Dublin Council Events unit liaise with police/gardai and insure the event. The procurement for the freelance event company is accountable to the arts manager in Dublin City Council.

3.9 Consultation with the cultural sector, audiences and previous funders

Following approval from SP&R in May to proceed with a procurement exercise, Thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. Were appointed as a partnership to deliver this Culture Night Sector Engagement and Roadmap Delivery contract. Together, they investigated:

- What is the purpose of Culture Night and who owns it

- How Culture Night started in Belfast and how it changed over time to better understand the lessons of the past and use these to shape any future iterations
- How the cultural sector and audiences experienced Culture Night in Belfast and what they want it to become in the future
- What past and potential funders' priorities and any likelihood of funding the event in the future

**3.10 To find out the above, they carried out the following:**

- Desk research into comparable events in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the UK and abroad, to explore and analyse models of programming, budget and delivery
- 1x one-to-one interview with Dublin City Council
- 7x one-to-one interviews with the founders of Culture Night Belfast and people who have worked as producers or event managers for Culture Night Belfast over the years
- A survey aimed at the cultural sector, including artists, venues and producers
- 3x focus groups with members of the cultural sector in Belfast
- 2x focus groups with audiences
- A consultation with past and potential funders, including Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Tourism NI, Arts & Business NI and the city's Business Improvement Districts

An online survey was administered in February 2025 and 938 responses were collected.

This included:

- 203 sector participants (including venues, artists, producers, libraries, and heritage places who participated in CNB before)
- 735 non-participating sector organisations and audiences (people who attended CNB but didn't participate)

**3.11 Key findings from the survey include:**

- 78% of respondents said they want Culture Night to come back, with just 4% saying no and 18% weren't sure
- 76% said they would be interested in taking part, while just 3% said no. 21% said they didn't know if they would participate in Culture Night in the future.
- Most people mentioned wanting less alcohol and better crowd management

- Other themes centred around being more artist-led, having more funding or support for artists and venues, and better communication so people don't miss events/performances.
- 39% of those who incurred costs related to the work said they didn't receive any additional funding and operated at a loss. A further 35% said they didn't receive any additional funding, but 'were able to make it work.'
- A quarter of respondents weren't able to pay artists involved in their CNB programme
- Paying people, logistics, and programme costs were the most challenging aspects for the sector

The full report, which includes qualitative feedback from focus groups and funders, is detailed in appendix one of this report.

### **3.12 Key findings and recommendations from the report**

Based on this qualitative and quantitative feedback, coupled with research on comparable events and the context of Belfast, the report's authors have produced a range of recommendations. These include:

### **3.13 Purpose and ideology**

The report recommends that 'any return of Culture Night Belfast must be done with eyes firmly fixed on the core ideological pillars that inspired the creation of the event in the first place', namely:

- Celebrating the diverse arts, culture and heritage ecosystem in Belfast and its connection with the people of this place - including venues, organisations and individuals.
- Giving the opportunity to audiences to visit places and experience culture they may not have encountered before, for free.
- Being inclusive and accessible to all, thus welcoming all kinds of audiences, regardless of age, disability, socioeconomic status or community background.

### **3.14 Recommendations for a 2025 event**

Alongside a range of recommendations for the long-term sustainability of the event, the report recommends an approach to delivering an event in 2025, namely:

- Whilst a smaller event is deliverable in 2025, with the timeline available, it should be limited to venue-based events.

- Additionally, street-based events should not be included in the programme.
- It is essential that the creative sector are the main focus.
- Given the timeframe for a 2025 event, there is a risk that some organisations and artists won't be able to take part as their programme and schedule for the year are already set. However, it is important that they do not feel obligated to participate.

### **3.15 Procurement approach**

While not a recommended approach for future years, the report recognises that a procurement process is the only approach for 2025.

However, this procurement exercise should take into account that, as well as large-scale event management skills and strong health and safety knowledge, what is being sought is not simply a service but a nuanced understanding of the event and its stakeholders. The skills and requirements for a 2025 provider should include:

- Large-scale event management skills and curation of such events,
- Knowledge of the cultural sector, including funded and non-funded organisations, freelance, artists, libraries and heritage, as well as strong existing relationships with the sector across the city.
- Marketing resources appropriate for an event of this scale.
- The successful appointee will be required to lay the foundation for 2026 and create an independent committee, as referred to in the Governance section of these recommendations.
- Other aspects mentioned in the long-term recommendations should be taken into consideration as part of the procurement process, when possible to deliver within the short timescale for 2025. These include the event's delivery model, safety and marketing.

### **3.16 Long-term recommendations**

The report highlights a range of long-term recommendations relating to governance, the delivery model, funding, safety, marketing and growth. These include:

### **3.17 Governance**

On governance for future events post 2025, the report recommends that:

- Culture Night Belfast should be led by an independent body that shares the values and ethos of the event highlighted in this report and in the previous recommendations. We recognise this is not achievable for the 2025 event but should be explored for future iterations.
- Given CNB's scale and significance, a steering committee is appropriate to ensure the event remains true to its core values in the future. This committee should include and represent Belfast's arts and culture sector in majority.
- This newly constituted entity should lead on programming, curation and fundraising.

### **3.18 Delivery model**

On delivery, the report recommends that:

- Culture Night Belfast to return with a Receiving House model. This means each organisation or artist that will take part in CNB will programme their own event, pay for it and submit it to the central organising body for inclusion in the programme.
- This delivery model will still require a strong, creative, curatorial approach, to ensure the cultural sector stays on the front stage, there is a diverse representation of art forms and organisations and artists can avail of support from the organiser if required
- Events are located and scheduled appropriately to avoid crowding.
- That the delivery organisation has a programming budget to support artists and venues who may not be able to take part in Culture Night without it.
- Belfast City Council may also want to explore alternative ways to engage in some curatorial funding to support creatives to deliver content for the event.
- To ensure artists are paid for submitted events, organisations will be required to show how they will pay artists in order to be part of the programme.

### **3.19 Funding and sponsorship**

The report recommends the following approach to funding and sponsorship of the event:

- a value-led approach should be undertaken when it comes to funding the event.
- Future corporate relationships need carefully managed and rejected if not in line with the event's priorities.
- In terms of its funding, Culture Night should not be treated like any other festival. As a matter of fact, Culture Night is



not a festival and sits outside of festival funding schemes. It is rather a sector development initiative.

**3.20 Event safety**

To ensure future events are safe, the report recommends that:

- As part of a procurement process, health and safety should be a mandatory tender requirement.
- that the scale of the event is expanded across the city instead of focused in Cathedral Quarter.
- Sufficient budget will be needed to ensure the security to be more visible as the event grows

**3.21 Marketing and communications**

On messaging and communications relating to the event, the report states that:

- Marketing must set clear expectations about the event's evolution, emphasising the new, community-focused approach and expanded reach across the city, while acknowledging the shift away from its previous scale and structure.
- Any communication will have to emphasise that CNB has now expanded into other parts of the city and encourage people to explore their own neighbourhoods.
- Although Culture Night has been described by many as an 'audience development tool', one night of engagement is not enough to deepen relationships with new audiences. For this reason, Culture Night should not be advertised as such.

**3.22 Risks and challenges**

It is worth noting that delivery of an event in 2025 does come with several risks and challenges. These include:

- The potential of a lack of suitable responses or suppliers to the public procurement exercise
- Subject to approval to issue a tender, the earliest any potential supplier could be appointed is May 2025. This means any supplier would effectively have just over four months to issue an open call, build a programme and ultimately deliver on an event on 19th September 2025
- Given the tight timeframe and challenges within the cultural sector, there may be a limited number of responses from venues and organisations across the city to this open call

- Any contractor will have a challenge to ensure there is clear messaging around the event. This will need to emphasis the shift from being a large, on street event based in the Cathedral Quarter to a more venue based, city wide programme.

### **3.23 Recommended approach for 2025**

In order to deliver on an event in 2025, it is proposed to follow a similar model to Dublin City Council and issue a public tender to market to deliver the event. This procurement exercise will seek to appoint an external organisation to manage an open call for a series of free events in venues across the city. This contractor would act as a receiving house, collating various events from willing participants under one banner and presenting them to the public as a cohesive programme. This external organisation would be expected to lead on programming, production and marketing of the event. As referenced in the report from Thrive, it is important that the specification for this procurement exercise reflects the complexities and essence of Culture Night. Given the timelines for delivery officers are seeking approval to open the tender process in mid-April ahead of council ratification. No spend will be incurred prior to final ratification.

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

The value of this contract will be up to £150,000. This will be resourced from the 2025/26 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals.

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

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

During discussion several Members thanked officers, Thrive and Daisy Chain Inc. for the work that had been undertaken to date in relation to Culture Night including the engagement with the cultural sector, and welcomed the recommendations outlined within the report to deliver a 2025 Culture Night programme.

In response to a Member’s suggestion, the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, agreed that officers would explore the potential use of Belfast City Hall as part of the 2025 Culture Night programme, subject to availability.

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In relation to support for the 2025 Culture Night, a Member further suggested that the Committee write to the Minister for Infrastructure and Translink to request that late-night public transport services be operated on Culture Night; write to the Minister for Communities to request that the Department for Communities provide funding support for the 2025 programme and Culture Night going forward; and that officers engage with the incoming operator of the Belfast Bikes Scheme on the potential for reduced pricing for bike rentals for 2025 Culture Night.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report and Appendix 1 - "Culture Night Sector Engagement and Roadmap for Delivery";
- ii. approved the recommendation to launch a public procurement exercise to deliver the 2025 Culture Night programme which would include supporting marketing activity up to the value of £150,000;
- iii. agreed that, given the timelines for delivery, officers would open the tender process in mid-April ahead of Council ratification and that no spend would be incurred prior to Council ratification and call-in period;
- iv. agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure and Translink requesting that consideration be given to the operation of late-night public transport services on Culture Night 2025;
- v. agreed to write to the Minister for Communities requesting that consideration be given to the provision of funding to support the 2025 Culture Night programme, and Culture Night going forward; and
- vi. agreed that officers would engage with the incoming operator of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, Beryl, in respect of pricing to support Culture Night 2025.

**Invitation to Lord Mayor – Heroes  
of Irish America Awards**

The Committee considered an invitation from the Irish Echo for the Lord Mayor to attend its "Heroes of Irish America Awards" in Buffalo, New York, on 16th May, 2025.

In response to a Member's question in relation to the Council's international engagement approach, the Senior Manager, Economy, advised that an update report would be submitted to the Committee for consideration at its meeting in June, 2025.

The Committee:

- i. approved for the Lord Mayor to attend and address the Irish Echo 'Heroes of Irish America Awards' in Buffalo, New York, on 16th May, 2025; and

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- ii. noted that the costs associated with the attendance of the Lord Mayor and one officer at the event, would not exceed £3,400, and that these costs would be covered within the International Relations budget for US-based activities.

**Request for External Market Licences**

The Committee considered the following requests for market licences:

- an external market to take place on a temporary basis in the former Europa Bus Station building; and
- a one-off market as part of the 25th Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival in mid-May, 2025.

During discussion, the Markets Development Manager and the Senior Manager, Economy, advised that the Market Rights Policy was currently under review and that an update would be provided to the Committee in due course.

After discussion, the Committee approved:

- i. a licence for an external market to take place in the former Europa Bus Station on a monthly basis over the course of the coming months; and
- ii. a licence for a one-off market as part of Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival in May, 2025.

**Growing Business & the Economy**

**Go Succeed 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.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are asked to:**

- **Note and endorse the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service across Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses**
- **Note the update to the current funding position from MHCLG for the 2025/26 financial year**

- **Agree to the provision of match funding from Belfast City Council of £314,415 to support delivery for the 2025/26 financial year**
- **Agree to support the work to secure resources for delivery beyond March 2026.**

**3.0     Main Report**

**3.1     At the August 2024 meeting of this Committee, members were provided with an update on progress to operationalise and deliver the Enterprise Support Service which has been branded as Go Succeed. The service has now been operational for around eighteen months and has reached thousands of potential entrepreneurs and businesses across Northern Ireland.**

**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, has now secured additional 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 over the next year, alongside delivery of the service, will be working to secure a more permanent funding source. The coming year is considered a "transition" year for Shared Prosperity Fund and work is underway within the NI government departments to consider how they will take a more direct management role in a future Fund from April 2026 onwards.**

**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.**

- **Start:** this element of the service aims to identify individuals with entrepreneurial intentions as well as reaching those individuals who do not have an intention to start a business but could be encouraged to do so. There is specific, targeted support for a range of underrepresented groups. The menu of support available includes masterclasses, peer support networks and 1-1 mentoring
- **Grow:** this element of the service provides support for existing businesses. 1-1 mentoring is allocated based on the business' potential to grow and innovate. Masterclass and peer support network activity are also provided to support existing businesses to make key decisions on issues such as entering new markets or accessing finance for growth
- **Scale:** this part of the service is geared to supporting start-ups that have the potential to go on and generate at least £1m in revenue after 3 years. Support is delivered through 1-1 mentoring which aims to enable access to finance or further support through Invest NI, Catalyst or others.

**3.6** In addition to the tiered menu of support, small grants of up to £3,000 (up to 50% of capital costs) will be available to entrepreneurs or businesses accessing support through the service who demonstrate growth potential.

**3.7** The delivery is underpinned by investments such as a wide-reaching marketing and communications campaign; a call handling service to deal with phone enquiries as well as an online portal to deal with online requests for support and a regional CRM system to enable tracking of client engagement across the service.

**3.8** Regional Performance Update

Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of regional performance:

- 18,793 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities
- 6,202 individuals/entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
- 4,168 businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
- 1,595 entrepreneurs/businesses have accessed Go Succeed Grants since the launch in February 2024.

- 3.9 The service provides an opportunity for councils to deliver a consistent approach to enterprise, start-up and growth provision across the region. However it also has the flexibility to adapt to meet the specific needs of entrepreneurs and businesses within local areas. To achieve this, councils have developed local-level annual service plans which identify key areas of focus for outreach and delivery activities. This can include interventions to increase participation and address specific barriers faced by certain under-represented groups including females, individuals with a disability, ethnic minorities etc. It can also allow for targeted sector support activities such as those aimed at the tourism and hospitality sector or creative and digital sector support.

3.10 Belfast Performance Update

Since the service launched in November 2023, we have achieved the following by way of Belfast performance:

- 2,046 individuals 'reached' through a range of community outreach activities. This has included:
  - Sector specific events and self-employment academies for those in the hair and beauty industry including delivery of aspirational workshops and hands-on mentoring support for over 80 newly qualified individuals
  - Delivery of a female-focused 'inspiring enterprise' event for a group of 100 female entrepreneurs 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 as a very real and achievable pathway for consideration
  - Facilitation of the '22 under 22' initiative, designed to unearth, recognise and fast track 22 exceptional potential entrepreneurs in the city
  - Increasing awareness of enterprise among young people at the Young Enterprise Big Market event in St George's Market in December 2024.
- 1,036 Belfast entrepreneurs supported through start-up activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks)
- 756 Belfast businesses supported through growth activity (1-1 mentoring, masterclasses, peer support networks).

- 3.11** 315 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.
- 3.12** Critical to the service is the ability to deliver place-based activity and to be responsive to the needs of the local business community. In Belfast, there has been a series of targeted masterclasses for businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector. We have also put in place several information and support sessions to help businesses access other support services such as the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and the Belfast Business Promise and have organised support clinics to help businesses interested in exploring new markets and introducing new technologies into their business. For the year ahead, planned activity includes:
- 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, encouraging and supporting new and existing social enterprises and co-operatives as well as improving social value connections across the city
  - 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.
- 3.13** Looking ahead, it is critical that funding is secured to enable this service to continue. The SPF funding is currently scheduled to run out in March 2026 and there is no future SPF funding approach beyond this date. There has been some engagement with the Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Minister has been vocal in her support for the service. However, at this point, DfE is not making a financial contribution to support the delivery of NIESS – although councils are using some of resources allocated to them from central government for the delivery of their statutory duty to provide start-up support as their match funding contribution to the overall funding pot. The councils have developed a detailed stakeholder engagement plan – including political engagement – for the coming months in order to drive home the value and impact of the service and to make the case to relevant departments to prioritise resources for future delivery. Local political support across the region will be critical in building support for this work.
- 3.14** Financial and Resource Implications



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.

- 3.15 A condition of the funding from MHCLG is that projects include match funding as part of the funding package. Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has a statutory obligation to support the promotion of jobs through business start-up activity. Members are therefore asked to note and endorse Belfast City Council's Enterprise and Business Growth Unit contribution of £314,415 in match funding to the NI Enterprise Support Service in order to comply with both the funder's requirement and Council's statutory obligation. The contribution is based on an agreed formula across all council areas, calculated on the number of businesses to be supported.

3.16 **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 and endorsed the progress to date on the delivery of the Enterprise Support Service across Belfast and beyond, with the objective of driving more and better businesses;
- ii. noted the update on the current funding position from the UK Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), for the 2025/26 financial year;
- iii. agreed to the provision of match funding from Belfast City Council of £314,415 to support delivery for the 2025/26 financial year; and
- iv. agreed to support the work to secure resources for delivery beyond March, 2026.

Chairperson

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## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 16th April, 2025

### MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);  
The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer;  
Alderman McCullough; and  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,  
Collins, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,  
Doran, D. Douglas, McCann,  
McDowell, McKay, Ó Néill 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);  
Ms. L. Hillis, Principal Building Control Surveyor;  
Mr. J. Cunningham, Senior Licensing Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors T. Brooks and Kelly.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th March were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### Delegated Matters

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

#### **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 March, 2025.

#### **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.

**Restricted Items**

The information contained in the report associated with the following two 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.

**Addendum report relating to an Application  
for a Renewal Licence to operate a House of  
Multiple Occupation for 60 Sandymount Street; and**

**Addendum report relating to an application  
for a Renewal Licence to operate a House of  
Multiple Occupation for 29 Colenso Parade**

With the agreement of the Committee, the HMO Manager presented the details of the two applications together. He reminded the Committee that it had, at its meeting on 19th March, been presented with the details of the applications and that it had agreed to defer them in order that officers would submit the proposed wording of conditions to be attached to the licences to the next meeting.

He explained that officers, having liaised with the Council’s Information Governance Unit and Legal Services, were proposing that the following conditions be attached to the licences for both 60 Sandymount Street and 29 Colenso Parade:

“During the period of the licence, the Licensee must not permit any person not named in the licence to do any of the following–

- (i) to directly receive rents or other payments from persons who occupy the accommodation,
- (ii) to arrange for the carrying out of any repairs or refurbishment of the accommodation,
- (iii) to send, receive or engage in communications relating to the accommodation, to or from the occupants or the Council; or
- (iv) to engage in any other activity or course of activity which constitutes, or assists in, the management of the HMO.”

The Committee was advised that, should the applicant breach the conditions, it would constitute an offence pursuant to s31 (2) and/or (3) of the 2016 Act, and they may

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be liable to a Fixed Penalty of £2,500 and maximum fine on summary conviction of £10,000.

The Committee was also reminded that section 33 of the 2016 Act already provided that it was a criminal offence for the applicant to permit any person not named on the license to act as a managing agent. That person, too, would also be deemed to have committed an offence. A person guilty of an offence under subsection 33 (1) or (2) was liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £10,000.

After discussion, it was

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

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to grant the licence, for both 60 Sandymount Street and 29 Colenso Parade, in terms different from those applied for, by imposing the following conditions:

“During the period of the licence, the Licensee must not permit any person not named in the licence to do any of the following–

- i. to directly receive rents or other payments from persons who occupy the accommodation,
- ii. to arrange for the carrying out of any repairs or refurbishment of the accommodation,
- iii. to send, receive or engage in communications relating to the accommodation, to or from the occupants or the Council; or
- iv. to engage in any other activity or course of activity which constitutes, or assists in, the management of the HMO.”

**Application for a New Licence to operate a House  
of Multiple Occupation for 27 St Ives Gardens**

The HMO Unit Manager presented the details of the application to the Committee.

He outlined that the property had the benefit of an HMO licence issued by the Council, with a start date of 25th June, 2020, and an expiry date of 25th June, 2025, in the names of Mr. I. McKeown and Mrs. C. McKeown. The ownership of the property had transferred to Ms. A. McKeown with an assignment date of 1st October, 2024. He explained that, in accordance with Section 28(2) of the 2016 Act, the license granted to Mr. I. McKeown and Mrs. C. McKeown ceased to have effect on the date of transfer.

The Committee was advised that ownership of the property had reverted back from Ms. A. McKeown to Mrs. C. McKeown on 29th November, 2024. An application for a new HMO licence was received from Mrs. C. McKeown on 13th January, 2025.

A temporary exemption notice (TEN) was applied for on 18th February, 2025, and subsequently granted on 27th February, 2025.

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The HMO Manager outlined that, pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council could only grant a licence if it was satisfied that:

- a) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;
- b) the owner, and any managing agent of it, were fit and proper persons;
- c) the proposed management arrangements were satisfactory;
- d) the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- e) the living accommodation was fit for human habitation and—
  - i. was suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
  - ii. could be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

The Committee was advised that, as it was a new application, the Council's Planning Service was consulted. It had confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development ("CLEUD") was granted on 6th December, 2018.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with the Environmental Protection Unit in relation to nighttime and daytime noise; the Public Health and Housing Unit in relation to rubbish accumulation/filthy premises; and the Enforcement Unit in relation to litter and waste and all had confirmed that there had been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of any of the issues in the HMO in the last 5 years. The applicant had confirmed that they had not been convicted of any relevant offences pursuant to the 2016 Act.

For the purpose of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation as being Housing Management Area (HMA) "2/17 Sandymount" as defined in the document Council's Local Development Plan Strategy, which was formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. It was reported that Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the 2016 Act upon the Council to be satisfied that the granting of a licence would not result in overprovision.

The officers had had regard to:

- a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality; and
- b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation was required to meet that need.

To inform the Council in its consideration of the above provisions, the Council had taken account of the 2023 Strategy given that "Nurturing sustainable and balanced

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communities was a fundamental aim of the LDP's housing policies." In particular, the Council had considered Policy HOU10, which stated:

"Within designated HMAs, planning permission will only be granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within an HMA."

The Committee was advised that, on the date of assessment, 19th March 2025, 76% of all dwelling units in policy area "HMA 2/17 Sandymount" were made up of HMOs and flats/apartments, which in turn exceeded the 20% development limit as set out in Policy HOU10. There were 109 (64%) licensed HMOs with a capacity of 472 persons in that HMA.

The Committee was advised that the fact that the use of the property as an HMO was permitted for planning purposes was a relevant consideration in determining whether the granting of the licence would result in overprovision.

The Committee was advised that, on 19th March, 2025, out of 223 premises available for rent within the BT9 area on PropertyNews.com there were 65 licensed HMOs which represented 302 bed spaces.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager reminded the Committee that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and, to meet that demand, HMOs were an important component of the housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, played an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who were single, who had temporary employment, students, low income households and, more recently, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

He reported that the Ulster University Director of Campus Life, in December 2022, had advised the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee that there was an "increase in competition for HMOs particularly from NIHE, Immigration Services and statutory agencies and there were increasing accommodation issues across the housing sector which required a holistic view and should include the consideration of international students, families and graduates looking for professional accommodation."

However, the QUB Director of Student Plus had confirmed that the current trend indicated a significant move of students to purpose-built student accommodation blocks. She had advised the Members that there were 7,000 purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) rooms in the city, the majority having been built since 2018, and approximately 5,000 in the city centre.

The Committee was reminded that recent monitoring information produced by the Council's Planning Service for PBMSA indicated that 2055 bedspaces were currently under construction with an operational date of 2024, 92 bedspaces approved but where construction had not yet commenced and a further 1426 bedspaces going through the planning process.

Therefore, with the continued expansion of the PBMSA sector and students transitioning from private rentals to PBMSAs, it was too early to tell whether the increased

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competition from non-students for HMOs was a temporary problem which could be managed by the contraction in students residing in existing HMO accommodation within the locality, or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager explained that, in assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, officers could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

The Committee was advised that no objections had been received in relation to the application.

It was reported that the accommodation had inspected by a technical officer from the NIHMO service, on 6th March, 2025, at which time it was found that the rear attic bedroom was below 6.5 square metres but that the accommodation otherwise complied with the physical standards set for a House in Multiple Occupation for five persons.

On 18th February, 2025, correspondence had been received from Comerton and Hill Solicitors detailing the reason behind the transfer of ownership. On 11th March, 2025, officers had responded, stating that the current application was a new application and that overprovision would be a material consideration.

On 19th March, 2025, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, officers had issued a Notice of Proposed Decision to the Applicant advising that it was proposing to refuse the licence on the grounds of overprovision.

The HMO Unit Manager advised the Committee that the applicant had declined the invitation to attend the meeting.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McKay  
Seconded by Councillor McCann and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to refuse the application as, in accordance with Section 12 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, it could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, as determined under section 8(2)(d) of the Act.

**Non-Delegated Matters**

**Motion: Harm Reduction Campaign**

The Committee was presented with the following motion, which had been referred to it by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 27th March:



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Moved by Councillor Smyth,  
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite

“This Council recognises the increasing harm associated with drug and alcohol misuse in Belfast, including rising drug-related deaths and the consequences of zero-tolerance policies. Following the successful harm reduction campaign launched in Bristol, in which it became the first harm reduction city in the UK, this Council commits to introducing a similar initiative in Belfast to promote safer nightlife practices.

It will seek to bring together stakeholders from across the night-time economy, including venues, promoters, the PHA, PSNI, community organisations and Belfast City Council. To develop city wide harm reduction messaging and educational materials/guides for venues to promote harm reduction strategies. As well as developing training resources, safety first policies and community engagement to reduce the stigma of substance misuse.”

With the agreement of the Committee, Councillor Smyth addressed the Committee and explained his rationale for requesting the initiative.

After discussion, during which the Director of Planning and Building Control outlined the next steps, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting to provide it with options on what approach could be taken towards the implementation of a Harm Reduction Campaign, including any potential cost implications.

### **Revised Amusement Permit Policy**

The Principal Building Control Surveyor presented the following report to the Committee:

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

- 1.1 To advise Committee that amendments have been made to the Council’s Amusement Permit policy and to seek permission to commence consultation on the amended policy.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Committee is asked to consider the amended Amusement Permit policy and, subject to any changes that Members deem necessary, agree that consultation be initiated on the policy.**

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Committee is required to consider all applications for the grant of an Amusement Permit under the Betting, Gaming,**

**Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 (the Order).**

- 3.2 Members are advised that the Council agreed to the introduction of an Amusement Permit policy at their meeting of 1 May 2013.**
- 3.3 The aim of the policy is to serve as a guide for Elected Members, Council officers, applicants and the wider public on applications for amusement permits in the Belfast City Council area. By outlining those matters which may be taken into account in determining an application for an amusement permit the policy is intended to introduce greater clarity, transparency and consistency to the decision-making process.**
- 3.4 The need for the policy was highlighted by previous Court decisions on amusement permit applications. These demonstrated the need for the Council to make its position clear on the issues to be considered when deciding to grant or refuse an amusement permit application under the 1985 Order. Some of these issues, such as location, character and impact on neighbours/surrounding area often overlap with planning considerations.**
- 3.5 The policy has been in operation since 2013 and is considered by Committee as part of the decision-making process in respect of every application for the grant of an amusement permit.**
- 3.6 The key objectives of the policy are to: -**
- 1. Promote the retail vibrancy and regeneration of Belfast;**
  - 2. Enhance the tourism and cultural appeal of Belfast by protecting its image and built heritage;**
  - 3. Support and safeguard residential communities in Belfast;**
  - 4. Protect children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling;**
  - 5. Respect the need to prevent gambling from being a source of crime and disorder.**
- 3.7 To meet these policy objectives when determining amusement permit applications, the Council will assess each application on its own merits and will:**
- 1. have regard to the requirements set out in the 1985 Order; and**

2. assess the suitability of the location for a proposed amusement arcade, which will typically be based on several assessment criteria set out in the policy. Namely the: -
  3. Impact on the retail vitality of Belfast City;
  4. Cumulative build-up of amusement arcades in a particular location;
  5. Impact on the image and profile of Belfast;
  6. Proximity to residential use; and
  7. Proximity to schools, youth centres and residential institutions for vulnerable people.

**Changes to the policy**

- 3.8 As with any policy of the Council it is important that it is reviewed and updated so that it can remain relevant.
- 3.9 A review of wording and terminology has taken place and quoted website links and references have been updated. Some parts of the policy have been reworded to make it easier to read and understand its meaning.
- 3.10 While the main elements of the policy remain in place, they have been updated to take into account the following:
  - changes in related policy and legislation, notably the Belfast Local Development Plan and its supplementary planning guidance;
  - court judgements in respect of the Permit Policy since 2013; and
  - general lessons learnt from the application of the policy.
- 3.11 Dr Tony Quinn of Braniff Associates, a consultant with experience of policy formulation and planning matters, helped formulate the initial policy and has been involved in updating the recent amended version before you for consideration.
- 3.12 The proposed policy changes have also been reviewed with Legal Services, King's Counsel and colleagues in the Planning Service.
- 3.13 Dr Quinn will be available at your meeting to answer any queries you may have in relation to the revised policy.
- 3.14 Subject to any amendments Members may require it is proposed that the revised draft Amusement Permit Policy be subject to consultation in line with normal Council procedures. Those consulted will include the Gaming

Industry, Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure Planning, Police Service of N. Ireland, CommunityNI on Gambling, Gamblers Anonymous Ireland and various interested parties and organisations.

**4.0     Financial and Resource Implications**

**4.1     None associated with this report.**

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

**5.1     A review of the equality screening exercise undertaken in 2012 is being carried out and a full equality screening and rural needs assessment will be undertaken prior to consultation and implementation of the amended policy.”**

The Chairperson welcomed Dr. T. Quinn, Braniff Associates, to the meeting. He had been involved in formulating the initial policy and had also been involved in updating it. He provided the Committee with further details on the rationale behind the amendments.

In response to a Member’s question, the Principal Building Control Surveyor advised the Committee that, while the Council issued Amusement Permits, the PSNI was responsible for enforcement of the legislation and did not inform the Council of any specific actions taken against any Amusement Permit holder.

The Committee considered the amended Amusement Permit policy and agreed that consultation on it be commenced.

**Review of Street Trading Licence Fees**

The Senior Licensing Officer presented the following report to the Committee:

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

**1.1     Section 15 of the Street Trading Act (NI) 2001 gives the Council the power to set sufficient fees to allow it to recover the full costs of administering the Street Trading Licence Scheme. The Act, prescribes the range of circumstances in which the Council may charge a fee:**

- 1.     For the grant or renewal of a Street Trading Licence,**
- 2.     For the grant of a Temporary Licence; and**
- 3.     For varying the conditions on a Licence at the request of the licence holder.**

**1.2     The Act also limits the maximum amount of the fee to that required to cover the Council’s costs in administering the scheme. The Council is, therefore, denied the right to use the Street Trading Licensing system to raise revenue.**

- 1.3 The EU Services Directive, the Provision of Services Regulation 2009 and the Hemming V Westminster City Council court case have provided clarity about the specific requirements that apply to the charging of licence fees. Charges must be reasonable and proportionate to the cost of the processes associated with a licensing scheme and councils must not use fees to make a profit or act as an economic deterrent to certain business types from operating within an area.**

**Procedure for fee setting**

- 1.4 The Act states the procedures which the Council must follow in setting the fees and these stages may be summarised as follows:**
- 1. The Council is to give notice of the proposed fees to licence holders and to publish a notice in two or more newspapers showing how the fees have been calculated.**
  - 2. The Council is required to consider any written representations concerning the proposed fees and charges.**
  - 3. The Council after reaching its final decision must inform licence holders and publish a final notice in two or more newspapers showing the new fees.**
  - 4. Furthermore, the Act allows the Council to determine the time and manner in which fees or charges are to be paid.**
- 1.5 However, as a prerequisite, Members need to determine the proposed level of fee, which will allow the Council to start the statutory process for setting the fee as per stage one above.**
- 1.6 As we progress, further reports will be brought before the Committee detailing the outcome of the process of consultation. At that stage Members will be able to determine the final fee you consider appropriate.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the three options below (in the key issues) and to determine which option to approve and authorise that option of proposed fees for publication and commence consultation with licence holders.**
- 2.2 Should you not accept the proposed fees in option 1, which are set at a level to recover the cost of administering the**

scheme, the matter may require to be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration as any shortfall in income may have an impact on the rates.

- 2.3 Members are advised that the Licensing Committee does not have delegated powers in relation to policy decisions concerning licensing matters and as such your recommendation as to the appropriate fees for Street Trading Licences will be subject to ratification by Council.

3.0 **Main report**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 The current Street Trading Licence fees were set in 2017. In the intervening time period, the Council has processed numerous licence applications and dealt with any associated licence holder queries. This has allowed the Service to have a better understanding of what it costs to administer the licence scheme.
- 3.2 During that period costs associated with administering an application and monitoring licence compliance have also increased, such as staff costs relating to salary, employer's National Insurance contributions, superannuation contributions, etc.
- 3.3 The process for administration and regulation of the various types of licences has been examined and the time allocated to each task has been reviewed.
- 3.4 In assessing our processes for both Stationary and Mobile Licences it has been determined that both types of Licence cost an identical amount for licence compliance. The cost for a Stationary Licence application or for the renewal of a Mobile Licence application to be processed are also identical.
- 3.5 Temporary Licences were extensively examined and, in particular, the amount of work that is required to process and ensure licence compliance. Given the nature of a Temporary Licence it is normally granted for 1 day for a one-off event, a daily charge is therefore applied.
- 3.6 The amount of work required for processing a Temporary Licence application is the same as the other types of licences; hence the cost of a Temporary Licence application is identical.
- 3.7 Members are reminded that in 2017, you decided to set a fee for a permanent trader who has a Monday – Friday licence but only trades on one day during the week at £300, on the basis

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that it was one-fifth of the proposed fee of £1,500 in June 2016, which had been approved for public consultation.

- 3.8 Members are further reminded that when the Committee set the current fees in 2017, they had agreed that two site visits a year were appropriate to have no detrimental effect on compliance. The cost of compliance visits at the weekend includes an enhanced pay rate; this is particularly evident when two compliance visits are included for Weekend and Sunday only traders.
- 3.9 The detailed costs of how these fees were calculated are attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.10 The following table is a summary of the proposed fees which have been rounded to the nearest pound. (Option 1)

<b>STATIONARY LICENCE</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Calculated fee</b>
Application Fee - Non refundable	£150	£385
Licensed for Monday to Friday	£800	£1,400
<i>Licensed for one day (Mon-Fri)</i>	£300	
Licensed for Monday to Saturday	£1,000	£1,470
Licensed for Monday to Sunday	£1,250	£1,600
Licensed for Saturday	£520	£1,340
Licensed for Sunday	£580	£1,400
<b>MOBILE LICENCE</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Calculated fee</b>
Application Fee - Non refundable	£180	£385
Licensed for Monday to Friday	£550	£1,255
<i>Licensed for one day (Mon-Fri)</i>	£300	
Licensed for Monday to Saturday	£800	£1,300
Licensed for Monday to Sunday	£1,100	£1,450
Licensed for Saturday	£300	£1,190
Licensed for Sunday	£380	£1,250
<b>TEMPORARY LICENCE</b>	<b>Current Fee</b>	<b>Calculated fee</b>
Application Fee - <i>Non refundable</i>	£ 180	£385
Licensed for Monday to Friday, per day	£40	£130
Licensed for Saturday	£50	£200

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Licensed for Sunday or Public holiday	£70	£260
Variation of Licence Particulars	£100	£190

- 3.11 A further two options have been considered as outlined below, and an overview of all three fee options are attached as Appendix 2.

**Option 2**

- 3.12 Another option to consider would be to applying the cost of inflation to the current fees set in 2017 to determine the 2025 fees. To do this we used the Bank of England inflation calculator, this uses the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation data from the Office for National Statistics. The rate was calculated using figures from the Bank of England for December 2024.
- 3.13 Adopting this option will give Committee, in any future fee review exercise, a better baseline for comparison as these fees will be more relevant to present day monetary value.
- 3.14 However, this option will not address the significant shortfall in cost recovery for the licensing application process, in particular the cost of processing a grant/renewal application.

STATIONARY LICENCE	Current fee	Inflation	Say
Application Fee - Non refundable	£150	£196.72	£200
Licensed for Monday to Friday	£800	£1,049.16	£1,050
Licensed for one day (Mon-Fri)	£300	£393.43	£395
Licensed for Monday to Saturday	£1,000	£1,311.45	£1,310
Licensed for Monday to Sunday	£1,250	£1,639.31	£1,640
Licensed for Saturday	£520	£681.95	£680
Licensed for Sunday	£580	£760.64	£760
MOBILE LICENCE	Current fee	Inflation	Say
Application Fee - Non refundable	£180	£ 236	£ 240



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Licensed for Monday to Friday	£550	£721	£720
Licensed for one day (Mon-Fri)	£300	£393.43	£395
Licensed for Monday to Saturday	£800	£1,049.16	£1,050
Licensed for Monday to Sunday	£1,100	£1,442.59	£1,450
Licensed for Saturday	£300	£393.43	£400
Licensed for Sunday	£380	£498.35	£500
<b>TEMPORARY LICENCE</b>	<b>Current fee</b>	<b>Inflation</b>	<b>Say</b>
<b>Application Fee - <i>Non refundable</i></b>	<b>£ 180</b>	<b>£236</b>	<b>£240</b>
Licensed for Monday to Friday, per day	£40	£52.46	£52
Licensed for Saturday	£50	£65.57	£65
Licensed for Sunday or Public holiday	£70	£91.80	£90
Variation of Licence Particulars	£100	£249.18	£250

**Option 3**

- 3.15 When Committee last determined the fees, they had asked officers to formulate an option, based around a combination of the latter two options. In calculating this option, Officers have determined the difference between the calculated fee and the cost of increase in inflation fee, split that difference and added this to the cost of the inflation fee. Where inflation is the same or higher than the calculated fee, the inflation fee is proposed.

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<b>STATIONARY LICENCE</b>	<b>Current fee</b>	<b>Calculated fee</b>	<b>Inflation fee</b>	<b>Proposed fee</b>
<b>Application Fee - Non refundable</b>	<b>£150</b>	<b>£385</b>	<b>£200</b>	<b>£290</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Friday</b>	<b>£800</b>	<b>£1,400</b>	<b>£1,050</b>	<b>£1,225</b>
<b>Licensed for one day (Mon-Fri)</b>	<b>£300</b>		<b>£395</b>	<b>£395</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Saturday</b>	<b>£1,000</b>	<b>£1,470</b>	<b>£1,310</b>	<b>£1,390</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Sunday</b>	<b>£1,250</b>	<b>£1,600</b>	<b>£1,640</b>	<b>£1,640</b>
<b>Licensed for Saturday</b>	<b>£520</b>	<b>£1,340</b>	<b>£680</b>	<b>£1,010</b>
<b>Licensed for Sunday</b>	<b>£580</b>	<b>£1,400</b>	<b>£760</b>	<b>£1,080</b>
<b>MOBILE LICENCE</b>				
<b>Application Fee - Non refundable</b>	<b>£180</b>	<b>£385</b>	<b>£ 240</b>	<b>£310</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Friday</b>	<b>£550</b>	<b>£1,190</b>	<b>£720</b>	<b>£955</b>
<b>Licensed for one day (Mon-Fri)</b>	<b>£300</b>		<b>£395</b>	<b>£395</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Saturday</b>	<b>£800</b>	<b>£1,300</b>	<b>£1,050</b>	<b>£1,175</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Sunday</b>	<b>£1,100</b>	<b>£1,450</b>	<b>£1,450</b>	<b>£1,450</b>
<b>Licensed for Saturday</b>	<b>£300</b>	<b>£1,190</b>	<b>£400</b>	<b>£795</b>
<b>Licensed for Sunday</b>	<b>£380</b>	<b>£1,250</b>	<b>£500</b>	<b>£875</b>
<b>TEMPORARY LICENCE</b>	<b>Current fee</b>	<b>Calculated fee</b>	<b>Inflation fee</b>	<b>Proposed fee</b>
<b>Application Fee - <i>Non refundable</i></b>	<b>£ 180</b>	<b>£385</b>	<b>£240</b>	<b>£310</b>
<b>Licensed for Monday to Friday, per day</b>	<b>£40</b>	<b>£130</b>	<b>£52</b>	<b>£91</b>
<b>Licensed for Saturday</b>	<b>£50</b>	<b>£200</b>	<b>£65</b>	<b>£132</b>
<b>Licensed for Sunday or Public holiday</b>	<b>£70</b>	<b>£260</b>	<b>£90</b>	<b>£175</b>
<b>Variation of Licence Particulars</b>	<b>£100</b>	<b>£190</b>	<b>£250</b>	<b>£250</b>

- 3.16** For Members information, in order to accommodate licence holders, Mobile and Stationary Licence Fees will continue to be spread over a one year period of twelve equal instalments. The first payment must be received before the licence is issued. The remaining eleven instalments may be made by

**Direct Debit or eleven payments in person. For a three year licence, the trader would in effect continue to make 36 payments over the licence term.**

- 3.17 Authorisation is sought to permit the publication of the Statutory 28 Day Notice and to commence consultation with licence holders.**

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 There are direct financial costs attached to the administration of the street trading scheme by the Council and, whilst fees have been set, the cost to administer the scheme is only partially recovered from applicants based on our information to date.**

- 4.2 If the fee proposals as set out, based on the cost of administering the scheme, are not accepted by the Committee, the implications of the shortfall in fee income will be considered further, and may result in future growth proposals for the Service.**

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

- 5.1 There are no equality or good relations issues associated with this report.”**

During discussion, the Senior Licensing Officer answered Members’ questions in relation to the costings and he drew the Committee’s attention to the two appendices which explained the processing tasks and estimated costs involved for each application.

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that, given the points raised during discussion, it might wish to opt for Option 2 or 3.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,  
Seconded by Councillor McCann and

Resolved – that the Committee approves and authorises Option 3 of the proposed fees, as detailed above, and authorises the publication of the proposed fees to commence consultation with licence holders.

Chairperson

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## Planning Committee

Tuesday, 15th April, 2025

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;  
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan,  
T. Brooks, Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett,  
Groogan, Hanvey, Magee, McCabe, McCann,  
Murphy and Whyte.
- In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management),  
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;  
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer;  
Mr. P. O'Reilly, Senior Planning Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th March, 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 1st April, 2025.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in items 9b, LA04/2024/2131/F - Section 54 planning application to revise the wording of the planning condition numbers 13 and 15 (Relating access gradient and visibility splays) of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F. 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower and 9c, LA04/2025/0305/F - Section 54 application to amend condition 8 of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F relating to the submission of foul and surface water drainage details. - 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower in that she was an employee of Queen's University and left the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in item 9a, LA04/2024/1385/F - Amendment to planning permission Z/2013/0931/F to permit occupation for Class B1(a) office and/or Class B1(c) research and development. (amended description and information) - Olympic House, Titanic Quarter, 5 Queens Road, in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to item 9b, LA04/2024/2131/F - Section 54 planning application to revise the wording of the planning condition numbers 13

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and 15 (Relating access gradient and visibility splays) of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F. 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower, in that his employer had previously worked with the agent.

**Withdrawn Item**

The Committee noted that the following item had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- LA04/2024/0267/F - Change of Use from Dwelling to 6no bed HMO(amended description) - 11 Friendly Way.

**Committee Site Visits**

**Note of Committee Site Visits**

The Committee noted the site visits.

**Pre-emptive Committee Site Visits**

The Committee agreed to undertake site visits to the following applications sites:

- LA04/2024/1592/F and LA04/2024/1595/LBC - Residential development comprising the demolition of no. 8 Marlborough Street, partial demolition of existing Marlborough House, and the refurbishment of existing Listed Building (Princes Court) (3 storeys), for the erection of 103 no. apartments (mix of 1-bed, 2-bed and 3 bed units) (7 storeys), with provision of private amenity, and internal and external communal amenity spaces; and associated site and infrastructure works. - Marlborough House, (no. 28-32 Victoria Street), and no. 8 Marlborough Street;
- LA04/2024/2044/F - Erection of 895 room Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) across 9-20 storey building blocks with communal facilities, internal and external communal amenity space including landscaped courtyard and roof terraces and ancillary accommodation. With additional use outside term time (no more than 50% of the rooms) as short-term let accommodation and (no more than 50% of the rooms) accommodation for use by further or higher education institutions - Lands at 39 Corporation Street;
- LA04/2024/1761/RM - Application for approval of reserved matters application for a medical facility in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details. - Land forming Plot 9 of the Kings Hall development as approved by LA04/2020/0845/O;

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- LA04/2024/2020/F - Extension to Kings Hall Plot 2 building to provide first floor link bridge between Plot 2 and Plot 9. - Land at Kings Hall and RUAS site, southeast of Dataworks building and east of Kings Hall;
- LA04/2024/2024/RM - 41no. retirement living apartments at Plot 6, parking and landscaping in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details. - Royal Ulster Agricultural Society, the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road; and
- LA04/2024/2026/RM - Multi Storey Car Park with ground floor units for local retail uses, restaurant and cafe uses leisure and gym facilities at Plot 8, new public realm and amenity open space including a central plaza in accordance with outline planning permission LA04/2020/0845/O, seeking approval of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping details. - Royal Ulster Agricultural Society the Kings Hall, 488-516 Lisburn Road

**Planning Appeals Notified**

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

**Planning Decisions Issued**

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in March, 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**

**Delegation of Local applications with NI Water objections**

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

**Confirmation of Listed Buildings - 119 University Street,  
121 University Street, 2 Malone Hill Park, 6 Malone  
Hill Park**

The Committee noted the confirmation of Listed Buildings.

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**Planning Applications previously considered**

**LA04/2022/1046/F - Proposed demolition of existing building and construction of a residential development consisting of 14 No. units (9 No. apartments within a three-storey building and 5 No. two storey terraced dwellings) with associated landscaping and car parking (amended description). - 18 Annadale Avenue**

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

- Principle of housing at the location;
- Affordable housing;
- Demolition of existing building;
- Housing density;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Access and transport;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste management;
- Natural heritage; and
- Section 76 Planning Agreement.

He referred the Committee to the applicant's justification for demolition of the existing building and the viability assessment which had been submitted that outlined various potential options to retain and convert the existing building to other uses, which made the case that retention of the existing building was not feasible.

He explained that, since the publication of the report, NI Water had submitted a response which advised that further engagement with the applicant was required in order to address network capacity issues and advised that, the issues raised by NI Water had been addressed within the report.

He informed the Committee that six further objections had been received and he summarised the issues which had been raised.

He reported that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to



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conditions and the agreed Section 76 planning agreement to secure a viability review of the scheme, prior to commencement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. E. Morgan, Agent, Mr. K. Campbell and Mr. J. Campbell, Applicants, and Mr. M. Donnelly, Quantity Surveyor, to the meeting.

Mr. Morgan explained that he was engaged by the applicants, a father and son team, in 2020 and that a PAD had been submitted to the Planning Service who had stated that the principle of development on the site was acceptable and subsequent to the advice, the applicants had purchased the site.

He stated that a design team had been appointed to explore development options for the site and that the initial brief had been to work with the existing structure.

He stated that, in an attempt to retain the building, the design team had exhausted many options, which included conversion to a single-family dwelling, subdivision into two, four and five residential apartments and consideration given to other uses, that included short term rented accommodation and office use, however, all had been deemed unviable.

He outlined some of the issues which had contributed to the aforementioned options having been deemed unviable.

Mr. Morgan explained that the building had previous approval for demolition and provision of 14 apartments and had been declared unsuitable for listed status as it was not located within a conservation area and how the proposed redevelopment would make best use of architectural salvage and derelict building materials such as red brick, stone cills and roof tiles for incorporation into the new building.

He stated that, without redevelopment, the property would remain vacant and unused and, given the increased demand for housing, the proposal would provide fourteen high quality, sustainable homes.

He stated that the planning process had been lengthy and costly process and that building costs had increased substantially which had affected the overall development viability. He asked the Committee to accept the recommendation to approve the application.

A number of Members raised questions with regard to the viability options that would retain the original building or façade,

A Member asked Mr. M. Doherty, Naylor Devlin, who was in attendance at the meeting, if he had seen an alternative option that would retain the building façade. Mr. Doherty said that he had not seen such an option.

The Planning Manager explained that the viability option information that had been received was high level and had not been scrutinised. He added that it would be unreasonable to refuse the application based on viability issues and reminded the Committee that the application site was not in a protected area.

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**Proposal 1**

Moved by Councillor T. Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor Hanvey,

“The building at 18 Annadale Avenue, whilst not listed or in a conservation area, makes a positive contribution to its existing built environment.

Policy ENV2 states that development proposals should, where feasible, seek to avoid demolition and should consider how existing buildings or their main structures could be reused.

If demolished the embodied carbon in the existing building will be lost and the built heritage of Annadale Avenue will be chipped away further.

The committee therefore does not agree to the demolition of this building and refuses planning permission.”

Upon hearing the undernoted proposal from Councillor Groogan, Councillor T. Brooks withdrew her proposal.

**Proposal 2**

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor Garrett, and

Resolved – “That consideration of the application is deferred to allow the applicant to provide further viability information regarding options to retain the original building.

**New Planning Applications**

**LA04/2024/1385/F - Amendment to planning permission Z/2013/0931/F to permit occupation for Class B1(a) office and/or Class B1(c) research and development. (amended description and information) - Olympic House, Titanic Quarter, 5 Queens Road**

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the application sought to amend permission Z/2013/0913/F to provide flexibility whereby the building could be occupied as either Class B1(a) or B1(c), or a combination of both.

She stated that the applicant was willing to enter into a Section 76 planning agreement to provide construction employability and skills in respect of the specific occupier fit-out of the

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building and specific restrictions on the occupancy of the building, in order to minimise the potential for impacts on the city centre.

She informed the Committee that the case officer report had omitted reference to a letter of support from the NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry which echoed many of the points made by the Belfast Chamber in its letter of support and stated that the application had the potential to make a substantial contribution to helping Belfast meet its demand for high-quality office space, supporting economic growth and attracting inward investment.

She referred the Committee to the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of the proposed uses;
- Environmental impacts;
- Health impacts;
- Climate change;
- Traffic and access;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-Application Community Consultation.

She pointed out that, since the report had been published, an additional objection had been received from Gravis Planning which reinforced the previous grounds of objection and, in addition, raised issues with the methodology employed by Lisney in its report and that the policy did not recognise ESG credential or different grades of office space. She explained that the concerns raised had been addressed within the report.

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the material considerations, consultation and assessment to the Committee. She reported that the proposal was in conflict with Policies EC3 and EC6 of the Plan Strategy as it had not been demonstrated that the level of proposed Class B1(a) floor space could not be accommodated in a city centre location and the sequential test had not been met.

She stated that it was the officers' view that there were overriding material considerations whereby there was an exceptional set of circumstances that outweighed the policy conflict.

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

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Hanvey, Gravis Planning, to the meeting, who spoke in objection to the application.

Mr. Hanvey explained that the recommendation to approve the application at contradicted the objectives and planning policies of the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) - Plan Strategy and wider regional planning policy and that this had been confirmed by the Council's Local Development Plan Team in its most recent consultation response.

He stated that the original application had been specific in relation to the split between floor area and for Use Class B1(a) and Use Class B1(c), with the majority of the floorspace being for Use Class B1(c) or 'Research and Development' purposes.

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He stated that the current application would more than treble the amount of office floorspace that had originally been envisaged for Phase II of Titanic Quarter. He added that the policy was clear, in that Class B1(a) uses would only be permitted in a major or strategic employment locations where it could not be accommodated in a city centre location and that it would otherwise result in the loss of a significant inward investment.

Mr. Hanvey stated that the Lisney report had omissions in its summary of available accommodation in the market, which included All State's building, Lanyon Plaza, The Soloist and Adelaide Exchange. He added that buildings such as 9 Lanyon Place and the Waterside Tower were marketed as Grade A office buildings.

He stated that the Council's Local Development Plan clearly stated that Grade A certification or BREEAM standards were not policy considerations and that market intervention to change or widen the use classification and Olympic House, to assist private sector developer where they had failed to achieve product market fit, was not the responsibility of the planning system.

He concluded by stating that the vitality and viability of Belfast city centre was a challenge for a variety of reasons and that the proposal would only exacerbate the challenges for retailers and service providers that were already closing in significant numbers. He asked the Committee to give his submission due consideration in the determination of the application.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. S. McKee, Turley, Mr. J. Eyre, Titanic Qtr Ltd., Mr. B. Lavery, CBRE, and Mr. C. O'Hara, RPS Tetra Tech, to the meeting, speaking on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. McKee explained that Olympic House was a high-quality Grade A BREEAM Excellent and ESG compliant office building that had been fully constructed to shell and core standard and ready for occupation. He stated that it had the ability to support over 1360 jobs and represented a £40m investment in the city.

He reported that, despite active marketing prior to, during construction and post completion five years ago, there had been not tenancies secured, despite there having been a series of expressions of interest from prospective occupiers, and the building remained unoccupied.

He stated that CBRE, Lisney and Invest NI had confirmed that the demand for B1(c) accommodation was very limited and not expected to change in the short to mid-term. He explained that Lisney had stated that a very significant challenge for Belfast was that there was just 220,000 square foot of Grade A BREEAM Excellent accommodation available which was less than a one-year supply and that the lack of supply was compounded by the fact that no new speculative accommodation of that calibre was likely to come forward within the next three years and perhaps longer, due to market rents persisting at £25 per square foot.

Mr. McKee stated that CBRE and Lisney had also confirmed that other competing cities were carrying strong levels of unrestricted accommodation of the same calibre, ready for occupation and that Lisney had advised that the proposed amendments to the Olympic House permission would not negatively impact Belfast's existing city centre office market and instead,

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would highlight a greater set of concerns that could arise from a shortage of Grade A BREEAM excellent office space.

He concluded by stating that the Council's Planning Service had appropriately weighed the prevailing planning policy context and key material considerations and found consistent with its commercial advisors, Lisney, that there would not be significant adverse impact on the city centre and that the proposal was acceptable.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement, and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

The Committee further agreed that, should the planning agreement not be completed by 31st May 2025, the application would be reported back to the Committee for reconsideration.

(The Committee agreed to consider the following two applications together.)

(Councillors T. Brooks and Whyte left the meeting for the following two items.)

**LA04/2024/2131/F - Section 54 planning application to revise the wording of the planning condition numbers 13 and 15 (Relating access gradient and visibility splays) of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F. 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower; and**

**LA04/2025/0305/F - Section 54 application to amend condition 8 of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F relating to the submission of foul and surface water drainage details. - 38-52 Lisburn Road, Malone Lower**

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the applications to amend conditions 8, 13 and 15 of LA04/2023/3778/F as follows:

**Approved Condition 8**

Notwithstanding the submitted details, no development shall commence on site (other than site clearance, site preparation, demolition and the formation of foundations and trenches) unless details of foul and surface water drainage, including a programme for implementation of these works, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The development shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the approved details, which shall be retained as such thereafter.

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Proposed Amendment:

Notwithstanding the submitted details, ***no development shall be occupied*** on site unless details of foul and surface water drainage, including a programme for implementation of these works, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Council. The development shall not be carried out unless in accordance with the approved details, which shall be retained as such thereafter.

Approved Condition 13

The access gradients to the development hereby permitted shall not exceed 4% (1 in 25) over the first 10m outside the road boundary. Where the vehicular access crosses a footway or verge, the access gradient shall be between 4% (1 in 25) maximum and 2.5% (1 in 40) minimum and shall be formed so that there is no abrupt change of slope along the footway.

Proposed Amendment:

The access gradients to the development hereby permitted shall not exceed 4% (1 in 25) over the ***first 10m outside the carriageway***. Where the vehicular access crosses a footway or verge, the access gradient shall be between 4% (1 in 25) maximum and 2.5% (1 in 40) minimum and shall be formed so that there is no abrupt change of slope along the footway

Approved Condition 15

No development shall commence on site (other than that required to fulfil this condition) unless the visibility splays have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. Within the visibility splays, there shall at no time be obstruction to visibility above 250mm as measured from ground level.

Proposed Amendment:

No development shall commence on site (other than that required to fulfil this condition ***and including site clearance, site preparation, demolition and the formation of foundations and trenches***) unless the visibility splays have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. Within the visibility splays, there shall at no time be obstruction to visibility above 250mm as measured from ground level.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. L. Talbot, JUNO Planning, to the meeting, speaking on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Talbot explained that the proposed rewording of the conditions did not revise or contradict the approved plan and only served to ensure that the site works could continue in line with the project plan.

He pointed out that NI Water was content with the amended wording of the conditions.

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The Committee granted planning permission to vary conditions 13 and 15 of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided the issues were not substantive.

The Committee granted planning permission to vary condition 8 of planning approval LA04/2023/3778/F and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided the issues were not substantive.

(Councillors T. Brooks and Whyte returned to the meeting.)

**LA04/2024/0675/F - Change of Use of first and second floor to 39 No. apartments; extension to second floor for 6 No. apartments and erection of new third floor for 19 No. apartments (all social housing dwellings, 64 No. in total), and ancillary/associated works. Solar panels on roof (amended plans and description). - The Arches Centre 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue**

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

- Principle of residential in the location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Public realm;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Impact on trees;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Natural heritage;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

He stated that since publication of the report, Environmental Health had provided a consultation response to indicate that it was content with the proposal, subject to conditions and that Building Control had raised concern of the waste management plan with regard to distance to bins.

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He reported that NIHE was supportive of the social housing proposals and that no third party objections had been received.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

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

Mr. Bryson explained that he fully endorsed the application which represented a highly sustainable development of a locally important building and requested that the Committee approved the officers' recommendation to approve the application.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the established retailer located on the ground floor of the application site and how the applicant would minimise impact on the existing business, Mr. Bryson explained that the applicant operated the businesses on the ground floor and that the scheme would not see any change to the ground floor operations and that engagement and consultation with retailers would be ongoing to minimise any disruption.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to resolved final consultation responses, finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided the issues were not substantive.

**LA04/2025/0239/F and LA04/2025/0240/DCA -  
Renewal of LA04/2019/2651/F - Demolition of  
existing garage, carport, porch and roof to  
dwelling. Single storey extension to side and  
rear. Porch extension to front, new roof creating  
a new ridge level and associated site works - 21a  
Cyprus Avenue**

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 and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided the issues were not substantive.

Chairperson



## Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 10th April, 2025

### MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Councillors Anglin, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,  
T. Brooks, Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly,  
P. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Flynn, Hanvey,  
Long, Magee and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner; and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance  
Coordinator.

### **Apologies**

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 13th March, 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 1st April, 2025.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

### **Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme update**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. C. O'Neill, Project Manager of the Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme representing the Department for Infrastructure Rivers, to the meeting.

Ms. O'Neill reminded the Committee that the scheme dealt with the risk of tidal flood waters overtopping the quay walls and flooding into the city. It did not include any measures to address pluvial or surface water flooding, fluvial flooding from any tributaries of the Lagan or any back drainage issues, including potential surcharging from existing drainage systems during flood events in the Lagan.

She advised that tidal events were typically forecast which allowed time to enact any emergency plans.

It was reported that the project model had identified that there were currently over 1500 properties in Belfast at risk of tidal flooding and, based on the application of climate change allowances: over 3900 by 2080 and over 7300 by 2117.

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Ms. O'Neill explained the impact of climate change on increased storm surges and the need for the scheme.

She provided an overview of the scheme details which extended from Belfast Harbour to the Stranmillis Weir covering the extent of the tidal influence on the Lagan. She advised that the scheme was designed to reduce the impacts of tidal flooding from events up to the 1 in 200 year (0.5% AEP) event, including an allowance for climate change to 2080.

She highlighted that, to ensure a long term approach, the design of the RC Floodwalls were adaptable, providing an element of future proofing for the scheme enabling the walls to be raised to 2117 predicted levels. She pointed out that, as a secondary intervention, this catered for future refinement of the sea levels rises within any second intervention.

Ms. O'Neill outlined the line of defences along the river which also provided equal access with improved pathway surfaces integrating open spaces rather than creating corridors.

She described the different types of defences that had been included in the scheme, the environmental consideration and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report which had been undertaken.

She advised that the emergency responses in cases of flooding risk required assistance from multi-agency partners and that emergency planning exercises would be undertaken to inform the resource requirement and time needed to deploy.

Ms. O'Neill pointed out that there were helpful resources in the presentation regarding Capital Projects and Department webpages that provided further information on the issue.

She concluded that it was intended that this project would help Belfast manage the flood risk impacts presented by climate change by ultimately delivering enhanced protection for over 3000 homes and businesses from tidal flooding.

During discussion, Ms. O'Neill answered a range of question in relation to the flood barriers used across the city, the Lagan Weir, lessons learnt and environmental screening, planning policy and developments, and future proofing.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. O'Neill for her attendance and she retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**UPSURGE Project Update**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**1.1 To provide an update on progress on the Horizon UPSURGE project.**

## **2.0     Recommendation**

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

- i. Progress made in delivering the UPSURGE project;
- ii. Programme of activity under the Place Lab Action Plan for the remainder of the project up to February 2025;
- iii. The use of the project and the city as part of the TalX2 climate adaptation research project;
- iv. Risks and mitigations in place for the successful close out of the project in February 2026.

## **3.0     Progress on UPSURGE**

The UPSURGE project has been running now since September 2021 and is now in its final year. The project is an action research project developing a model for cities across Europe through testing nature based solutions for renaturing urban space, addressing challenges of cities' carbon footprint and air pollution. Belfast is one of five cities developing a demonstrator and testing different nature-based solutions and support learning on how adaptive practices and management of green spaces in the city can support pollution alleviation, citizen health and climate resilience.

The main demonstrator site is at Lower Botanic Gardens and has been working in partnership with QUB, Friends of the Field, Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens and more recently the All Island Climate Co+ Centre to deploy and test the following nature based solutions:

1. A research site testing soil contamination and urban growing
2. An agroecological community growing space and tree nursery
3. A climate resilience garden
4. Habitat restoration and improvement

In the past twelve months the community growing space has been established with a polytunnel, raised beds, compostable toilet, an outdoor learning space, mixed species hedgerow planting. A range of open days and volunteering days are facilitated by all the partners to enable greater stewardship of the space and build capacity and learning about urban growing. Habitat restoration works have taken place on the grassland to introduce wetland areas to boost biodiversity, improve soil quality and enable natural flood resilience on the site.

A range of visits to the space have also taken place to facilitate learning and knowledge exchange. In September, the city hosted 50 delegates from across the project partners and 5 cities as part of a Project Group Meeting. In March 2025, the DAERA Minister visited the site and met many of the community groups involved in growing in the area and learned of the partnership approach to building place based research into nature based solutions. A range of demonstrations have taken place including hydroseeding, scything, hedgerow planting, habitat restoration, cooking demos, and more. In September 2024, the project also supported the certification of 12 community growers in the city in Permaculture Design by running the first course of its kind in Northern Ireland, recognising the large skills and capacity gaps that currently exist in climate friendly practices in urban growing.

The four nature based solutions being tested on site are underway. Works still to be completed this year include the installation of environmental sensors, solar PV, fit out of the polytunnel, establishment of rainwater collection and harvesting, establishment of the climate resilience garden and development of a tree nursery.

### **3.1 Place Lab Action Plan**

As part of the project a Place Lab Action Plan has been developed with partners to engage with citizens on five key themes related to nature based solutions. In Belfast the following five objectives were set. They are:

1. **Ecosensitisation:** demonstrating the benefits of nature friendly land management to increase biodiversity. This will be delivered through open garden days, bioblitzes, engagement with schools, universities and citizen science projects.
2. **Social Benefits:** fostering greater engagement and equality of marginalised groups, when engaging with green spaces to support health and wellbeing. This is being delivered through growing workshops, cooking and sharing events, tree planting etc.
3. **Gender based NBS:** identifying and engaging with the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and QUB Working Group to understand systemic issues relating to women and girls' experience and engagement in green spaces in Belfast.
4. **Economic Opportunities:** understanding how community growing spaces could become economically sustainable, supporting skills development, training and more resilient funding models, whilst teaching skills in food production, composting, cooking, renewable energy etc.

5. **Political Capital:** increasing understanding of what nature based solutions are and the multiple co-benefits that they can deliver for communities. This will be achieved through visits, interpretation and knowledge sharing throughout 2025.

**Request for Belfast to be used for a Living Lab as part of the TalX2 project**

- 3.2 The Climate Team has been approached by Climate NI who are one of the partners on the TALX 2 project to request Belfast be used as one of three living labs for testing climate adaptation with communities, along with Dublin and Mayo. Talx 2 builds on the outputs of TalX1 to develop place-based adaptation partnerships, by building 'living labs' to engage communities and government to plan and adapt for an uncertain future. To achieve this the research has four objectives:
  1. Identify and analyse a range of place-based climate action partnerships both nationally and internationally and identify key principles employed in successful partnership working including the co-benefits and trade-offs;
  2. Establish living labs across the island of Ireland and using the TALX framework, work to advance climate action partnerships in these real world settings, unlock co-benefits, and identify no regret adaptation pathways in line with local, regional and national plans and policies;
  3. Identify cross-border areas where transboundary dialogue facilitation would enhance partnership working and provide a programme of activities to help to exploit potential opportunities for partnership working and minimising cascading/ transboundary risks;
  4. Evaluate and reflect on how the living labs and the cross-border programme of activities have developed over the course of the project and how engaged and embedded research/researchers can better enable place-based climate action partnerships, develop local adaptive capacity and support decision-making for climate action in Ireland by providing guidance and recommendations for other organisations and communities.

Following discussions with UPSURGE and UP2030 teams it is proposed that this Living Lab work alongside the UPSURGE Place Lab to share greater learning and knowledge exchange on how to deliver effective climate adaptation in Belfast. The project will run to March 2027 and can provide continuation of the learning in UPSURGE, which is due to end in February 2026. This partnership will include workshops, capacity building and co-developing

communication materials for communities around climate adaptation.

**3.3 Close out of the project and the future of the demonstrator site at Botanic Gardens**

The project has experienced a number of delays to the deployment of the capital works and sensor technology, due to a number of factors affecting demonstrator cities. As a result the project has been given a no cost extension to February 2026 by the funder, Horizon Europe.

As part of the close out of the project, the future of the site as a space for demonstration and learning for climate change should be considered as part of wider strategies for the redevelopment of the PEC at Queen's, the Pitch Strategy and the 200th anniversary celebrations of Belfast's Botanic Gardens in 2028.

**3.1 Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial implications for Belfast City Council.

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

None."

During discussion, the Climate Commissioner suggested that a site visit to the project would be useful and would be organised in due course.

In response to a Member's question in relation to one of the project's objectives to identify and engage with the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the Climate Commissioner advised that further information would be provided on this action.

The Committee noted:

- I. The progress made in delivering the UPSURGE project;
- II. The programme of activity under the Place Lab Action Plan for the remainder of the project up to February 2026;
- III. The use of the project and the city as part of the TalX2 climate adaptation research project;
- IV. Risks and mitigations in place for the successful close out of the project in February 2026.

The Committee also agreed that a site visit would be arranged to the UPSURGE project.

**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 item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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.

**Shared Island Funding Update**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update in relation to the Council’s current involvement under the Shared Island Initiative, and the role of officers in progressing projects and exploring future funding opportunities under this initiative for the Council and with organisations across the city.

The Committee:

- Noted the update provided in relation to the work underway in bringing forward council projects under the Shared Island Programme and a summary update of the projects at Appendix A;
- Agreed to extend an invitation to the Department of the Taoiseach’s Shared Island Unit (SIU) to attend a future meeting to update the Committee on the Shared Island Initiative and potential future opportunities for the city; and
- Agreed that Dr A. Soares, Director of the Centre of Cross Border Studies, be invited to present at a future Committee.

Chairperson

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## Standards and Business Committee

Monday, 28th April, 2025

### REMOTE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lawlor (Chairperson) and  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer);  
Alderman McCullough; and  
Councillors Bradley, de Faoite, P. Donnelly,  
D. Douglas, Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Maghie,  
McCallin, McDonough-Brown, 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  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance  
Coordinator.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 25th March were taken as read and signed as correct.  
It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st April.

### **Declaration of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

### **Motions**

The Committee considered the following three motions which had been received in  
advance of the Council's meeting on 1st May:

### **Pathways to Work Green Paper**

### **Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the Committee agrees that the motion, which had been proposed by  
Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, be referred to the  
Council for debate, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.

**Standards and Business Committee,  
Monday, 28th April, 2025**

**Amendment**

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

That the Committee agrees to adopt the motion.

On a vote, fourteen members voted for the proposal, with two no votes, and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee adopted the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Doherty and seconded by Councillor de Faoite:

“This Council strongly opposes the proposed Welfare reforms as part of the Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper from the UK government, which will have disproportionate impacts on vulnerable people in the North; commits to writing to the First and Deputy First Minister asking them to lobby the UK Government to reverse changes that will negatively impact vulnerable people; further commits to writing to the Minister for Communities to prepare a business case for a mitigation package which provides protections for current and future claimants from reductions in social security entitlements outlined in the Pathways to Work Green Paper.”

**U.S. War Planes out of Belfast**

Moved by the High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer,  
Seconded by Alderman McCullough and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Flynn, be referred to the Council for debate, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.

**National Famine Commemoration Day**

The City Solicitor reminded the Committee that an update on the previous motion relating to the matter: [National Famine Memorial Day 2024 motion](#) (Ref 336), had been provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in January 2024 and the motion had been subsequently closed. She highlighted that the response to the Council’s letter to the Minister at the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media on 8th November 2023, to make a request for Belfast to host the National Famine Memorial Day in May 2024, stated that the Commemoration would be due to take place in Ulster again in a number of years and the Department would keep the Council’s expression of interest on file for consideration.

**Standards and Business Committee,  
Monday, 28th April, 2025**

**Proposal**

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

Resolved - That the motion be adopted.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McKay and seconded by Councillor Brennan, be adopted:

“That this Council writes to the National Famine Commemoration Committee asking that they hold the National Famine Commemoration Day in Belfast in 2027.

This commemoration has never been in Belfast and has only been in the North once in Newry in 2015. With recent interest about rediscovering the history of the famine in Belfast, we believe that it would be appropriate for this remembrance to take place in Belfast reflecting on one of the most pivotal and painful chapters of our nation’s history.”

**Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes**

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

Chairperson

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## **U.S. War Planes Out of Belfast**

“This Council notes its alarm that Belfast Aldergrove Airport has been used as a transit point for US military aircraft and cargo en route to Europe and the Middle East. As reported by the *Irish News*, over 60 military flights have been detected using Aldergrove airport as a transit point during the 18 months of Israel's assault on Gaza. Over a dozen of these flights were found to have travelled to Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar: a key transfer point for large-scale munitions between the US and Israel.

The Council notes its grave concern that these flights were, therefore, likely carrying weapons and munitions which were used in the Israeli genocide in Gaza. This will cause considerable distress to the Palestine community living here in Belfast, as well as the many thousands of people in the city who have publicly demonstrated to demand an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid. Allowing this to continue without a robust challenge from our political institutions would signify a complicity on the part of our own devolved government with Israel's genocide, and the wider US imperial project.

The Council resolves to write to the Stormont Executive, the Westminster Government, and management of Aldergrove Airport to express its disgust at this complicity. The Council reiterates its opposition to war and demands that Irish soil, be it Shannon or Aldergrove, refuses to handle US military cargo in solidarity with the millions of people killed or displaced as a result of US imperialism.”

Proposed by: Councillor Michael Collins

Seconded by: Councillor Anthony Flynn

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