

# Public Document Pack

## BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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

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

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Thursday, 8th January, 2026 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 42)
7. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 43 - 50)
8. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 51 - 58)
9. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 59 - 66)
10. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 67 - 72)
11. Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 73 - 74)
12. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 75 - 84)

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

John Walsh

Chief Executive

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## Council

### MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

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

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson); The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty; The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer; Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

#### Summons

The Chief Executive read the summons convening the meeting.

#### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

#### Declarations of Interest

Councillor R-M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared an interest under item "Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting of 10th November" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that their employers were in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillor Beattie declared an interest under item "Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his employer operated a family support hub.

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

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Councillor Flynn declared an interest under item “Request from Commonwealth Games Northern Ireland” within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that he was a member of Archery Great Britain and Archery Northern Ireland.

Councillor Long declared an interest under items “Motion - Together: Building a United Community Strategy” and “Draft Amenity Bye Laws” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his wife was the Minister for Justice.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest under item “Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that his partner was a Minister in the NI Executive.

Councillor Verner declared an interest under item “Update on Hardship Programme 2025/26” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that her employer operated a family support hub.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest under item “Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update” within the City Growth and Regeneration Committee minutes, in that he worked with a number of Housing Associations and the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations.

**Minutes of the Council**

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 3rd November, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

**Official Announcements**

**Congratulations**

Alderman Lawlor expressed his congratulations to Linfield Football Club and Mr. D. Johnston, the Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner, for running a successful veterans remembrance reception event at Windsor Park.

Councillor I. McLaughlin congratulated the volunteers of Clarendon Development Association who had recently been awarded the King’s Award for Voluntary Service and the Lord Mayor acceded to his request to write a letter of congratulations.

Councillor McAteer congratulated Ms. Rachael Davison, Centre Manager for Walkway Community Association on 25 years of community work and the Lord Mayor acceded to her request to write a letter of congratulations to Ms. Davison.

Councillor R-M. Donnelly congratulated Naomh Owen and Slaughtneil GAA clubs on their recent success in the Ulster Hurling Championship.

Councillor Long offered his congratulations to Councillor Bower on the recent birth of her fifth child.

**Meeting of Council  
Monday, 1st December, 2025**

Councillor Murray congratulated the Oh Yeah Centre on receiving an award at the recent Aisling Awards.

Councillor R. Brooks attended the Pride of Place Awards with Councillor Carson and congratulated those who contributed to Belfast winning the Community Youth Initiative award. She also congratulated GLL and Templemore Baths for their recent win at the Aisling Awards.

**World Aids Day**

To mark World Aids Day, Councillor Murray thanked Positive Life NI for the work it did to promote a positive future for people living with or affected by HIV in Northern Ireland.

**Condolences**

Councillor M. Donnelly offered his condolences to the family of Mr. Paddy McStravick, founder of Newhall Football Club, following his recent passing and the Lord Mayor acceded to his request to write a letter of sympathy to his family and Newhill Football Club.

**Change of Positions of Responsibility**

The Chief Executive stated that notification had been received from the Democratic Unionist Party and Alliance Party, indicating that they wished to make the following changes to Positions of Responsibility:

- Councillor Cobain to replace Councillor R. Brooks as Chairperson of the People and Communities Committee;
- Councillor Ferguson to replace Alderman McCoubrey as the Deputy Chairperson of the Climate and City Resilience Committee;
- Councillor McCormick to replace Councillor Ferguson as the Deputy Chairperson of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee;
- Councillor Nelson to replace Councillor McDonough-Brown as the Deputy Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- Councillor Murray to replace Councillor McDonough-Brown on the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- Councillor McDonough-Brown to replace Councillor Murray on the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Council noted the changes.

**Meeting of Council  
Monday, 1st December, 2025**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Verner,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st November, omitting the item under the heading “Update on Standing Orders” which had been called in in accordance with sections 41(1)(a) and (b) of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, and matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

**Physical Programmes Update**

**Amendment 1**

Moved by Councillor McCoubrey,  
Seconded by Councillor Verner

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st November under the heading “Physical Programmes Update” in so far as it relates to Fernhill House, be rejected and accordingly, the project be moved to Stage 3.”

On a vote, thirty-one Members voted for the amendment and twenty-nine against and it was declared carried.

**Amendment 2**

Moved by Councillor Brennan,  
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st November under the heading “Belfast Stories Update” be amended to provide that the Council ceases the design development of the enhanced studio and event space provision (including use as a Media Production Studio) for the Belfast Stories scheme.”

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

**Draft Amenity Bye Laws**

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Long, and

Resolved – “That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st November under the heading “Draft Amenity Bye Laws” be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.”

**Meeting of Council  
Monday, 1st December, 2025**

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

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor McKay,  
Seconded by Councillor Black, and

Resolved – “That the decision under the heading “Requests for use of the City Hall and the provision of Hospitality” be amended to provide that a report be brought to the Committee that would provide an update on Council investigations into incidents which had occurred during the provision of hospitality and use of the City Hall.”

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st November, were thereupon approved and adopted.

**People and Communities Committee**

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 5th and 26th November, be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Boxing Strategy 2025/26**

**Amendment**

At the request of Councillor I. McLaughlin, in respect of the item under the heading “Belfast Boxing Strategy 2025/26”, the Chief Executive agreed a report would be brought to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that would provide legal advice on the Equality Commission report and the legality of pausing or conditioning the Boxing Strategy Funding.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th and 18th November, were thereupon approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council  
Monday, 1st December, 2025**

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 5th and 26th November be approved and adopted.

**Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update**

**Amendment**

At the request of Councillor R. McLaughlin, the Council agreed that the decision of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 5th November under the heading "Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update" be amended to provide that a report be brought back to the Committee at its meeting in January, that would outline potential impacts of the reduction to the Housing Association Grant rate on the delivery of social housing.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 5th and 26th November, were thereupon approved and adopted.

**Licensing Committee**

Moved by Councillor Doran,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 11th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council  
Monday, 1st December, 2025**

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

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,  
Seconded by Councillor Bell and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 10th November, be approved and adopted.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee**

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 6th November, be approved and adopted.

**Standards and Business Committee**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 20th November, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson

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# Council

## SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall  
on Monday, 22nd December, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson); The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty; Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey and McCullough; and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Brennan, R. Brooks, Bunting, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Lyons, Magee, McCallin, McCann, McCormick, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

### Summons

The Deputy Chief Executive read the summons convening the meeting.

### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of The High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer); Aldermen Copeland and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower, T. Brooks, Cobain, Hanvey, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, Murray and Nelson.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

### Motion

#### Motion in Support of Pro-Palestine Hunger Strikers

In accordance with the notice on the agenda, Councillor Collins proposed:

"This Council notes with deep concern the ongoing hunger strike of 6 Palestine solidarity activists in Britain. Two of these activists, Qesser Zuhrah and Amu Gib, are on their 51st day of hunger strike and are consequently in critical condition.

This Council calls on the British government to immediately allow medical access to all of the activists, to end the censorship of their communication from inside prison and, to enter negotiations in earnest to ensure the hunger strike can come to an end before lives are lost.

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This Council further calls on the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to intervene in their official capacity to relay these demands to the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Council, and the sizeable Palestinian community for whom Belfast is home.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin.

On a recorded vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the proposal and thirteen against and it was declared carried.

<b>For (28)</b>	<b>Against (13)</b>
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty); and Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Brennan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Lyons, Magee, McCallin, McCann, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Ó Néill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	The Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly); Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey and McCullough; and Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, McCormick, I. McLaughlin and Verner.

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson

# Agenda Item 6

## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th December, 2025

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

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director  
of Corporate Services;  
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;  
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing  
and External Affairs;  
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood  
Services;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
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 21st November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, and subject to the amendments of the minutes under the following headings:

#### ***Physical Programmes Update***

The Council agreed that the decision in so far as it relates to Fernhill House, be rejected and accordingly, the project be moved to Stage 3.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

***Draft Amenity Bye Laws***

The Council agreed that the decision be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

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

The Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that a report be brought to the Committee that would provide an update on Council investigations into incidents which had occurred during the provision of hospitality and use of the City Hall.

**Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Murray declared an interest in items 2.b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and 5.a) Contracts Update in that he was employed for the S.O.S who were a delivery partner of the Fleadh and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 6. (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership, in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that she worked for an organisation which was funded under the Programme. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

In respect of item 4.a) Physical Programme Update, Councillor Maghie declared an interest in that she was a member of a club which was listed under the Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 7.b) Requests for use of the City Hall, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 6. a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership, in so far as it related to the Community Recovery Fund, Councillor Beattie declared an interest as he was associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Long declared an interest under item 3. e) Draft Amenity Byelaws, in that his wife was the Justice Minister, however, was not required to leave the meeting.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following five 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 five items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of

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exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

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

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

The Committee:

- Noted the challenges since the last update be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting;
- agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2026; and
- Noted a further workshop would be held on 15th January, 2026.

**Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann**

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

The Committee:

- Noted the update at the previous meeting on venues, provision within contracts report for contracting key venues;
- Noted the update on governance and risk management;
- Noted the updates in relation to programming, comms and engagement;
- Noted that details on hotel bookings would be reported to the Committee in January; and
- Noted that Members' comments in relation to social media would be considered.

**Boxing Strategy**

The Committee was reminded that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 4th November, considered an update report on the Belfast Boxing Strategy Q1 and Q2 2025-2026 action plan. The Committee was advised that, during discussion, a Member had referred to the findings of a recently-published report by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland relating to discrimination within amateur boxing in Northern Ireland and it had been proposed and seconded that, until formal assurances had been received that the Equality Commission's recommendations had been implemented by the aforesaid bodies, the Council should withhold any further funding linked to the strategy.

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Subsequently, the matter had been referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for clarity and legal opinion.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the Committee:

- Agrees to invite the IABA to a future meeting to discuss the implementation and recommendations made in a NI Equality Commission report;
- Approves the Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 payment to the IABA; and
- Requests that future funding be considered for the delivery and continuation of the Council's Boxing Strategy post March 2026.

**Amendment**

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

That the Committee agrees not to proceed with the quarter 4 payment of funding arrangement until the IABA provide evidence that it is undertaking work to implement the recommendations made by the NI Equality Commission.

On a vote, five Members voted for the proposal and ten against, with five no votes, it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor de Faoite and seconded by Councillor Long was put to the meeting when fifteen Members voted for it and five against and it was subsequently declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Agreed to invite the IABA to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the implementation and recommendations made in the NI Equality Commission report;
- Approved the Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 payment to the IABA; and
- Agreed that a report be submitted to a future Committee regarding future funding options for the continuation and delivery of the Council's Boxing Strategy for 2026/27, together with comparative information on the potential for other single sport strategies.

**Belfast City Innovation Programme Update**

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an update on a number of urban innovation initiatives, including the final Augment the City learning event; the Local Innovation Partnership Fund; the third Belfast: Inclusive Innovation seminar, a research request from the London School of Economics; the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions Research and Development project; and the iCapital awards.

The Committee:

1. Noted the invitation to the Economy Minister, and to all Elected Members, to attend the Augment the City showcase event on 22nd January, 2026 in the City Hall;
2. Approved the submission of letters of support for the ZETEC, INNOVATION ARC, and IMPACT expressions of interest to the Local Innovation Partnership Fund and noted that any further support would be subject to Council approval of final, detailed proposals;
3. Noted the invitation to Members to attend the third Belfast: Inclusive Futures seminar on 24th February, 2026 at the City Hall which would focus on the challenges and opportunities of AI for the future role of the city's community and voluntary sector;
4. Approved Belfast's submission to the LSE Deep Dive research on City Innovation;
5. Noted the progress on the second phase of the Belfast 5G Innovation Region programme and a planned 12-week R&D project expected to commence in January 2026; and
6. Approved that work commence with Innovation City Belfast partners on an application to the 2027 European Capital of Innovation Award (iCapital).

**Bad debt write off**

The Committee approved the write-off of ground rent arrears, in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations, as outlined in the report.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Draft Public Health Agency Partnership  
and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030**

The Committee was advised that the Public Health Agency (PHA) had recently published for consultation a draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy for the period 2025-2030. The purpose of the draft Strategy was to set out priorities with measurable indicators which showed a strong commitment to working with people and communities. It was highlighted that, a copy of the draft strategy was available @ [Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 | HSC Public Health Agency](#) and feedback was being sought by 19th December, 2025.

In reviewing the draft strategy, there was a clear omission or reference to the role of local authorities and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the

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Friday, 19th December, 2025**

collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.

It was reported that the Council was already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint funding and work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Healthier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.

During discussion, one Member raised concerns in relation to drug misuse in the city centre and the response times to incidents and suggested that representatives of the Public Health Agency be invited to attend a future committee to discuss how it delivers its services.

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report;
- ii. agreed the proposed draft Council response attached at appendix 1;
- iii. agreed that the proposed Council response be submitted to the Public Health Agency (PHA) in line with the deadline (19th December, 2025). The response would state it remained subject to ratification by Full Council in January, 2026; and
- iv. noted that representatives of the Public Health Agency be invited to attend a meeting with Elected Members to discuss how it delivers its services, in particular drug misuse.

**Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from  
the Department for Communities Minister**

The Committee considered the recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities, dated 10th December, 2025, confirming that funding would not be made available in future years to support a hardship programme.

Several Member's highlighted their disappointment in the response and the impact this would have on vulnerable residents.

Noted.

**Planning Information**

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

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**Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Final  
conference in Katowice, Poland and  
Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit in  
Budapest, Hungary in February, 2026**

The Committee:

- I. Noted that two Council Officers would be attending the UPSURGE Final Conference on 10th – 11th February, 2026 in Katowice, Poland;
- II. Noted that one Council Officer would be attending the Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit on 10th – 12th February, 2026 in Budapest, Hungary; and
- III. Noted that all costs associated with the attendance at the above events were covered within the grant funding.

**Draft Amenity Byelaws**

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

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

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an opportunity to further consider;**

- the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement,
- the revised draft byelaws which were presented to SP&R Committee last month.

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that Members:**

- note the contents of this report and appendices;
- authorise officers to engage with DfC in relation to the revised draft byelaws to understand which aspects could be approved in the coming months.

**3.0 Main Report  
Background**

Members will be aware a report was previously presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2025, updating members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement. In addition, the report sought members approval of the draft byelaws.

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**At Full Council meeting held on 1 December 2025, members agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21 November 2025 be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.**

**Following on from some concerns previously raised, members will note that the proposed bye laws do not set a level for fixed penalty notices. £500 is the maximum fine which can be imposed by a Magistrates Court for breach of bye laws. This maximum fine is set by Section 92 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The fixed penalty level would be considerably lower than the maximum fine which the Court can impose, typically this is approximately 10% of the maximum fine. The level of fixed penalty would be subject to engagement with DfC and would require Committee approval in due course. Members will note that officers have proposed that the reference to continuing offences is removed as it is not considered that this is applicable to the types of behaviour which these bye laws seek to regulate.**

**Members will recall that some provisions in the draft bye laws relate to arrangements for special events such as the Fleadh. Therefore it is important that there is early engagement with DfC in relation to these proposals.**

**Committee is asked for its further views in relation to the revised bye laws which were presented to Committee last month. It is also requested that Committee authorises officers to carry out engagement with DfC in relation to the revised bye laws.**

**Members are asked to note that correspondence has been issued to PSNI and DoJ seeking;**

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

**When responses are received, officers will bring a report back to Committee with further proposals in relation to the issues of graphic imagery and alleged hate speech in the city centre. Dependent upon responses being received, it is anticipated**

that these proposals will be brought to Committee in early spring 2026.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

3.2 There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. As outlined in the report tabled on 21 November 2025, there will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.

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

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

During discussion, members raised concerns in relation to the enforcement of existing byelaws and the need for options regarding the issues surrounding the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and appendices;
- authorised officers to engage with the Department for Communities in relation to the revised draft byelaws which related only to arrangements for special events, such as the Fleadh; and
- agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee in February in relation to the options on the remainder of the revised draft byelaws, including the enforcement of existing byelaws.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Physical Programme**

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 requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, approval for best practice site visits to inform the next phase of leisure and an approval to work with DFC to progress the mixed use development at Girdwood.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- **Capital Programme Movements** -
  - **IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver
  - **City Hall External Christmas Tree provision** – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.
  - **Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000.
  - **Greening & Growing Project** – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 funded through the Shared Island Unit.
  - **Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 funded by the Linen Quarter Bid
  - **Depot Charging Scheme** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
  - **IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration** - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

- Assembly Rooms Cluster - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – *Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Public AED Replacement - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – *Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Belfast Stories – note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.
- Leisure Programme – agree that Member site visits are undertaken in early 2026, to view new products with unique selling points, to consider incorporating within the next phase of leisure.
- Girdwood Masterplan – agree that officers work with DfC officials to progress the mixed-use development site at Girdwood with further information to be brought back to Members

**3.0 Main report**

**Key Issues**

**Physical Programme**

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

**Capital Programme - Proposed Movements**

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

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Project	Overview	Stage movement
<b>IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement</b>	Phased upgrades, enhancements and full replacements to Council websites	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed</b>
<b>City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision</b>	Replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution	<b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £77,500</b>
<b>Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26</b>	Improvements to pitches	<b>Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £500,000</b>
<b>Greening and Growing Project</b>	Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of €30,000</b>
<b>Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme</b>	Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall funded by the LQ Bid.	<b>Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £165,000</b>
<b>Depot Charging Scheme</b>	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	<b>Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted</b>
<b>IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration</b>	HR/Payroll System migration to a new cloud-based platform	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Assembly Rooms Cluster</b>	Redevelopment of Assembly Rooms Cluster	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>
<b>Public AED Replacement</b>	To replace our current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units	<b>Add as Stage 1 – Emerging</b>

**3.3 IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement**

This project aims to upgrade the Council's CMS platform and to deliver a modern, secure, and accessible set of council websites that meet evolving legislative, user, and business requirements. The Content Management System (CMS) is software that lets the Council's web editors create, edit, organise, and publish content on the council websites. It acts as the backbone for managing text, images, videos, and other digital assets. The provider of the current CMS has informed the Council that the platform we currently use will no longer be supported after December 2026. This means that there will be no support/ maintenance, patching or security updates from that date onwards. This would represent a significant security and reputational risk to the organisation. The project is now part of the overall IT Programme and a business case has been submitted. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement**

processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.

**3.4 City Hall Christmas Tree Provision**

Members will recall that in August 2025 this project was moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The project aims to replace the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution. The City Hall Christmas tree is a major focal point within the City Centre and can set the tone for the city's Christmas celebrations, both for visitors and the local economy. Given issues with the quality and supply of real trees it is proposed to purchase an artificial tree which will be installed from 2026 onwards. The Installation - City Hall/ City Hall Grounds Working Group at its meeting on 18th November was updated that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had been completed and a supplier had been appointed. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.

**3.5 Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26**

Members will be aware of the successful completion of pitch improvement works for the financial year 2024/25 as reported in April and October 2025. Officers have since been working to identify opportunities to use the recurring annual budget of £500,000 for the 2025/26 financial year and are proposing the following schemes:

Location/ project	Overview
Wedderburn Park*	Perimeter fencing to enclose 2 existing grass pitches.
Falls Park	Spectator fencing and hard standing to existing grass pitch
Marrowbone Millenium Park	Height increase of existing fencing from 5m to 8m
Clarendon	Height increase in fencing at goal ends to 6m
CI Ladies Hockey Club	Funding Contribution towards Floodlighting
Belfast Met Montgomery Road	Provision of junior goal posts for use by SBYL
Westlands Pitch	Fencing and improved gates

*\*A concept design to further enhance Wedderburn Park for the benefit of local residents is being drafted from feedback gathered during preliminary engagement. Further engagement will be carried out and any works arising from this will form a second phase of parks improvements and be separately funded.*

Members are asked to agree that the 'Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26' is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council as a rolling programme of investment. Members are asked to note that should there be an underspend, this could be utilised for other projects from the existing shortlist subject to Member agreement.

### **3.6 Greening & Growing Project**

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025. This project focuses on biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island Fund programme. It will be delivered at the GROW NI community garden at Waterworks, in partnership with Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 from Shared Island funding.

### **3.7 Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme**

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in May 2025. 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 and will be in keeping with the building's listed status. The letter of offer to the Council from Linen Quarter BID for the design phase has been secured. A subsequent letter of offer for the supply and installation is under review. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 fully funded by the LQ Bid.

### **3.8 Depot Charging Scheme**

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in October 2025, when the SP&R Committee approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government's Depot Charging System. The Depot

Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council's counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. The application for funding has been submitted and a decision is awaited. Members are asked to agree that 'Depot Charging Scheme' is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course, and update regarding the funding position referred above.

**3.9 IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration**

The Council's current HR/ Payroll System provider has informed the Council that the platform that it currently uses needs to be migrated to a new cloud-based platform. This includes the ResourceLink system and the Optimum (Time & Attendance) system. Members are asked to agree that the 'HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration' project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.

**3.10 Assembly Rooms Cluster**

At the July 2025 special SP&R Committee meeting, Members agreed that a without prejudice/ conditional offer was made to acquire the Assembly Rooms and adjoining properties – the sale completed on 24 October 2025. The Assembly Rooms Cluster consists of approximately 0.5 acres within the former Tribeca Belfast site located in Belfast city centre. The Cluster is comprised of the following buildings: Assembly Rooms (Grade B1 Listed Building) and including rear extension; part of the Donegall Street carpark site; 5 – 9 North Street (former Laffin Travel building); and the Braddell's Building, 11 North Street (Grade B1 Listed Building). Members are asked to agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed with further information to be brought back to Committee.

**3.11 Public AED Replacement**

The project aims to replace the Council's current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units to ensure continuity of service provision. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.12 Belfast Stories

Members will recall that Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC) update was considered by the SP&R Committee in April 2025. Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open in 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond, helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods. The Committee also noted the detailed overview of the OBC following the 5-case model, with the total estimated capital cost of the preferred option at approximately £100m with £35m funded by BCC and £65m by BRCD. Furthermore, it was agreed to submit the Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and a Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received. Members will also recall that the project is now at Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and update regarding the funding position referred above. Members are asked to note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.

Leisure Programme – Site Visits

3.13 Members will be aware that work is underway on the development of the next phase of the Leisure Programme with Party Group briefings held in late Autumn. At these the need to look at USPs for the other sites was discussed and the need to look at where there are gaps in provision across the city. To inform this it is proposed that a two-day site visit is undertaken in late January/early February to leisure sites in and around London focusing on sites which provide facilities not currently within the Belfast leisure model. Details of the final itinerary are currently being finalised. It is proposed that this will be for Party Group Leaders or their nominees. Members are asked to agree that site visits are undertaken in early 2026 to London to inform the next phase of leisure.

Girdwood Masterplan

3.14 Members will be aware that the Girdwood Masterplan includes several agreed elements, some of which have not yet been delivered. These include the leisure facility, which forms part of the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme; housing at the Oldpark end of the site, which the Department for Communities (DfC) is progressing with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and the mixed-use development. DfC is

leading on the mixed-use site, and officers have been engaging with DfC officials to explore options for progressing its development, including the potential for the Council to act as a development or delivery partner. Members are asked to note these ongoing discussions and to agree that officers continue to work with DfC to identify an appropriate mechanism to deliver the mixed-use site.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

**3.15 *Financial Implications –***

**City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision – capital budget allocation of up to £77,500.**

**Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 – recurring capital budget allocation of £500,000.**

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

**Greening and Growing Project – capital allocation of up to €30,000 externally funded via Shared Island Fund. Letter of Offer is in Euro (€).**

**Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme – capital allocation of up to £165,000, externally funded via Linen Quarter BID.**

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

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

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

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Murray,  
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees, under Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26, to halt the proposed fencing at Wedderburn Park grass pitches so that further engagement with residents could be undertaken.

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

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees, under Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26, and that a report on the condition of the pitch at Cherryvale be commissioned.

After discussion, the Committee:

• **Capital Programme Movements –**

- **IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
- **City Hall External Christmas Tree provision** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that the project was within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated;
- **Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000, and that a report on the condition of the pitch at Cherryvale be commissioned;
- **Greening & Growing Project** – Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 funded through the Shared Island Unit;
- **Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 funded by the Linen Quarter Bid;
- **Depot Charging Scheme** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course;
- **IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed;
- **Assembly Rooms Cluster** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed; and
- **Public AED Replacement** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

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- **Belfast Stories** – noted that the Contract for Funding (CFF) had now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and was under review prior to acceptance.
- **Leisure Programme** – agreed that Member site visits would be undertaken in early 2026, to view new products with unique selling points, to consider incorporating within the next phase of leisure.
- **Girdwood Masterplan** – agreed that officers work with DfC officials to progress the mixed-use development site at Girdwood with further information to be brought back to Members.

**Asset Management**

The Committee:

- i) **Hannahstown Village - Playground & Public Square Sublease**
  - Approved Council entering a sublease with Hannahstown Community Association for the lands for Hannahstown Village Playground and Public Square situated at Pairc Lamh Dhearg.
- ii) **Cathedral Gardens - Licence for Works**
  - Approved entering into a licence for works with Ulster University for a plot of land adjoining Belfast City Council Lands at Cathedral Gardens.
- iii) **Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI**
  - Approved entering into a 10-year lease with DfI for the siting of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park.
- iv) **Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI**
  - Approved Council entering a new licence with the Department for Infrastructure for the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway.
- v) **Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands**
  - Approved the acquisition of lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane to deliver a footpath.

**Area Working Update**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group of 24th November, North Belfast Area Working Group of 25th November, West Belfast Area Working Group of 27th November, and East Belfast Area Working Group of 4th December, 2025.

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**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Contracts Update**

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3);
- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4); and
- Noted the non-procurement expenditure (Table 5).

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Renewal of Eploy online recruitment system	Up to 4 years	£124,800	S McNicholl	Required to maintain the provision of the online recruitment system for the Council	N	N	N
Online security awareness training and provision of phishing tests	Up to 3 years	£69,000	P Gribben	Increasing need to ensure staff awareness and help reduce the risk of security events	N	N	N
Procurement of annual insurance contracts	Up to 1 year	£1,262,000	T Wallace	Annual insurance premiums covering employer's liability, public liability, crime, environmental legal liability, property (excess of loss city hall) and motor fleet. Current annual policies expire on 31st March 2026.	N	Included in annual financial estimates	N

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Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Procurement of the Cisco Secure Connect Service	Up to 5 years	£130,410	S McNicholl	The Belfast WiFi service requires a secure DNS facility to protect users and devices. Cisco Secure Connect is a security product with a focus on DNS-layer security which will add layered protection to all Public Belfast WiFi users and devices and protect BCC from possible reputational damage.	N	N	N
The provision of a new regulatory case management solution for City & Neighbourhood Services	Up to 10 years	£2,162,000	S McNicholl	The objective is to replace our current systems (APP/Flare, IDOX – Public Protection Portal – NIHMO and Animal Welfare (IDOX) with a single modern and intuitive case management solution designed to embed mobile technology and digitally transform how we plan, manage and monitor our service delivery across the core areas. This project aligns with the CNS Transition & Improvement	N	Outline business case previously approved through the Capital Programme - Physical Programmes update, S,P&R June 2024	N

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Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)	
				<p>Programme by improving customer service, removing duplication, making long-term cost savings, services more sustainable, empowering staff and to improve decision-making. Furthermore, it fits with the strategic themes Customer and Performance in the CNS Business Plan. We also have alignment with the Digital Strategy in terms of Digital Transformation, improved Data &amp; Analytics and reduction of cyber security risk.</p> <p>The existing contracts for current systems will be aligned to the go live date of the new case management system. Capital Year 1: £665,000 &amp; Revenue Years 2-10: £1,497,000</p>				

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Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire of Grounds Machinery with Operator	Up to 3 years	£130,000	D Sales	To complete flail arm work, fraise mowing, overseeding and herbicide application and spiking across the OSS Estate. This supports in house teams/ operations.	N	N	N

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire of Ulster University Belfast Campus (York Street) for use during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 inclusive of setup and de-rig.	Up to 8 days	£200,000	D Martin	Ulster University Belfast Campus has been designated as a central competition and educational hub in the Fleadh operational plan, developed jointly by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Belfast City Council. It provides the only feasible location capable of supporting the complex requirements	Ulster University Belfast Campus	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N

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Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				of Scoil Éigse and All-Ireland competitions				
Hire of the MAC Arts Centre, Belfast, as a core competition and cultural venue for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026	Up to 8 days	£45,000	K Forster	The MAC is uniquely positioned as the Irish Language and Cultural Hub within the Fleadh 2026 delivery plan and was identified through joint planning with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) and Belfast City Council as a core competition and programming venue	The Mac	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N
Hire of The Belfast SOS Bus for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026	Up to 8 days	£49,000	K Forster	The Belfast SOS Bus provides a mobile, non-judgemental safe space on the streets, offering a range of support including first aid, mental health intervention, and harm reduction. It offers practical assistance like refreshments, transport home, and referrals to	The Belfast SOS Bus	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N

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Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				other services. There is no other provider of this service for Belfast.				
Upgrade and contract extension of the Content Management System (CMS) which supports all BCC websites	Up to 4 years	£350,000	S McNicholl	There has been an urgent, unforeseen and essential need to upgrade the current CMS platform to ensure continuity of service. This can only be actioned by the existing supplier. A longer-term procurement strategy to procure a new CMS will be developed to align with the expiry of this requirement. £200k- Capital & £150k - Revenue	Simply Zesty	7	N	N
Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collect vehicles	Up to 8 months	£21,333	S Leonard	Stewart Commercial are the only supplier within N. Ireland to supply the hire of these specialist glass collect vehicles. These 2 vehicles will ensure continuity of supply until the new	Stewart Commercials	1	N	N

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Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				vehicles are delivered in August 26. The current T2048 contract expired on 31.05.25 therefore retrospective STA approval is required – see below.				

**Table 3: Modification to Contract**

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Provision of Drama, Puppetry and Script writing CNS 2412	Up to 1 year	Additional £1,584 Original quotation value - £30k	J Girvan	Additional cost for writing a new script for anti-litter/ waste roadshow to be performed in primary schools 2025/26. The supplier was the only respondent to the original quotation process. Being reported as quotation value now exceeds £30k.	Cre8 Theatre Ltd

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**Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Est. Max Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>STA Reason</b>	<b>Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee &amp; Date</b>	<b>External Funding (Y/N)</b>
Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collect vehicles	Up to 7 months	£18,667	S Leonard	Further to STA request above this is retrospective STA approval to cover hire of these vehicles 01 June 2025 to 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2025.	Stewart Commercials	1	N	N

**Table 5: Non-Procurement Expenditure**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Est. Max Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
Hire of the ICC Belfast, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall	Up to 7 days	£400,000	D Martin	The spaces available across three sites were identified during the initial planning and bid for Fleadh 2026 in conjunction with the Comhaltas team. Given occupancy of all other viable sites across the city centre there are no other venues available that offer the same level of occupancy/production support required to successfully deliver Fleadh core events alongside multiple competition and performance spaces.	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall

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**Audit and Risk Panel Report and  
Minutes of Meeting of 2nd December**

The Committee noted the key issues arising at the meeting and approved the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 2nd December, 2025 at outlined in appendix A of the report.

**Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 24/25**

The Committee approved the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March, 2025 and noted that Management Responses to the 9 audit recommendations identified by the NIAO would be provided to the Committee.

**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership  
Meeting of 1st December**

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 1st December, including:

**Presentation – Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Project**

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

**Update from Partnership Members**

- Updates from members were noted in the minutes for further information, following a proposal from the NIHE, the partnership agreed to receive a presentation from the Housing for All Team to be scheduled for 2026.

**Community Recovery Fund Update**

- The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the contents of the report; and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also noted and agreed the content of the report. The Partnership further agreed that any underspend in the programme should be aligned to the Area Based Consortia, WULO, and resources subject to satisfactory evaluation and proposal, the partnership requests that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also agreed the proposal which was outlined in the minutes.

**Asylum Dispersal Funding**

- The Shared City Partnership noted the report and agreed the proposed approach for the future allocation of dispersal funding, subject to confirmation of further funding from the Executive Office and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also noted and agreed the proposed approach detailed in the report.

**PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update**

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

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

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

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

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

**Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update**

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

**Any Other Business**

- Key items reported: -
  - Next Meeting: 12th January 13.30 – It was agreed this would be a half day workshop to be held in Girdwood Community Hub, commencing with Lunch; and Key areas of business dealt with at the start of the meeting with the remainder of the time to focus on the New Good Relations Strategy, audit and Action Plan.
  - The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the new VCSE Community Panel had met and 2 VCSE Reps had been allocated to the Shared City Partnership: Irene Sherry representing Ashton Community Trust (North) and JP Sukumaran representing Karma Kalakendram (City-wide)
  - The Good Relations Manager reported that following agreement at the November Shared City Partnership meeting for Council to develop a pilot proposal to progress the programme in conjunction with Social Change Initiative (SCI) a proposal had been submitted, further details were in the minutes.
- The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the items raised under AOB; and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also noted and agreed the items raised.

**Operational Issues**

**Minutes of the Party Group Leaders  
Consultative Forum of 11th December**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 11th December, 2025.

The Committee noted that, in relation to the Display of Flags in some council owned assets, an audit would be undertaken including the Council's Leisure Facilities.

The Committee noted that further information would be submitted to the Committee in relation to the Council's sponsorship of the Lewis Crocker fight, including partnership sponsorship and the intended use of the funding.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 19th December, 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
Indian Women's Association	1 March 2026	<b>International Women's Day Celebrations</b> – an event to celebrate local women with speeches, group discussion and cultural entrainment  Numbers attending - 120	B & D	£300
Forge Integrated Primary School	11 April 2026	<b>Forge Integrated Primary School 40th Anniversary Gala Ball</b> – School community celebration event to mark milestone with reception, dinner, presentations and entertainment.  Numbers attending – 250	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	26 May 2026	<b>Launch of Newly Co-produced Dementia Information Booklet</b> with round table discussion; guests to include community/ volunteer sector and Dementia Acute services.  Numbers attending - 80	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
African Caribbean Community Network (ACCN) and Minorities Recognition Award Northern Ireland (MRANI)	6 June 2026	<b>Africa Day 2026</b> will be a vibrant cultural celebration designed to honour and showcase the rich diversity, unity, and contribution of African communities living in Belfast and across NI. The event will gather the local community for a day of music, art, dance, food, and cultural exchange.  Numbers attending – 300	B & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences (ORAHS)	23 July 2026	<b>Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences Conference Dinner</b> with drinks reception, dinner, awards and entertainment.	A	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,  
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
		Main conference being hosted by QUB.  Numbers attending – 200		
Ulster Youth Orchestra	16 August 2026	<b>Post-Ulster Hall Concert Reception</b> will follow earlier that week a performance at the Konzerthaus in Berlin, as part of the prestigious Young Euro Classic Festival. The reception will recognise this notable achievement.  Number attending – 120	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Thiepval Memorial Loyal Orange Lodge 1916 (Lodge of special purpose)	21 November 2026	<b>Thiepval Memorial LOL 1916 – 30 Year Anniversary Celebration</b> with reception, dinner, awards and presentations  Numbers attending – 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Minutes of the All-Party Working Group  
on the City Centre of 5th December, 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 5th December, 2025.

**Minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds  
Installations Working Group of 18th November, 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 18th November, 2025.

Chairperson

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# Agenda Item 7

## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025

### MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Cobain (Chairperson); and Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower, Brooks, Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Collins, M. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Doran, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Murray, McKeown and Verner.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services; Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services; Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene; Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services; and Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th and 18th November 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 December.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillors Black, Bradley, Canavan, Doran and Verner declared interests in item 4d, 'Community Support Plan – Large Grant Funding Programme', in that they worked for organisations which were in receipt of funding under the Community Support Plan.

Councillors Canavan and Doran declared interests in item 5e, 'Winter Festival 2025', in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding under the terms of the fund.

Councillor Bradley declared an interest also in item 4c, 'DfC Welfare Reform Mitigations Advice Funding 2026/27', in that she worked for an organisation in receipt of advice funding under the scheme.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in item 5d. 'All-Party Reference Group on Older People – Update', in that his employer had been referenced within the report.

**People and Communities Committee,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

With the exception of item 4d, none of the items mentioned became the subject of discussion nor debate and the Members were not required to leave the meeting whilst those matters were under consideration.

**Donegall Pass Residents' Association**

Further to its decision of 4th November, the Committee welcomed Mr. E. Purvis and Mr. P. McDonald, representing the Donegall Pass Residents' Association, who were in attendance to outline concerns in relation to antisocial behaviour in the vicinity of the Reverend Robert Bradford Memorial Park. Mr. Purvis stated that there had been recent reports of individuals loitering at the playpark and that there was evidence of drug use at the site. As a result, parents of local children had been reluctant to permit them to use the facility and the community was seeking the Council's support to address the issue. He suggested that the Council might consider the use of CCTV as a method to deter antisocial activity, as well as further measures to reassure local users of the playpark

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would examine the feasibility of installing CCTV across all parks and playgrounds. That report would consider also the projected costs, a comparison of antisocial behaviour statistics across Belfast, data protection considerations and the ability of the PSNI to monitor CCTV, should cameras be installed.

**Queen's University – Community Archaeology Project at Woodvale Park**

Subsequent to its decision of 18th November, the Committee welcomed Dr. H. Montgomery, Project Manager with the Community Archaeology Programme Northern Ireland (CAPNI), who was in attendance to provide an overview of the recent project which had been undertaken at Woodvale Park.

Dr. Montgomery explained that the project had been delivered in conjunction with The Queen's University of Belfast and had involved pupils from seven local primary schools as well as community volunteers. She reported that pupils had uncovered the remains of Woodvale House, which had been the home of the Reverend Octavius Glover, who sold the land to the then Belfast Corporation in 1888. The excavation had provided pupils with an opportunity to study history in depth and to take part in workshops at the Spectrum Centre. She added that the project had given the community a sense of ownership of their shared heritage, whilst giving young people an insight into local history.

The Committee noted the contents of the presentation.

**Notice of Motion - Sustainable Burial Options**

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 20th November, had referred the following notice of motion, which had been moved by Councillor Abernethy and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks, to the Committee for its consideration:

“That this Council recognises the significant environmental impact of traditional burial and cremation practices, including high carbon emissions,

**People and Communities Committee,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

chemical pollution, and long-term land use challenges, as highlighted in the All-Party Group on Climate Action's briefing paper 'Beyond Burial and Cremation'.

This Council further acknowledges the growing public interest in more sustainable, dignified, and low-carbon alternatives to conventional practices – such as natural (green) burials, tree pod interment, and other emerging end-of-life methods.

Natural burial, which involves the use of biodegradable materials, avoids embalming, and often takes place in woodland or meadow settings with minimal ongoing maintenance, has already been successfully implemented elsewhere as a simple and ecologically restorative option.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to:

1. Explore the feasibility of providing sustainable burial options within existing or new cemeteries, including the designation of natural burial grounds or woodland burial areas within our district; and
2. Provide an update report on any identified legislative, planning, infrastructural, or regulatory barriers that may impact the delivery of these sustainable end-of-life options locally. "

Accordingly, it was

Moved by Councillor Abernethy,  
Seconded by Councillor Maghie and

Resolved - that the Committee agrees to adopt the motion and agrees further that a report in this regard be submitted initially for consideration by the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group.

**Restricted Items**

**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 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 Committee was advised that content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**People and Communities Committee,  
Tuesday, 2nd December, 2025**

**Financial Reporting - Quarter 2**

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the above-mentioned matter, together with the details contained within the associated financial pack.

**City of Sport 2026 - Belfast Candidature Bid Update**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 5th November, 2024, it had agreed that Belfast would apply to ACES, a Belgian-based non-profit association, for designation as a European City of Sport in 2026 and had approved a budget of £30,000 for that purpose, 50 percent of which would be met by the Council's leisure provider, Greenwich Leisure Limited.

The Committee was informed that, after a thorough and in-depth assessment process, Belfast had been awarded European City of Sport status for 2026, which was in recognition of the City's commitment to sport, physical activity and community wellbeing. The judges, it was reported, had been most impressed by Belfast's longer-term investment strategy to transform health and wellbeing and how the City had reflected the core values of the organising body.

The Committee congratulated officers on the work which had been undertaken in achieving the award and approved the attendance of the Deputy Lord Mayor and Council officials at the ACES Awards Gala event in the European Parliament in Brussels on 11th December. It was noted that the costs associated with travel, accommodation and subsistence for attendance at the ceremony had been included within the original budget allocated for the bid.

**Department for Communities (DfC) Welfare Reform Mitigations Advice Funding 2026/27**

The Committee considered a report relating to the current arrangements for the allocation of the Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension funding, which was delivered as part of the Advice Services element of the Community Support Plan Letter of Offer from DfC. The report contained a range of options for consideration to oversee the future allocation of the fund from April 2026, or until the funding stream had ended.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable officers to engage directly with DfC to ascertain if it could administer the fund directly to organisations; and establish how the DfC would manage the transitional process once the funding had expired in 2028. A further report would be submitted to Committee outlining the outcomes of the above-mentioned considerations.

**Community Support Plan - Large Grant Funding Programme**

(Councillors Black, Bradley, Canavan, Doran and Verner left the meeting whilst this matter was under consideration).

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 25th June, had agreed, as part of the Community Support Plan, to establish a Large Grant Funding Programme for 2026/29, which would replace the former

**People and Communities Committee,  
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Capacity and Revenue Fund. Accordingly, the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services outlined the main aspects of a report which provided an overview of the number of applications which had been received for support under the new funding programme. It was noted that the number of applications, together with the level of funding requested, had exceeded significantly the original amount allocated within the budget for the programme.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that it be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration at its meeting on 19th December.

(Councillors Black, Bradley, Canavan, Doran and Verner returned to the meeting at this point).

**Lagan Valley Regional Park – Funding Update**

The Committee considered a report regarding the above-mentioned matter and was reminded that, at its meeting on 7th October, it had received a presentation from representatives of the Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) at which a number of future funding models had been outlined.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to recommend that a sum of £88,000 be allocated within the Council's estimates of expenditure for 2026/27 for LVRP. It was noted that the 2026/27 contribution would be at the same level as allocated in 2025/26, and that further discussions would be undertaken with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council regarding any revised funding model.

**Operational Issues**

**Alley Gate Replacement Keys – Update**

At its meeting on 7th October, the Committee had noted the contents of a report which had outlined the costs incurred in providing replacement alley gate keys to local residents. Arising from discussion, the Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the number of replacement keys which had been issued, together with income received by the Council in charging residents for keys over the past 24 months.

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that, from September 2023 to September 2025, 166 replacement keys had been provided, in respect of which a charge of £25 per key had been levied on individuals. Over that period, the Council had generated an income of £4,150, whilst the actual cost incurred at source in purchasing the keys had been £2,490. The remaining amount of £1,660 had been added for administrative purposes.

A Member suggested that the charge made for replacement keys was somewhat onerous and that the Council should consider introducing, on a trial basis, a scheme whereby no charges be made for replacement keys. It was added that such a scheme might run throughout 2026 and that, at its conclusion, a further report be submitted to enable the Committee to consider the costs incurred and examine the matter further.

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

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that no charges be made for the cost of replacement keys for a period of one-year (commencing January 2026) and that a further report in this regard be considered at the Committee's meeting in December 2026.

**Belfast City Airport –  
Rook Management at Victoria Park**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, over the past number of years, it had agreed that the Council would enter into legal agreements with the George Best Belfast City Airport to permit access to Victoria Park to facilitate the management of rook nests. The management of the nests was one of the airports obligations under its Wildlife Hazard Assessment and Civil Aviation Authority Licence, which required the airport to identify and manage risks to aircrafts.

The Committee was advised that a further request had been submitted by the airport seeking to extend the arrangements in order to disperse, reduce and discourage rooks from settling in areas which had been used in previous years.

The Committee acceded to the request and granted the airport access to Victoria Park (under licence) to facilitate rook management and, for that purpose, that the Council would enter into a three-year legal agreement, subject to the drawing-up of appropriate terms and conditions.

**Lenadoon and Suffolk Playing Fields –  
Developer Contributions**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which outlined the work which had been completed at the Lenadoon and Suffolk Playing Fields by way of a developer contribution.

**All-Party Reference Group on Older People**

The Committee noted the contents of the report in respect of the above-mentioned matter and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Reference Group of 16th September.

**Winter Festival 2025**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd November, had amended the minute of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th October, under the heading 'Requests for Funding', to reflect that a one-week expression of interest exercise be undertaken to provide funding in the sum of £17,000 to one organisation within the north, south, east and west of the City for the purposes of delivering a Winter Festival during December 2025. In addition, the Committee had agreed to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to award funding to the successful organisations, subject to assessment and due diligence.

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The Committee noted the contents of a report which gave an overview of the outcome of the expression of interest exercise.

**Requests for the Use of Parks**

The Committee granted approval for the hosting of a series of Christmas events at Páirc Nua Chollan, subject to the organisers meeting with – and adhering to – all of the stipulations and requirements set out within the associated report.

**Dual Language Street Signs**

The Committee agreed to the erection of second street nameplates, in Irish, at Old Colin, Whitewell Road, Upper Dunmurry Lane, Rileys Place and Keegan Street.

**Proposals for the Naming of New Streets**

The Committee agreed to the naming of Eastland Street and Eastland Place.

**Issue Raised in Advance**

**Botanic Gardens  
200th Anniversary in 2028**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Groogan addressed the Committee and pointed out that the bicentenary of the opening of Botanic Gardens would occur in 2028. She referred to the rich history of the gardens and how significant the bicentenary would be to the City of Belfast. She enquired if plans were being formulated to mark the anniversary.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor Murray and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that a report be submitted for consideration that would outline the plans to mark the bicentenary of Botanic Gardens, together with details regarding a projected budget, and that consideration be given also to establishing a working group for that purpose.

Chairperson

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# Agenda Item 8

## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025

### MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson); The High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer; Alderman Lawlor; and Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite, S. Douglas, Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, McCabe, McCallin, McCormick, McDonough-Brown, McKay, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Nelson and Ó Néill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy; Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development; Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development; Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor; Ms. C. Cassin, Markets Development Manager; Mr. F. Grant, Operations Development Manager; Ms. C. Keenan, Programme Lead, Enterprise Support Service; and Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th and 26th November, 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, 2025, subject to the minute of 5th November, under the heading “Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update”, being amended to provide that a report be brought back to the Committee at its meeting in January to outline the potential impact of the reduction to the HAG rate on the delivery of social housing.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Black declared an interest in relation to item 2(b) “Sandy Row/Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Fund Update” in that she was the Manager of the Grosvenor Community Centre and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

### Restricted Items

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

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025**

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.

**Assembly Rooms Cluster Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report which provided an update on various matters associated with the Assembly Rooms Cluster which included the Assembly Rooms, part of Donegall Street carpark site, 5-9 North Street and Braddell’s Building.

The Director highlighted that the Assembly Rooms had been selected for inclusion in the World Monument Fund’s (WMF) ‘2025 World Monuments Watch’ programme. It was reported that the WMF’s biennial programme selected twenty-five treasured heritage sites of significance across the world which faced urgent challenges with the aim to raise awareness, mobilise resources, and implement conservation initiatives. She informed the Committee that, following discussions between the Council and the WMF, the WMF had offered to work in partnership with the Council to procure and fund a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) to guide the repair and conservation of the Assembly Rooms as a keystone for heritage-led regeneration in the area and ensure the preservation and adaptation for public benefit. The Committee was advised that the Council and the WMF had proposed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which would formally agree the intention to work together towards a common goal.

The Director also provided an update on the Visioning and Future Use Strategy for the Assembly Rooms and adjacent sites. She reminded the Committee that, following agreement by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting in October, 2025, a workshop would be held in January, 2026, for Members to commence the process for the consideration of the future uses of the Assembly Rooms Cluster.

In respect of planning for the wider site, the Committee was also reminded that the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Development Opportunity Area Cathedral and North-East Quarter had been approved by the Council on 1st October, 2025, and had opened for consultation in November, 2025, for a twelve-week period.

During discussion, the Director of City Regeneration and Development answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the condition of the Assembly Rooms Cluster and future redevelopment.

In response to a Member’s question on the prioritisation of proposals, the Director advised that, as previously agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
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Regeneration Framework would be used as a tool to support and assist in the prioritisation of catalytic regeneration projects, subject to final approval by Members.

In relation to the potential partnership between the Council and the WMF, a Member requested that Party Group Leaders be provided with a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the completion of the acquisition of the Assembly Rooms and adjacent properties (Assembly Rooms Cluster) in the context of the regeneration and development of the city;
- ii. noted the ongoing liaison with the WMF; the pending offer of funding for certain essential works and a Conservation Management Plan; the intention to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to underpin the intentions of working together for a common goal;
- iii. agreed that Party Group Leaders be provided with a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding;
- iv. noted the update on the Visioning and Future Use Strategy and the pending workshop for Members in January 2026 to commence the process for the consideration of the future uses of the Assembly Rooms; and
- v. noted the update on planning in respect of the wider site and the live consultation on the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Development Opportunity Area for North-East and Cathedral Quarter.

**Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Scheme Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided the Committee with an update in relation to the Department for Communities funded revitalisation schemes for Sandy Row and the Grosvenor Road.

She reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 10th September, 2025, the Committee had agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to request support for independent businesses located on Great Victoria Street. She drew the Members' attention to a response received from the Minister which recognised the challenges faced by local businesses during the major infrastructure works associated with the Belfast Grand Central Station, however, outlined that, as public realm works on Great Victoria Street had not yet been scheduled, there was currently no strong rationale for a revitalisation scheme to be brought forward for the area.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025**

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

Resolved - that the Committee agrees to invite the Northern Ireland Food To Go Association to present at a future meeting on their work and in relation to the businesses which they represent within the Great Victoria Street area.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the Department for Communities funded Sandy Row and Grosvenor Road Revitalisation Schemes;
- ii. noted a response from the Minister for Communities regarding support for independent businesses on Great Victoria Street; and
- iii. agreed to invite the Northern Ireland Food To Go Association to present at a future meeting.

**Local Growth Fund Update**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update in relation to the current position of the Local Growth Fund and the potential implications for the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed).

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in November, 2025, it had received a performance update on Go Succeed, which was a support service led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the eleven Councils across Northern Ireland to support potential entrepreneurs and businesses. It was reported that the service had received £17million of funding from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) for 2023-2025, which had been extended for a further year with an additional £9.2million awarded for 2025/26.

The Director of Economic Development highlighted that, from March, 2026, the UK Government's SPF, the principal funder of the service, would be replaced by a Local Growth Fund (LGF) and that, given the success of Go Succeed, there was concern in relation to how the new LGF would operate and the potential impact on the service. He advised that officers would continue to engage with the UK Government, regional government officials and the Northern Ireland Executive in respect of funding. The Director also highlighted the ongoing work by officers to explore potential opportunities to secure support for the service beyond March, 2026, whilst recognising current budget pressures.

The Programme Lead, Enterprise Support Service, presented the Committee with an overview of the service which included its ambition, pillars, focus on inclusion, impact of the service in Belfast and the future funding position.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025**

During discussion, several Members highlighted the success of Go Succeed and expressed concern in relation to the LGF's potential capital and revenue split and the potential implications for the service going forward.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the Local Growth Fund and the potential implications for the Enterprise Support Service (Go Succeed); and
- ii. agreed to support the ongoing work to explore opportunities to secure continued support for the Enterprise Support Service, which would take account of the changes in the external funding environment and the pressures on existing budgets.

**St George's Market Quarterly Performance Update**

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update in relation to the performance of St George's Market for Quarter 2 of 2025/26, the ongoing work regarding investment, development and marketing, market stall and venue hire fees, engagement with traders in relation to storage and operational matters, and the 2025 Christmas Twilight and Continental Markets.

In relation to market stalls and venue hire, the Director drew Members' attention to a revised fee structure, as set out within the report, which recommended an increase to stall and venue hire fees, effective from April, 2026.

The Committee also considered an application for an external market to be held as part of the Roots Market and Trade Fair at the ICC Belfast on 16th and 17th January, 2026.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development and the Markets Development Manager answered a number of questions from Members in relation to the engagement with traders.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update against priority business plan activities and the financial performance of St George's Market for Quarter 2 of 2025/26;
- ii. noted the update on the engagement with traders on storage and other operational matters;
- iii. approved an increase to the stall and venue hire fees with effect from April, 2026, as outlined within the report; and

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
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- iv. approved a licence for an external market to be held as part of the Roots Market and Trade Fair at the ICC Belfast on 16th and 17th January, 2026.

**Belfast Zoo Quarterly Performance Report**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the performance of Belfast Zoo for Quarter 2 of 2025/26 which included visitor and education services, animal collection, marketing and events, and financial performance.

The Committee noted the update on the performance of Belfast Zoo for Quarter 2 of 2025/26.

**Belfast Bikes Quarterly Performance Report**

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes Scheme for Quarter 2 of 2025/26 which included the operator contract, operational performance, marketing activity, expansion of the scheme and sponsorship.

During discussion, the Director answered a number of questions from Members in relation to the expansion of the scheme.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update provided in respect of the Belfast Bikes Scheme performance for Quarter 2 of 2025/26.

**Financial Reporting - Quarter 2 2025/26**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the Committee's financial position for Quarter 2 of 2025/26.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Notice of Motion - Priority for our Local Traders**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th November, 2025, the Standards and Business Committee had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Doran and seconded by Alderman McCoubrey, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for its consideration:

"This Council notes the significant contribution that local independent traders, small businesses, and market stallholders make to Belfast's economy, tourism offering and community life.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025**

This Council further notes that major Council organised events such as the Belfast Maritime Festival, Christmas Market, and other seasonal events attract large crowds and generate substantial commercial opportunities.

Accordingly, this Council resolves that for all Belfast City Council organised or Council supported events involving trader or vendor pitches, priority shall be given to traders who are residents or ratepayers within the Belfast City Council area. Council officers should develop and publish a transparent process for allocating pitches which:

- gives first refusal to eligible local traders before any external operators are invited;
- ensures fair opportunity across different sectors and communities; and
- supports the Council's commitment to local economic growth and inclusive prosperity.”

During discussion, a Member welcomed the motion and highlighted the need to support the city's local independent traders and small businesses.

In response to a Member's query in respect of the legal implications of the motion, the Divisional Solicitor advised that he would consider the legal position and that further information would be brought back to the Committee.

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

**Strategic and Operational Issues**

**Notices of Motion Quarterly Update**

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

The report outlined that there was currently nine Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which the Committee was responsible for, and recommended the closure of the following motion:

- Translink - Night-time provision of services.

The report also provided an update on the eight motions which remained open.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,  
Wednesday, 3rd December, 2025**

In response to an issue raised by a Member in respect of the update provided on the Tourism Street Signage (Enlightenment Period) motion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy undertook to obtain further information regarding the progress of the work.

The Committee:

- i. noted the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that it was responsible for, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. agreed to the closure of the motion 'Translink - Night-time provision of services', as outlined in section 3.3 and Appendix 1 of the report.

Chairperson

# Agenda Item 9

## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 10th December, 2025

### MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

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

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

#### Apologies

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

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th November 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 December.

#### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in item 2d, namely, "Objection to the Renewal of an Entertainments Licence for Shaftesbury Bowling Club", in that he had previously liaised with the objector in relation to the application and so he left meeting for the duration of the discussion on the item and did not vote.

#### Delegated Matters

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

#### Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

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

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

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

**Provisional Grant of an Amusement  
Permit for 51 Rosemary Street**

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with the details of the application from EZE Gaming Ltd., for the provisional grant of an Amusement Permit at 51 Rosemary Street. The applicant had expressed that they wished to relocate its existing amusement arcade from 13 North Street to the new location. The Director explained that the existing amusement arcade in North Street had been operational for over 20 years and that the applicant had advised that those premises would close if the new permit, for 51 Rosemary Street, was granted.

The proposed amusement arcade would house 48 gaming machines and the arcade currently operated by the applicant at North Street was licensed for the same number of machines, although on previous renewal inspections there were, in fact, fewer gaming machines.

The proposed opening hours of the amusement arcade were as follows:

- Monday to Saturday (8.00am - Midnight) and
- Sunday (12 Noon – 11.00pm)

The Committee was advised that planning permission for the change of use from retail to an amusement arcade was granted on 4th October, 2024, for the site in question. The Director pointed out, however, that the planning approval for the site was not dependent on the relocation of the amusement arcade and was not subject to an agreement under Section 76 of the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

The Committee was advised that the First Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, located near the proposed site, had objected to the application, citing concerns about the amusement arcade being an unsuitable neighbour and its potential negative impact on the Church's activities and the areas historical significance.

The Members were advised that a meeting between the applicant and the Church representatives had been held but no resolution had been reached.

The Council's Amusement Permit Policy, ratified in 2013, outlined criteria for assessing applications. The Policy generally presumed against granting new amusement permits in the Retail Core of Belfast City Centre unless part of a major retail-led development or upper-storey development.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 10th December, 2025**

The Director outlined that the application had been evaluated against five criteria in the Amusement Permit Policy:

- Retail vibrancy: The site was in the Retail Core, where new amusement arcades were discouraged. However, the applicant had argued that the relocation was necessary for city centre regeneration;
- Cumulative build-up: There were other amusement arcades nearby, but none in the same commercial block;
- Impact on Belfast's image: The site was near historic and listed buildings, including the First Presbyterian Church, but it was not considered to detract significantly from the area's tourism appeal;
- Proximity to residential areas: The site was not adjacent to residential properties.
- Proximity to schools and vulnerable groups: No schools, youth centres or residential institutions for vulnerable people were located within 200 metres of the site.

The Director explained that the Committee was required to decide whether to grant or refuse the application based on the applicant's fitness to hold the permit, the suitability of the premises, and any representations.

She explained that the objector wished to rely upon their written submission and was not in attendance to address the Committee.

The Chairperson welcomed the applicant, Mr. S. Stranaghan, and his solicitor, Ms. M. Conway, to the meeting. Ms. Conway reminded the Committee that the application was intended to be a relocation of existing arcade premises which were currently operated by the company at 13 North Street, which was a short walk from the application site. The applicant had requested a new lease from its landlord in North Street but was refused on redevelopment grounds. There was no gaming proposed as part of the redevelopment scheme.

She reminded the Committee that it would be familiar with the redevelopment on North Street, having approved an amusement permit for Oasis Gaming at 73 North Street, which had had to relocate from 19 North Street. The objectors in their submission had sought to distinguish the current application from the Oasis application, on the basis that the planning permission for 73 North Street included a Section 76 Agreement, which created a binding obligation on the applicant to cease trading from the original location. She confirmed that the applicant in this case was also tied to contractual arrangements which would require them to vacate the premises at North Street. If the Committee was minded to grant the permit, the applicant would confirm its undertaking to serve the requisite notice under the agreement for surrender which the Council's legal department held, on approval of the permit and expiry of the challenge period. The applicant confirmed his willingness to surrender the lease for the North Street premises upon approval of the new permit.

The Members were advised that the applicant intended to spend over £200,000 in carrying out improvement works to the unit, creating an improvement to the streetscape and character of the area, thereby contributing to the retail vitality and viability of the city centre.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 10th December, 2025**

The Church, and the objector in this application, had co-existed as a neighbour with other users not dissimilar to the applicant and it was situated close to the Three C's Social Club. In response to the Church's statement regarding sensitive users who attended the Church, she pointed to the fact that there was no vehicular access on Royal Avenue and therefore pedestrian access to the church was more likely to occur from Bridge Street and High Street. She added that the proposal would not result in a cumulative buildup of arcades in the area, given the requirement to cease trading from the premises in North Street.

The Chairperson then welcomed Dr. T. Quinn, Planning Consultant, to the meeting. He outlined that, in terms of whether the application was acceptable in principle, it was within the primary retail core where there was a presumption against allowing additional amusement arcades. He outlined, however, that the applicant had maintained that the arcade would be moving from its existing premises to the application site within the retail core and, therefore, it could be considered acceptable. He confirmed that the location could be considered appropriate as there were no schools, youth centres or places for vulnerable people within 200metres. In respect of any potential impact on the image and profile of Belfast, he outlined that the Church, as a listed building, could be considered a tourism asset. He stated that it sat several properties away from the application site, with a separation distance of approximately 20-25 metres, and that he did not feel that it would unduly harm visitors to the Church. He stated that it was not ideal that the premises would be visible from Royal Avenue, opposite Castle Court.

In summary he stated that the relocation of the premises, including the applicant's commitment to surrender the lease at North Street and the landlord's refusal to renew it, amounted to fairly strong evidence that the premises in North Street would close if the permit for Rosemary Street was granted. In addition, he reminded the Committee of a similar application in 2022, where it had granted an amusement arcade to relocate from North Street close to Royal Avenue for the same reasons and, in some respects, it could be considered as precedent.

A Member stated that it was frustrating that the Policy did not specify what quantified over-proliferation. He also stated that it was well known that people who struggled with addiction attended churches for help and that he felt that the application at that site was regrettable.

The Director of Planning and Building Control reminded the Committee that it had considered a revised Amusement Permit Policy in April 2025, and that it was subject to consultation, however, the current Policy remained in place until a revised Policy was agreed.

A further Member stated that he took assurance from the applicant and his solicitor that the North Street permit would be surrendered if the Committee was to grant the Permit for the current application.

Two further Members expressed concerns in regards to the nearby Church being a heritage asset and that they did not feel comfortable granting the application.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 10th December, 2025**

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Carson  
Seconded by Councillor McCann

That the Committee agrees to the provisional granting of an Amusement Permit for 51 Rosemary Street to Twilight Zone, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to issue the permit once all necessary technical requirements relating to health, safety, welfare and amenity have been completed to the satisfaction of the Building Control Service.

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

**Objection to the Renewal of an Entertainments  
Licence for Shaftesbury Bowling Club**

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the details of the application which was before the Committee due to an objection having been received from a local resident in relation to the renewal of the 6-day Annual Indoor Entertainments Licence for the Shaftesbury Bowling and Recreation Club. She outlined the history of the licence renewal process, including previous objections and resolutions.

The Committee was advised that the objection primarily concerned noise disturbances caused by loud music, particularly on Tuesday evenings and occasionally on weekends. The resident had claimed that the noise, including loud bass music and open windows during events, had negatively impacted their family's health and well-being, causing disrupted sleep for young children. The objector had expressed dissatisfaction with the club's efforts to address the concerns, stating that the club prioritised entertainment over the comfort of nearby residents. The objector had declined further liaison meetings, citing no new developments in their complaint.

The Members were advised that the applicant had responded to the objection by detailing measures taken to mitigate any disturbances, including reducing noise levels, turning off bass music, monitoring sound levels outside the hall, lining doors facing residential areas, and locking windows that faced nearby homes. Despite those efforts, the objector maintained that the noise remained disruptive and that they believed the club had not taken their concerns seriously. The applicant had stated that they had no additional measures to propose beyond those already implemented.

The Director drew the Committee's attention to noise complaints which had received by the Council's Nighttime Noise Team during the previous licence period (February 2024 to January 2025) and the current licence period (February 2025 to November 2025). During the previous period, 17 complaints had been received. However, most were either unsubstantiated or deemed not unreasonable for the time of day. In the current period, 10 complaints had been received, with verbal warnings issued on three occasions due to witnessed noise levels. The Members were advised that dance

**Licensing Committee,  
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classes held at the venue did not require an Entertainments Licence, but that musical entertainment provided after the classes did.

Due to technical difficulties in getting the objector to join the hybrid meeting, the Committee agreed to hear from the secretary of the Bowling Club, Ms. N. Hayden, first.

Ms. Hayden was welcomed to the meeting and she outlined that the complaints focused on the dance classes which took place at the Club on a Tuesday evening between 7.00pm and approximately 10.30pm, with the hall emptying shortly after that time. She stated that the Club comprised 80 members, 65 of whom were pensioners. She explained that they had endeavoured to do their best not to make noise for the neighbours and that the Club members were very much part of the surrounding community. The Members were advised that 10-12 letters of support for the club had been received from within the community. She stated that they had triple glazing on one side of the building and double glazing on another, with extra soundproofing on the fire door nearest the neighbours. She explained that, upon receiving a noise complaint at one event, she stopped the live band, which included a drum kit, at 10.30pm. She outlined a number of measures which the club had taken to mitigate against any noise emanating from the hall and that they were at a loss at what else they could do to minimise noise. The Members were advised that they had offered to send a noise engineer into a neighbouring property to measure the sound level but that the resident had declined.

The Chairperson then welcomed the objector, who wished to remain anonymous, to the meeting. They advised the Committee that their complaints related to persistent noise, namely loud music, coming from the Club on Tuesday evenings, and occasionally on weekend evenings, and that the Club had unfortunately not addressed the issue despite reasonable requests from residents. They stated that the noise was in breach of Council guidelines. They stated that they had met with a Council officer and the Bowling Club in November 2022, whereupon it had been agreed that the Club would:

- (i) submit an acoustic report on the suitability of its premises;
- (ii) ensure that windows were closed when playing loud music; and
- (iii) not use live drum kits.

He stated that those outcomes had not been met by the Bowling Club. He reported that the Club had been given nine verbal warnings regarding noise over the past number of years. He provided an example of a drum kit having been used at the Club on the evening of Friday, 17th October, 2025, approximately 4 metres from residential properties with young children living in them. He added that previous complainants had shied away from formally objecting again due to a number of disparaging social media comments which had been posted after a previous meeting where the Bowling Club's licence had been under consideration.

In response to a Member's question, the objector explained that, following the meeting in November 2022, where a number of outcomes had been agreed but were subsequently not adhered to, he did not feel that there was any merit in meeting with the Club again.

**Licensing Committee,  
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In response to a further Member's query regarding the social media posts which he had mentioned, the objector confirmed that they could still be viewed online.

In response to a further Member's query, the objector stated that, in response to a Freedom of Information Request, there had been nine verbal warnings issued to the Club since the meeting in 2022.

The objector confirmed that the issues related to noise emanating from the premises predominantly on Tuesday evenings, and not from Bowling events.

In response to further queries around the times of the noise complaints, the Director confirmed that officers did not hold any further information than what was within the report, as the complaints from the Noise Team were subject to General Data Protection Regulation.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Bunting,  
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers,

That, as the dance classes do not run on past 11pm; there had only been three verbal warnings in the past year; and that mitigations had been put in place by the Club to reduce noise where possible, the Committee agrees to renew the 6-Day Annual Entertainments Licence, given the importance of the club to the local community.

In response to a further Member's query, the Solicitor confirmed that verbal warnings were the lowest level of warning available.

In response to a further Member's query, Ms. Hayden explained that they had been denied access to a resident's property in order for a sound engineer to take a sound reading. She added that someone at the club could always be contacted by the neighbours, if required, and that she regularly stood outside the Club to monitor the sound levels from the building.

She further explained that the Club had explored the cost of carrying out an acoustic survey but that it was likely to cost approximately £2,500, which was a significant expense for a small club.

A further Member stated that, given no further action was taken by the Council regarding the 27 noise complaints within the last two years, the Committee should consider how much weight to attribute to them.

A Member stated that local sports clubs were struggling and that an expensive acoustic survey was unnecessary. A further Member added that there would always be some noise coming from a licenced premises and that the Club had clearly taken action to manage the noise.

In response to a Member's question, the Director confirmed that, if granted, the licence would be granted for one year.

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 10th December, 2025**

After discussion, the Committee agreed the proposal standing in the name of Councillor Bunting and approved the application for the renewal of the 6-Day Annual Entertainments Licence for Shaftesbury Bowling Club.

Chairperson

## Planning Committee

Tuesday, 9th December, 2025

### HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan, T. Brooks, Carson; Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Magee, McCabe, McCann and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management), Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy) Ms. C Reville, Principal Planning Officer; and Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

#### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillor McCabe.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th November 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 December, 2025.

#### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in item 11c - LA04/2025/1525/F - Removal of condition 9 of LA04/2024/0714/F (Removal of fuel storage tanks) - Units 2a and 2b 38 Boucher Road, in that she had been involved with a previous application, and she left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in item 10b - LA04/2025/0556/F & LA04/2025/0557/DCA - Proposed change of use from restaurant, public house, 2 no retail units and office use to public house, 2 no. restaurants, hotel with an additional 2no.storeys associated with the hotel use, and all external façade alterations (change of description and amended plans). - Lands at no's 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including 8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry, in that he knew the applicant and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Councillors D. Douglas and S. Douglas declared an interest in item 10b - LA04/2025/0556/F & LA04/2025/0557/DCA - Proposed change of use from restaurant, public house, 2 no retail units and office use to public house, 2 no. restaurants, hotel with an additional 2no.storeys associated with the hotel use, and all external façade alterations (change of description and amended plans). - Lands at no's 10-22 Ann Street Belfast (including

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 9th December, 2025**

8-10 Crown Entry and 12 Crown Entry, in that a relative was an employee of the applicant and they left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

**Committee Site Visits**

**Note of Committee Site Visit**

The Committee noted the site visit.

**Notification of Provision/Removal of Parking Bay**

The Committee noted the Notice of Provision of Parking Bay in relation to Essex Grove.

**Notification from Statutory Bodies: Abandonment at 141-147 Upper Dunmurry Lane**

The Committee noted the Notice of Abandonment.

**Planning Appeals Notified**

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

**Planning Decisions Issued**

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

**Housing Land Monitor Report**

The Committee noted the outcomes of the annual Housing Land Monitor for 2024/25 and the intention to publish a summary document and accompanying online map portal on the Council's website.

**Employment Land Monitor Report**

The Committee noted the outcomes of the annual Employment Land Monitor for 2024/25 and the intention to publish a summary document and accompanying online map portal on the Council's website.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 9th December, 2025**

**Local Applications subject to objections from NI Water**

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

**Planning Applications previously considered**

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

The Planning Manager summarised the application and explained that it had been brought back to the Committee as the applicant had incorrectly completed the ownership certificate and technically had invalidated the application.

He reported that the applicant had not served notice on a third party who had interest in a small parcel of land within the site but had since served the correct notice and that the application would be readvertised in the press on 14th December and the re-consultation period would end on 29th December.

He pointed out that the completion of the correct ownership certificate was a procedural matter and did not affect the planning merits of the proposal or previous assessment, subject to the review of any additional representations.

He stated that it was recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the Section 76 planning agreement and conditions, and to deal with any other matters that might arise from outstanding consultations and further public consultation, provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 9th December, 2025**

**LA04/2025/0556/F & LA04/2025/0557/DCA -  
Proposed change of use from restaurant, public  
house, 2 no retail units and office use to public  
house, 2 no. restaurants, hotel with an additional  
2no.storeys associated with the hotel use, and all  
external façade alterations (change of description  
and amended plans). - Lands at no's 10-22 Ann  
Street Belfast (including 8-10 Crown Entry  
and 12 Crown Entry)**

The Principal Planning Officer reported that the application had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in November under the following description:

- Proposed change of use from restaurant, public house, 2 no retail units and office use to public house, restaurant, hotel and 1.no retail unit with an additional 2no.storeys associated with the hotel use, and all external façade alterations.

She explained that the applicant had submitted amended plans which removed the proposed retail unit, to be replaced with a restaurant and provided the Committee with an updated floor plan.

She stated that the application had been re-neighbour notified on 1st December and re-advertised on 5th December and that both DfI Rivers or DfI Roads had responded with no objections.

She summarised the updated assessment of the application and stated that the recommendation remained that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The Committee approved the application and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, to deal with the outstanding consultation response from SES and any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**Planning Applications**

**LA04/2025/0605/F - Erection of a four storey  
building to create 29no. shortterm let accommodation  
units with ancillary roof-mounted solar panels -  
341-345 Albertbridge Road**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application in order to undertake a site visit.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 9th December, 2025**

**LA04/2025/1525/F - Removal of condition 9 of  
LA04/2024/0714/F (Removal of fuel storage tanks) –  
Units 2a and 2b 38 Boucher Road**

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the application was to seek planning permission for the removal of Condition 9 as it did not meet the tests of validity of planning conditions as the tanks referenced were not to be decommissioned.

She reported that, following consultation, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency concluded that it was content with the removal of Condition 9.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan, relevant planning policies and consultation responses, it was considered that the removal of the condition be approved.

The Committee approved the removal of Condition 9 and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise, provided they were not substantive.

**LA04/2025/1454/F - New community wellbeing  
centre and cafe extension to existing lockhouse  
building - The Lockhouse 13 River Terrace**

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and reported that, since publication of the case officer's report, DfI Rivers and Environmental Health had responded with no objections. She added that additional information which had been submitted by the applicant regarding access arrangements had been forwarded to DfI for re-consultation.

She explained that the Committee had previously approved a similar development at the site at its meeting in October, 2024 and that design changes had been required due to the discovery of an unknown sewage pipe which passed through the application site.

She displayed the previous and current site layout plans and explained the significance of the design changes. She stated that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions, and deal with the outstanding DfI Roads, NIEA and SES consultation responses and any other issues that might arise, provided they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 9th December, 2025**

**Restricted Item**

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

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

Members were also reminded that the content of '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.

**Quarter 2 Finance Report - 2025/2026**

The Committee noted the report and associated financial reporting pack.

Chairperson

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

Monday, 15th December, 2025

### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Bell, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,  
de Faoite, Ferguson, Flynn, McCann, McCormick,  
McKay, Ó Néill and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;  
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor; and  
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

(Councillor McCormick, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

#### Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors McCabe and Verner.

#### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### Restricted Item

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

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

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

#### Extension of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Operating Contract

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report in relation to the contract between the Council and Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) for the operation of the Waterfront Hall, Ulster Hall and International Convention Centre (ICC) Belfast.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee**  
**Monday, 15th December, 2025**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Committee with an overview of the establishment of BWUH Ltd., the company's operating and governance structures, its alignment with the Belfast Agenda, the current landscape of the industry and economic outlook, and BWUH Ltd.'s performance.

The Committee was advised that the Services Contract and Shareholders' Agreement, signed between the Council and BWUH Ltd. in 2016, had set out the terms and conditions required for the company to operate. It was reported that the contract was signed for a term of ten years, 2016-26, with an option to extend for a further five years until 2031. The report highlighted that the current model continued to provide the most appropriate model to deliver the agreed objectives and that, should the Committee approve the extension of the contract, further engagement would take place between the Council and BWUH Ltd. in respect of governance.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, the Director of Economic Development and the Divisional Solicitor answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the option to extend the contract between the Council and BWUH Ltd.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor Ó Néill,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the option to extend the contract with BWUH Ltd. until its next meeting, and that a dedicated workshop be held in advance to enable further information to be provided on the contract's option to extend and governance arrangements.

At the request of Councillor McCormick, the proposer and seconder agreed that information be provided to Members at the workshop in respect of potential legal implications.

During further discussion, Members also requested that further information be provided at the workshop on socio-economic benefits, BWUH Ltd.'s ten-year performance, the role of the Committee in respect of BWUH Ltd.'s Business Plan and targets, social inclusion and BWUH Ltd.'s alignment with the Belfast Business Promise, and the role of the Waterfront Hall in context of the city's development and animation of its waterfront.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the option to extend the contract with BWUH Ltd. until its next scheduled meeting on 19th January, 2026, and that a dedicated Committee workshop be held in advance of the meeting to enable further information to be provided on the contract's option to extend, governance arrangements, and the above-mentioned matters raised by Members.

Chairperson

## Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 11th December, 2025

### MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M. Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Councillors Anglin, Bell, R. Brooks,  
T. Brooks, Collins, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas,  
Ferguson, Groogan, Magee,  
Meenehan, Murray and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate); and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

#### Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor McCann.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th November 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 December.

#### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

#### Presentations

##### Sustainable Energy Communities NI – Advice NI

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. Begley, Project Manager at Advice NI, to the meeting.

Mr. Begley outlined the details of the Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) NI project which aimed to empower local communities to take charge of their energy generation and consumption, promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency. He explained that the project focused on reducing energy costs, addressing fuel poverty, and supporting sustainability. This included developing Energy Master Plans for four communities, implementing a renewable energy project and establishing the SEC model as a pathway to help the NI Government achieve its Climate Action goals. The project emphasised community collaboration through town hall meetings, energy-saving talks, and school visits, while also providing advice on retrofitting, energy audits, and renewable technologies.

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The Members were advised of how the project had made significant progress, including study visits to retrofitting centres and renewable energy sites, school visits engaging 120 students, and community events with nearly 2,000 participants. Outreach efforts had included food bank partnerships, monthly clinics, conducting energy audits for households and community buildings and developing Energy Master Plans. The SEC initiative planned to expand its efforts under "SEC 2.0," continuing to foster cross-border partnerships and furthering its mission to create sustainable energy solutions for local communities.

In response to a Member's question, he stated that the project was predominantly about maximising engagement and encouraging as many people as possible to consider more sustainable energy choices.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Begley for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

Noted.

**Retrofit and Sustainability Programme –  
Choice Housing**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. B. Rankin, Sustainability and Energy Manager at Choice Housing, to the meeting.

He provided the Members with details of its sustainability and retrofitting programme. He outlined that Choice managed over 13,000 homes with 30,000 tenants, 45% of which was in Belfast. He stated that Choice reinvested all its surpluses to benefit the community. Between 2022 and 2025, it had achieved a number of significant milestones, including a 21% reduction in scope 1 and 2 emissions, it had invested over £5million in energy efficiency and carbon reduction, and had generated over 1,500 MWh of electricity from solar PV systems. It had also improved the energy efficiency of its housing stock, with 87% of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) rated Band A-C and all new homes achieving SAP ratings of A or B. Notable projects included deep retrofits of homes to achieve EPC Band A, landlord solar PV and battery trials, and community initiatives like the Riverdale Community Garden.

In regards to questions about the deep retrofit projects, Mr. Rankin explained that they were more of an innovative exploration, as the costs were hard to justify.

He answered a number of Members' questions regarding their biodiversity plan, swift boxes, wildflowers, fly-tipping and maintenance schedules.

He emphasised that the main obstacle in not being able to implement retrofitting or energy saving measures in its housing stock was tenants declining access to their properties for works to take place. He stated that often they would offer to decant tenants to other properties for a short period in order to undertake multi element works.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked him for the update provided.

Noted.

**Proposals for Belfast to become a  
National Park City – Wild Belfast / QUB**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. C. McKinney, Wild Belfast, and Dr. R. Black, Queen's University, to the meeting.

Mr. McKinney explained the concept of transforming Belfast into a "National Park City", blending the principles of traditional National Parks with urban environments to foster a better relationship between communities and nature. He outlined that, in 2025, Chattanooga in Tennessee was recognised as North America's first ever National Park City, and the fourth worldwide. He outlined that the idea of a National Park City was a way to reimagine urban spaces, emphasising the importance of green spaces, outdoor learning, reduced pollution, and improved well-being. He stated that the idea had come to the fore during Belfast 2024.

The Committee was advised that the Universal Charter for National Park Cities outlined that the movement's goals included enhancing lives, health, relationships with nature, and promoted sustainable practices like locally grown food and responsible consumption.

He outlined the steps required to achieve National Park City status, which included research, campaign registration, creating a charter, and securing support from local authorities and communities. He emphasised the need for inclusivity, collaboration, and the development of policies to protect and enhance nature, culture, and public spaces.

The Members were advised that the benefits of Belfast becoming a National Park City included providing a platform for civic collaboration and marketing the City with a distinct message. The campaign would seek to align with existing city strategies, such as the Climate Action Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan, while encouraging grassroots involvement and partnerships with statutory and non-governmental organisations

Dr. Black explained that her doctorate had focussed on Belfast children, aged 7-13 years old, who lived beside interfaces and wanted more space to play. She highlighted that the children wanted more natural space, such as green space and plants to encourage bees.

During discussion, a Member requested that officers would provide information which identified green space across the city, minus any 3G or 4G pitches.

A number of Members representing the Titanic District Electoral Area emphasised that there was very little green, play space in their area. One Member stated that the recent installation of stones in Tommy Patton Park had unfortunately meant that some children from the nearby Mitchell House School, who were in wheelchairs, could no longer use the space. She requested that accessibility be at the forefront of any decision-making in respect of progressing the project. Mr. McKinney confirmed that this would be the case as one of the core aims was that access would be for everyone, at anytime.

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In response to a Member's query, Dr. Black provided the Committee with an example of how co-design and strong and continuous community engagement had been integral to the reimagining of the Grosvenor bonfire site.

The Climate Commissioner expressed that it was important that the City and Neighbourhood Services Department be involved in the discussions around National Park City.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for attending the meeting.

After further discussion, the Committee:

- noted the presentation;
- agreed that Climate Team officers would arrange a meeting with Wild Belfast, QUB and the City and Neighbourhood Services Department to discuss how a National Park City application could be progressed; and
- agreed that Wild Belfast and QUB be invited to a future meeting to present a further update on their work.

**Heat Network Update**

The Climate Commissioner presented the Committee with the following report:

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

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

**2.0 Recommendation**

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

- I. the successful bid for a third round of funding from Innovate UK (£150k) for a new project 'Enhancing the viability of low carbon heat networks' to be completed in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult, SONI and NIE Networks by the end of March 2026;
- II. the project builds on a feasibility study for a City Centre low carbon heat network as well the outputs of the previous Innovate UK funded project and that the project was one of only six projects approved for funding and there is a strong interest from Innovate UK in the project outcomes;
- III. the five work packages: 1) Further development of the portfolio PPA model for rooftop solar ESC and market testing; 2) An economic appraisal of the PPA model and the thermal storage component of a heat network; 3) Development of an off-takers forum and soft market

engagement; 4) Legal review and a procurement roadmap stress tested with heat network developers and aligned with the future regulations for the heat network; 5) UK-wide dissemination and communication of findings to assess the potential to replicate the approach in other parts of the UK.

- IV. the project will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising BCC, ESC, NIE, SONI, NIHE and the Department for Economy;
- V. the planned site visit to an operational heat network in Leeds on 27th February 2026 and the forthcoming request for nominees to attend the site visit.

### 3.0 Main Report

#### Background

- 3.1 The new project follows on from the Pathfinders Net Zero Living project which ended on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 (Committee were updated on this in October 2025). The project will strengthen delivery pathways for a city-centre heat network and rooftop solar which are two of the priority projects identified in the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP). It will be delivered in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult (ESC), SONI and NIE Networks with additional support from AECOM (who developed a feasibility study for a city centre network) and Bird and Bird (who have been advising on the route to market). The project timeframe is very tight with delivery scheduled for the end of March 2026.
- 3.2 The project builds on a feasibility study for a City Centre low carbon heat network as well the outputs of the previous Innovate UK funded project: the market readiness assessment and off-taker engagement; the development of portfolio PPA approach to scale rooftop solar; the route to market and a communities opportunities assessment.
- 3.3 This new project will address a number of local and regional barriers to achieving net zero ambitions: market immaturity and procurement complexity around complex decarbonisation projects; grid constraints and high levels of wind curtailment prevalent in Northern Ireland; off-taker concerns around the price of low carbon heat, contract complexities and risk; legal and commercial considerations; and the lack of integration of heat networks with the wider energy system.
- 3.4 The project was one of only six projects approved for funding and there is a strong interest from Innovate UK in the outcomes of this work in particular whether it can be scaled in

other parts of the UK to reduce wind curtailment, improve the financial viability of heat networks and scale rooftop solar.

### 3.5 Key project deliverables

There are five Work Packages.

#### 1. Further development of the portfolio PPA model for rooftop solar ESC and market testing.

Currently, the city generates 10MW of power from rooftop solar compared to a potential generation of 1GW estimated by the LAEP modelling. Moreover, the solar capacity installed on rooftops is often sized to the consumption needs of the building rather than maximising the use of the entire roof due to low export tariffs. The high cost of electricity in the UK can also make low carbon heat networks unviable compared with gas heating systems unless a high-grade waste heat source is available. This aggregation model has the potential to unlock solar deployment through an enhanced return from exporting power to a large off-taker such as an energy centre or data centre, maximising rooftop generation while also de-risking cheap power for other developments.

#### 2. Economic appraisal of the PPA model and the thermal storage component of a heat network

Over time, the volume of curtailed renewables across GB and Ireland has increased dramatically with much of the curtailed volume located in areas of weaker grid infrastructure. Almost 40% of wind energy generated in Northern Ireland in December 2024 went unused due to restrictions in the power grid. This level of curtailment deters investment and acts as a major constraint on achieving NI's 2030 target of 80% of grid power from renewables with the share of NI's renewable power falling from 51% in 2022 to 43.5% in 2024.

Thermal storage for heat networks can help to balance the grid by converting renewable electricity that would otherwise be curtailed to heat (using heat pump). This Work Package will quantify and monetise the value of using thermal storage to balance the grid and reduce heat tariff for off-takers as well as determining the impact of doing this at scale across the UK.

#### 3. Development of an off-takers forum and soft market engagement

Securing commitments from off-takers is critical because they turn uncertain future heat sales into predictable, contracted

revenue which strengthens the business case for the initial upfront investment. This Work Package will engage potential off-takers through a series of workshops responding to concerns raised by in the market readiness assessment, particularly around the price of heat, contract complexities and risk. It will build consensus across a relatively large group of off-takers and test risk mitigation strategies to progress off-takers towards co-designed letters of intent to connect to a network while also building investor confidence in the project, culminating in an off-taker forum that is well informed and enabled to engage with investors as the project progresses.

**4. Legal review and a procurement roadmap stress tested with heat network developers and aligned with the future regulations for the heat network**

This Work Package will provide a legal review of the portfolio PPA model and stress test this with businesses to identify risks (and mitigations). It will also develop a procurement roadmap aligned with the future regulations Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS), based on the de-risking and feasibility work to date and test appetite with heat network developers. This will enable BCC to progress the project, confident that it has a viable project which the market will be interested in competing for.

**5. UK wide dissemination and communication of findings**

This Work Package will disseminate the findings to a wide audience locally via the Belfast Net Zero Delivery Group and the Our Planet Board, using the learnings to advance two priority net zero projects from the Belfast LAEP. A two-day knowledge exchange visit in Belfast will target stakeholders from areas in GB affected by curtailment as well as those with an interest in increasing the viability of heat networks and reducing the reliance on grant finance. The aim is to understand specific interests and assess the potential to replicate the approach in other areas.

**3.6 Project oversight**

The project will be overseen by a Steering Group comprising BCC, ESC, NIE, SONI, NIHE and the Department for Economy. The Steering Group will specifically consider how the innovation will be commercialised and attract further investment. Additional value will be created through embedding design and delivery into key supply chains within the energy system through SONI, NIE (with capability to

translate solutions into programmes of work across the island of Ireland) and heat and solar supply chains.

**Site visit to an operational heat network in Leeds**

Elected Members approved a site visit to an operational Heat Network in Leeds at the October SP&R Committee. The purpose of the visit is to provide Elected Members and members of CMT with an opportunity to visit an operational heat network and learn about the development process, hurdles and benefits.

3.8 Leeds PIPES is a heat network led by Leeds City Council and is considered the most suitable for a Heat Network site visit at this time as the Council has been able to set a lower tariff for heat by taking a long-term approach to securing a return on the initial capex investment. This has enabled the Council to double their heat off-takers within 7 years, leading to more favourable financial returns. Our initial engagement with potential off-takers in Belfast suggests that the price of heat will be a key determinant in securing off-takers and hence the Leeds delivery model would be of interest to CMT and Elected Members.

3.9 The Leeds PIPES development began in 2018 and has progressed into its third phase beginning in 2022. So far 30km of network has been installed with 4,000 homes and public buildings connected, however it has been developed with future expansion in mind. The project has been delivered by Leeds City Council in partnership with Vital Energi with support from central government grant funding. The anchor loads included Leeds Town Hall, Leeds Becket University and several other Council buildings. The network involved a physical retrofit of old historic buildings (similar to those in Belfast) and uses heat generated from an energy from waste plant.

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

3.11 **Proposed attendees would comprise: Party Group Leaders or their nominees, Committee Chairs, Directors and Senior officers. Members are requested to note a forthcoming request for nominees to attend the site visit which is planned for 27th February.**

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

**The project will be funded through a £150k grant from Innovate UK. The site visit will be met via the existing City and Organisational Strategy Departmental budget.**

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

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

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated the Climate Team on the successful project bid being one of only six to be approved for funding.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Chairperson

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