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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 and remotely via Teams on Monday, 2nd March, 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 - 16)
5. Official Announcements
6. Changes of Membership on Committees
7. Request(s) to Address the Council
 - Representatives from Friends of the Field and the Stranmillis Neighbourhood Association (SNA) re: Lower Botanic Gardens
8. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 17 - 50)
9. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 51 - 56)
10. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 57 - 86)
11. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 87 - 98)
12. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 99 - 110)
13. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 111 - 116)
14. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 117 - 118)
15. Notice of Motion
 - a) Call for the NI Executive to Introduce a Basic Income for Artists Scheme (Pages 119 - 120)

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, 9th February, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

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

Declarations of Interest

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Alderman McCullough and Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Carson, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe, McCullough, I. McLaughlin and Verner all declared interests under the item 'Community Support Plan - Large Grant Funding Programme', in that they were associated with a group which had applied for, or had received, funding under the terms of the programme. Councillor R-M. Donnelly advised also that she was the chairperson of 'New Start Education' and Councillor McCann declared an interest in that he was related to an individual who worked for the charity which employed Councillor P. Donnelly.

Councillor Murray declared an interest under the item 'Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann' in that he was employed for the SOS Bus NI, who were a delivery partner for the event.

Councillors Carson, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan, Murray, McCabe and Verner declared interests under the item 'Minutes of Shared City Partnership' which related to the matters 'PEACEPLUS' and 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' in

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that they worked for organisations which had applied for, or were in receipt of, funding under the programmes.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest under the item 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' in that his partner was a Junior Minister within the Executive Office and had worked in developing that project.

Councillor de Faquite declared an interest under the item 'Planning Information' in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest under the item 'Request for Use of the City Hall Grounds for Various Events in 2026', in that his employer was associated with one of the applicants.

Councillor D. Douglas declared an interest under the item 'Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan' in that a member of his family played for Bloomfield Football Club.

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest within the Climate and City Resilience Committee minutes under the item 'UPSURGE EU Horizon Project' in that her employer, The Queen's University of Belfast, was linked to the funding of research for the project.

With the exception of the item 'Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan,' none of the matters above became the subject of discussion or debate and the Members were not required to leave the meeting. However, Councillor D. Douglas did not vote or partake in any discussion or debate relating to the item 'Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan.'

Minutes of the Council

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 8th January, 2026, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor referred to an unprovoked attack on three members of Council staff which had occurred in central Belfast on 31st January. She condemned the incident and added that her thoughts and prayers were with the members of staff. A number of Members concurred with the Lord Mayor's comments and extended their best wishes to the staff members.

The Lord Mayor referred also to the recent retirements of long-standing staff members Mr. Cormac McCann and Ms. Mary McKenna. She thanked them both for their dedication to service and, on behalf of the Council, wished them well in retirement.

Councillor R. Brooks paid tribute to Mr. Jonathan McAlpine of the Eastside Partnership on the successful hosting the Eastside Awards and congratulated those groups and individuals who had been nominated. In particular, she referred Mr. Gregor Galway of Templemore Baths,

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Ms. Dot Blackburn from the Cregagh Estate and the Titanic Gentlemen's Club, all of whom had received awards. At Councillor R. Brooks' request, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to congratulate the individuals and the club mentioned.

Councillor Dornan referred to the recent passing of Ms. Violet Larmour, who was a past member of Council staff. Councillor Larmour paid tribute to Ms. Larmour's loyalty and community activism and added that she would be dearly missed within the wider Shankill area. At Councillor Dornan's request, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to Ms. Larmour's family to express condolences on behalf of the Council.

Councillor Groogan referred to recent revelations which had linked the former Senator George Mitchell, who had been made a Freeman of the City in 2018, to the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. She added that she had requested that the Chief Executive put in place a review of the former Senator's status as a Freeman of the City and to make appropriate changes to demonstrate the Council's commitment to upholding the highest standards of integrity. In response, the Chief Executive indicated that legal advice had been sought in the matter.

Councillor McKeown congratulated Aquinas Diocesan Grammar School on their winning of the MacLarnon Cup when they had defeated St Eunan's of Letterkenny in the final on 5th February. In addition, Councillor McKeown expressed his gratitude to those staff members who had overseen the work associated with the opening of the dedicated dog park within Ormeau Park.

Councillor Long thanked all those staff members who had been involved in the delivery of the Council's first-ever epilepsy awareness session, which had taken place to coincide with International Epilepsy Day earlier that morning. Councillor S. Douglas concurred with the comments of Councillor Long.

Councillor Meenahan referred to the recent passing of Mr. Danny Hale, who had been a prolific goal scorer for, amongst other clubs, Cliftonville, Crusaders and Derry City throughout the 1960s. At Councillor Meenahan's request, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to Mr. Hale's family to express condolences on behalf of the Council.

Alderman Copeland congratulated Mr. A. J. Carlisle and Ms. Emma Kincaid of the St John's Ambulance - Grove Cadets Division, who had both received the Knight Commander's Certificate of Commendation for the "professionalism and selflessness" they had displayed during a medical emergency which had occurred at the Asda store on the Shore Road in November, 2025. The Lord Mayor agreed to write to congratulate both cadets and to consider hosting an event to recognise the wider achievements of young people across Belfast.

In response to a request from Councillor Lyons, the Lord Mayor undertook to write a letter of condolence to the family of Mr. Petesy Burns on his recent passing. Mr. Burns had been a stalwart of the Belfast music scene for more than forty years, and as a community activist who had helped found the Belfast Music Collective in the 1980s.

Councillor S. Douglas referred to the recent reopening of the Better Gym at Connswater, which represented one of the largest investments ever made by Greenwich Leisure Limited. The Lord Mayor agreed to write to the Chief Executive of Greenwich Leisure

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Limited to express the Council's gratitude for the investment in a centre which would, he added, prove to be of great benefit, particularly to the people of east Belfast.

Changes to Committees

The Chief Executive reported that notifications had been received of the following changes to Committees:

- that the Social Democratic and Labour Party wished Councillor de Faoite to replace Councillor McKeown on the People and Communities Committee; and the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) to replace Councillor Whyte on the Licensing Committee.
- that Sinn Fein wished to replace Councillor Ronan McLaughlin with Councillor Seanna Walsh on the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- that the Democratic Unionist Party wished Councillor Doran to replace Alderman McCoubrey on the Strategic Policy and Resources; and Councillor R. Brooks to replace Councillor Bunting on the Licensing Committee.

The Council approved the changes.

Requests to Film Proceedings

The Chief Executive reported that requests had been received from the BBC and UTV to film the proceedings of the meeting.

The Council acceded to the requests and the representatives of the broadcasting organisations were admitted to the meeting.

Deputation

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from Ms. C. McStravick (Northern Ireland Council on Voluntary Action) and Ms. J. Kinnear (Ashton Community Trust) in relation to the motion under the heading 'UK Shared Prosperity Fund', which had been adopted by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 27th January. The Council acceded to the request and the deputation was admitted to the Chamber.

The Council was informed that the Westminster Government's decision to phase out the U.K. Shared Prosperity Fund and to replace it with the Local Growth Fund in Northern Ireland would reduce significantly the annual revenue funding received to address economic inactivity. It was stated that the change would impact significantly on those with complex health, wellbeing, and employability needs and on those local organisations which supported people to return to employment each year. It was pointed out that Northern Ireland already lagged behind the rest of the U.K. in accessing key programmes and investment to provide support through the community and voluntary sectors. Ms. Kinnear concluded by adding that there was a need locally to provide enhanced resources to fund the vital service, which was an integral part of the local economy and community.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for attending and for the information which had been provided.

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd and 30th January and 6th and 9th February 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

**Pitches Programme – Proposed
Phasing and Implementation Plan**

Amendment

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

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 6th February, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to provide that the second football pitch provision be changed from the current recommendation to prioritise the Blanchflower Park Playing Fields and Aircraft Park in the first phase.”

On a vote, fifteen Members voted in favour of the amendment, with twenty-three voting against and nineteen ‘no votes’ recorded. Accordingly, it was declared lost.

**Pitches Strategy and Strategic Use
of Boucher Road Playing Fields**

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Murray,

“That the above-mentioned decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 30th January, insofar as it related to the future Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields, be referred back to the Committee and that any final decisions regarding the future of the site would be reconsidered after the submission of detailed reports which would address the following:

1. an assessment of how the Boucher Road site could be reconfigured to support enhanced sports provision alongside a major events venue with a capacity of up to 40,000;
2. an evaluation of potential alternative sites across the city suitable for development as a major events space;
3. a comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of Boucher Road operating as an events venue, including benefits to local businesses, tourism, and employment; and

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4. the Council works with promoters and partners such as Eventsec, MCD, and Shine, to look at options of creating a hybrid site which provides sporting facilities and large scale events with a capacity of 40k.

In addition, this Council reaffirmed its commitment to music, arts, and culture as central to Belfast's future. The Council requested that also that an in-depth report outlining current support for the music industry, from grassroots and community-based venues such as the 'Oh Yeah Music Centre', through to initiatives that promote Belfast as a leading international city of music and culture."

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

Pitches Strategy and Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields and Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

"In addition to the inclusion of the previous decision, that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 30th January, under the heading 'Pitches Strategy and Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields', and the decision of the Committee of 6th February, under the heading 'Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan' be referred back to the Committee for further consideration."

On a vote, thirty-six Members voted in favour of the amendment, with twenty-one voting against, and it was declared carried.

Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Whyte,
Seconded by Councillor O' Neill,

"That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 6th February, under the heading 'Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan', specifically in relation to the Grove Playing Fields, be amended to provide future phases involving the site, as outlined, be amended to provide that any approach adopted relating to the 'Grove Playing Fields – Masterplan' would explore various options including GAA and association football facilities."

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On a vote, thirty-one Members voted in favour of the amendment, with fifteen voting against and eleven 'no votes' recorded. Accordingly, it was declared carried.

Revenue Estimates 2026/27

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 6th February, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to provide there be a three per cent increase in the Revenue Estimates 2026/27 to include the removal of the previously agreed increase of £100,000 for the Summer Community Diversionary Programme as agreed at the meeting on 23rd January.”

On a vote, five Members voted in favour of the amendment, with fifty voting against and three 'no votes' recorded. Accordingly, it was declared lost.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

Amendment

At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd January, under the heading 'Fleadh Cheoil na Éireann', be amended to provide that the Falls Park be included also within the sites earmarked for camp site provision during the Fleadh Cheoil.

Revenue Estimates 2026/27

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 9th February, under the above-mentioned heading, be referred back to the Committee to enable clarification to be obtained in respect of the 'growth proposals' which had been removed from within the estimates.”

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

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd and 30th January; and 6th and 9th February, 2026, were thereupon approved and adopted.

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People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 13th January and 9th February, 2026, be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 14th January and 9th February, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 21st January, 2026, 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 R. Brooks and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 20th January and 9th February, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor Long and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 19th January, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Climate and City Resilience Committee

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

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 15th January, 2026, be approved and adopted.

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Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 27th January, 2026, 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 Friday, 13th February, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor I. McLaughlin.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2026/27

Amendment 1

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer,

“That the above-mentioned decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, insofar as it related to the **Boucher Road Playing Fields**, be rejected and agrees to adhere to the decision taken by the Council, at its meeting on 9th February. Namely:

The decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd January, insofar as it related to the future Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields, be referred back to the Committee and that any final decisions regarding the future of the site would be reconsidered after the submission of detailed reports which would address the following:

- 1. an assessment of how the Boucher Road site could be reconfigured to support enhanced sports provision alongside a major events venue with a capacity of up to 40,000;*
- 2. an evaluation of potential alternative sites across the city suitable for development as a major events space;*
- 3. a comprehensive analysis of the economic impact of Boucher Road operating as an events venue, including benefits to local businesses, tourism, and employment; and*
- 4. the Council works with promoters and partners such as Eventsec, MCD, and Shine, to look at options of creating a hybrid site which provides sporting facilities and large scale events with a capacity of 40k.*

In addition, this Council reaffirmed its commitment to music, arts, and culture as central to Belfast’s future. The Council requested that also that an in-depth report outlining current support for the music industry, from grassroots and community-based venues such as the ‘Oh Yeah Music Centre’, through to initiatives that promote Belfast as a leading international city of music and culture.”

On a vote, twenty-five Members voted in favour of the amendment, with twenty-nine voting against, and three no votes, and it was declared lost.

Amendment 2

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer,

“That the above-mentioned decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, insofar as it related to the **Pitches Strategy**, be amended to:

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This council is committed to bringing forward the new Pitches Strategy in March 2026 to address the current significant deficit in pitch provision across Belfast, improve existing facilities and increase usage of other pitches through better partnership working with other organisations in the city.

In light of the particular challenges around the provision of GAA pitches, this Council will agree to the provision of at least 3 new GAA pitches within this pitches strategy as a priority. This will include the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields.

The Council acknowledges the potential conflict with the site's existing use as the largest venue for major concerts and events in Belfast and recognises the importance of ensuring we maintain a site that is capable of hosting on a similar or indeed greater scale going forward, with appropriate supporting facilities and infrastructure. We commit to working with the large scale events sector, statutory partners and local stakeholders to identify and assess suitable alternative sites across the city or the potential for managing both within the Boucher Road Playing Fields. A report will be brought back on these options within two months to advance this issue.

This Council will also prioritise proposed soccer pitches that may be eligible for external funding processes as and when such application periods open."

During discussion, Councillor Murphy suggested the following addition to the proposal at the end of the second paragraph: ***'This will include the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields with Belfast City Council installing two GAA pitches, an intermediate soccer pitch and small sided games pitches at this facility.'***

During further discussion, Councillor Whyte suggested the removal of the term ***'at least 3'*** in the second paragraph.

The Proposer accepted the amendments.

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

"This council is committed to bringing forward the new Pitches Strategy in March 2026 to address the current significant deficit in pitch provision across Belfast, improve existing facilities and increase usage of other pitches through better partnership working with other organisations in the city.

In light of the particular challenges around the provision of GAA pitches, this Council will agree to the provision of new GAA pitches within this pitches strategy as a priority. This will include the use of Boucher Road Playing Fields with Belfast City Council installing two GAA pitches, an intermediate soccer pitch and small sided games pitches at this facility.

The Council acknowledges the potential conflict with the site's existing use as the largest venue for major concerts and events in Belfast and recognises the importance of ensuring we maintain a site that is capable of hosting on a similar or indeed greater scale going forward, with appropriate supporting facilities and

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infrastructure. We commit to working with the large scale events sector, statutory partners and local stakeholders to identify and assess suitable alternative sites across the city or the potential for managing both within the Boucher Road Playing Fields. A report will be brought back on these options within two months to advance this issue.

This Council will also prioritise proposed soccer pitches that may be eligible for external funding processes as and when such application periods open.”

On a vote, thirty-two Members voted in favour of the amendment, with twenty-four voting against, and it was declared carried.

Amendment 3

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

Resolved - “That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, insofar as it related to the ***Pitches Strategy-DCMS Funding*** be amended to provide that, in relation to the expansion of East Belfast Pitch Provision, that the second football pitch provision be changed from the recommendation which had been outlined in the report of the Committee on 6th February under the heading Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan to prioritise the Orangefield Playing Fields, Blanchflower Park Playing Fields and Aircraft Park in the first phase, rather Dixon Park.”

Arising from the previous decisions, at the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council also agreed to proceed with the remainder of the Pitches Strategy.

Amendment 4

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th February, under the above-mentioned heading, be amended to provide there be a 4.25 per cent increase in the Revenue Estimates 2026/27 to include the removal of the previously agreed increase of £100,000 for the Summer Community Diversionary Programme as agreed at the meeting on 23rd January, and setting the growth fund at £3,653,887.00 – Any additional money from efficiency savings and revenue raising will be added to the Growth Fund, with a minimum target of £500,000 in year savings.”

On a vote, thirteen Members voted in favour of the amendment, with thirty-seven voting against, and four no votes, and it was declared lost.

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Adoption of Minutes

The Lord Mayor put the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Committee of the 13th February to the Council for adoption. As there was no consensus, the adoption of the minutes became subject to a vote.

On a recorded vote, forty-seven Members voted in favour of the adoption of the minutes and two against, with three no votes and, accordingly, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Committee of the 13th February, subject to the aforementioned amendments, were thereupon approved and adopted.

For 47	Against 2	No Vote 3
<p>The Lord Mayor, Councillor Kelly (Chairperson); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Long, Magee, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh.</p>	<p>Councillors Collins and McDowell,</p>	<p>The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty; and Councillors de Faoite and Lyons.</p>

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 20th February, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

Also attended: Councillor Groogan.

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. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing
and External Affairs;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
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 23rd and 30th January, and 6th, 9th and 13th February, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meetings on 9th and 13th February, subject to the amendments under the following headings:

Council amendments of 9th February

- Pitches Strategy and Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields (30th Jan)
- Pitches Strategy and Strategic Use of Boucher Road Playing Fields and Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan (30th Jan and 6th Feb)
- Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan (6th Feb)

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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- Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (23rd Jan)
- Revenue Estimates 2026/27 (9th Feb)

Council amendments of 13th February

- Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2026/27 - Pitches Strategy (13th Feb)
- Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2026/27 - Pitches Strategy-DCMS Funding (13th Feb)

Declarations of Interest

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

In relation to item 2. (b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, Councillor Murray declared an interest, in that he was employed by S.O.S NI who were a delivery partner of the Fleadh. As the related interest did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 4. (b) Planning Information, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 4. (e) Social Supermarket Fund 26/28, Councillor Beattie declared an interest associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor Long declared an interest under item 3. (f) Correspondence received from Minister of Justice - Stand alone Hate Crime Bill, in that his wife was the Justice Minister and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following seven 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 seven items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

Quarter 3 Finance Report 2025-26

The Director of Finance provided an update on the Quarter 3 financial position, including the year-end forecast for 2025/26.

The Committee:

- Noted the Quarter 3 financial position and year end forecast (Appendix1);
- Noted the attached Quarter 3 Treasury Management report (Appendix 2); and
- Noted that further information be provided on the Waterfront Hall forecast;
- Agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee in March in relation to Discretionary Funding.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

(Ms. L-A O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism and Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Open Spaces, Resources, Fleet and Transport, attended in connection with this item.)

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

During discussion, in relation to waste management plans, one member suggested that a plan was also needed for the continuation of resident's waste and recycling collection during the event week.

One member also highlighted the need that Belfast Bike stock at relevant stands should be monitored and replenished when necessary.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the Committee agrees that bi-lingual communications be undertaken for the marketing of St. Patrick's Day events.

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

After discussion, the Committee noted the progress to date on the development of the Fleadh Cheoil and agreed delegated authority be sought from the Council to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for decisions in relation to waste management arrangements for the Fleadh.

Accordingly, the Committee also agreed that bi-lingual communications be undertaken for the marketing of St. Patrick's Day events.

City Innovation Programme Update

The Committee:

1. Noted that Belfast's \$1 million 'alleyways transformation' application to Bloomberg Philanthropies had been successful;
2. Approved The Lord Mayor, Deputy Chief Executive and a City Innovation Broker to attend Bloomberg's CityLab workshop in April. (All costs would be covered by Bloomberg.);
3. Approved the procurement of a supplier to work with the six councils of the Belfast Region City Deal to maximise the impact of the forthcoming £4.4 million Contracts for Innovations programme;
4. Agreed to an additional contract be included under item 6.a) Contracts Update in relation to the procurement of a technical

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supplier for the 'Contract for Innovation' programme of up to £50,000.

**St Brigids GAC Management Agreement at
Musgrave Park**

The Committee considered an update on the outcome of negotiations with St. Brigids GAC regarding options for their future management of Musgrave Park GAA pitches.

The Committee:

- Approved a 15 year management agreement with St Brigids GAC for the 2 pitches at Musgrave Park on the terms outlined in the report;
- Noted that the agreement included permission to build a hurling wall at the clubs expense subject to all statutory approvals being in place; and
- Noted that the agreement permitted the club to seek pitch side advertising sponsorship income from suitable partners.

New Crematorium at Roselawn

The Director of Property and Projects presented a report on the proposed new Crematorium project at Roselawn.

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That the Committee agrees to proceed with the recommendation, as outlined in the report:

- a new, two-chapel crematorium at the Roselawn site, and to appoint the contractor;
- the adoption of a hybrid committal service model; and
- a review and increase of cremation fees, particularly for non-Belfast residents.

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

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the Committee agrees to invite the Local Government Auditor to analyse the decision to take forward the recommendation for a new, two-chapel crematorium at the Roselawn site, in relation to the concerns raised regarding cost implications and alternative site options.

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

Accordingly, the Committee noted the report which had been submitted to the special meeting of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group and agreed the minutes and recommendations of the Working Group to proceed with:

- a new, two-chapel crematorium at the Roselawn site, and to appoint the contractor;
- the adoption of a hybrid committal service model; and
- a review and increase of cremation fees, particularly for non-Belfast residents

Asset Management

The Committee:

- i. Request for Council to act as a Sponsoring Body**
 - Approved the Council granting in principle approval to act as a Sponsoring Body in the acquisition of a surplus asset available through the D1 trawl at Riddell Campus, Malvern Street, Belfast to Argyle Business Centre.

- ii. Update on Plot 15 Gasworks Estate (Klondyke Building) – proposed disposal of the Headlease**
 - Noted the update on the sale of Plot 15 at the Gasworks Estate (Klondyke Building)

The Committee also noted that further information would be provided in relation to the Capital Financing Budget.

Physical Programme Update

(Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Property and Projects provided an overview of the Council's Physical Programme, together with the requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme.

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor Murray and

Resolved – The Committee agrees, in relation to **5-9 North Street**, that a report be submitted to a future committee in relation to medium term studio space options for the creative sector and the Council engage with the Department for Communities and the Arts Council to look at mechanisms to support the sector going forward.

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor Whyte,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite and

Resolved – The Committee, in relation to **Historic Tiled Street Signs**, agrees that the project be moved to Stage 3 – Committed on the Capital Programme and agrees that a process looking at the future repair and maintenance of signs be investigated.

Proposal 3

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved – The Committee agrees that, in relation to **Community Centres**, the Braniel Community Centre and outdoor space be added as a Stage 1 – Emerging project onto the Capital Programme and agrees that a report be submitted to the Committee on the status of all Community Centres across the city, to include information on current service provision and gaps, within two months.

Proposal 4

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

Resolved - That the Committee agrees, in relation to **Belfast Stories**, to proceed with the Enhanced Studio to include an open-call for potential operators, in line with the Council's Social Value Policy.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- **Capital Programme Movements –**
 - **Depot Charging Scheme** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £76,324 (25% of project costs) being provided by the Council and noted that the Director of Finance had confirmed that this was within the affordability limits of the Council;
 - **IT Programme— HR/ Payroll Upgrade** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £545,355 and noted that the Director of Finance had confirmed that this was within the affordability limits of the Council;
 - **Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;

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- **Assembly Rooms Cluster H&S Works** - Agreed that 'Assembly Rooms Cluster Health and Safety Works/Essential Repairs' be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the buildings/cluster, and pending 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 with the works to be partly funded by the funding received under the World Monuments Fund in respect of the Assembly Rooms and noted that work was underway to explore feasibility for the use of the Assembly Rooms and its environs for the Fleadh with further detail to be brought back to Members;
 - **Leisure Programme** – noted the movement of Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme and agreed to move the remaining centres to be taken forward under the next phase to *Stage 2- Uncommitted*;
 - **Corporate Staff Accommodation** - Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to the Committee in due course;
 - **Blackstaff Greenway** - Agreed that the project be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed;
 - **Historic Tiled Street Signs** – Agreed that the project be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme and agreed that a process looking at the future repair and maintenance of signs be investigated.
- **Section 76 Planning Agreement Developer Contribution – Lagmore Youth Project** – agreed that the S76 Agreement developer contribution be utilised to appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team to progress the detailed design and delivery of the new facility.
 - **Belfast Stories** – agreed to proceed with the Enhanced Studio to include an open-call for potential operators, in line with the Council's Social Value Policy, and submit the addendum to the Outline Business Case to the Department for Economy for approval and to agree to the financing of the additional capital costs associated with the Enhanced Studio, subject to necessary legal agreements being in place and the approval of the addendum to the OBC by the Department for Economy.
 - **5-9 North Street** – noted the update in relation to the current status of the building and that discussions were ongoing and agreed that a report be submitted to a future committee in relation to medium term studio space options for the creative sector and the Council engage with the Department for Communities and the Arts Council to look at mechanisms to support the sector going forward.
 - **Community Centres** – Agreed that the Braniel Community Centre and outdoor space be added as a *Stage 1 – Emerging* project onto the Capital Programme and agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee on the status of all Community Centres across the city, to include information on current service provision and gaps, within two months.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motions - Quarterly Update report

The Committee considered an update on the progress of all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which it was responsible for.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that the Committee was responsible for;
- Agreed to the closure of Notices of Motion 7 and 407; and
- Agreed that Motion 479 - *Levels of criminality and violence in the city centre* remained open, so that a further update could be provided.

**Motion Update - Correspondence received from
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural
Affairs - Greyhound Racing**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting held on 3rd November, 2025, it had been agreed that the Council write to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to “*improve the regulation of greyhound racing, noting the developments in other jurisdictions, and to support rehoming efforts and welfare organisations working to protect retired greyhounds.*”

The Committee was advised that a response had been received from the Minister ([Appendix 1](#)).

The Committee noted the correspondence received from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs as set out in the report and agreed to the closure of the motion.

Notice of Motion - City Centre Gritting Feasibility Study

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 27th January, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor Groogan:

“This Council notes that the Department for Infrastructure currently grits only 20% of the road network across Northern Ireland as part of its winter service programme.

This limited coverage excludes pavements and cycle lanes, critical routes for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in Belfast City Centre where footfall is highest.

This Council recognises the health, safety, and accessibility issues caused by untreated pavements and active travel routes during winter months. Impacting workers, residents, those with mobility issues, and

visitors as well as discouraging walking and cycling at a time when sustainable transport remains a key council priority.

Therefore, this Council calls on the Department for Infrastructure and Belfast City Council to jointly undertake a feasibility study into the development of a winter gritting programme within the Belfast City Centre area, with a focus on pedestrian routes and cycle lanes.

This feasibility study should:

Assess the operational and financial requirements of such a programme and explore potential sources of capital grant funding from the Department for Infrastructure for the purchase of appropriate gritting and maintenance machinery. As well as identifying how Belfast City Council could support delivery through associated staffing and coordination costs.”

During discussion, the Committee raised concerns in relation to funding options from the Department for Infrastructure, the need for also gritting of footpaths on arterial routes and highest points of elevation, and the legal implications of any potential winter gritting programme .

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure or fall within the remit of a particular Committee must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee noted that the notice of motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report would be brought back to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the motion and the potential cost implications, to include information on funding options from the Department for Infrastructure, the gritting of footpaths on arterial routes and highest points of elevation, together with the legal implications.

Notice of Motion - Funding for Faith-Based Organisations and Addiction Services

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 27th January, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Alderman McCullough and seconded by Councillor Bunting:

“Belfast City Council recognises the essential role played by faith-based organisations in serving the most vulnerable members of our city, particularly those battling life-controlling issues such as drug and alcohol addiction.

This Council acknowledges the work of Teen Challenge Belfast, a registered charity which provides critical intervention services to individuals struggling with addiction. These include on-street outreach, counselling, crisis intervention, and referrals to an 11-month residential rehabilitation programme – reportedly delivering an estimated 85 per cent success rate.

This Council further notes that, despite delivering life-saving services without discrimination, organisations such as Teen Challenge face structural barriers to funding due to their faith-based governance models – barriers which inhibit access to public funding streams otherwise available to comparable service providers.

Accordingly, this Council commits to reviewing its current funding arrangements and eligibility criteria, with a view to removing unnecessary obstacles that exclude faith-based organisations from applying for and receiving support – provided their services are offered to all, without discrimination, and meet the pressing social needs of our communities.

This Council further calls on officers to bring forward proposals to ensure that funding frameworks are inclusive of organisations with a faith ethos, in recognition of the diverse contributions required to tackle addiction, homelessness, and social vulnerability across Belfast.”

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure or fall within the remit of a particular Committee must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee noted that the notice of motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report would be brought back to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the motion and the potential cost implications, and to outline the reasons for exclusions of such funding.

Notice of Motion - Fleadh Cheoil 2026 – Legacy Monument for Belfast

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 27th January, referred the following motion to the Committee for consideration, which had been proposed by Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Paul Doherty, and seconded by Councillor Whyte:

“This Council notes that Belfast will host Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026, one of the most significant cultural events ever held in the city, celebrating Irish traditional music and delivering major cultural and economic benefits.

The Council further notes the legacy approach taken by other host cities, including Wexford, which installed a permanent Fleadh Harp monument following the festival.

This Council believes Belfast should create a visible and enduring legacy to mark the success of hosting Fleadh 2026 and to celebrate the city’s historic and contemporary contribution to Irish traditional music.

Accordingly, this Council agrees to install a permanent Fleadh Legacy Monument, outside the Assembly Rooms, recognising its status as the home of Belfast's Harp Festival, in time for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026.

The Council further agrees that the monument should be delivered using Council resources and supported where possible through potential sponsorship and external funding, with engagement from artists and relevant cultural partners."

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Orders, Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure or fall within the remit of a particular Committee must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report.

The Committee noted that the notice of motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report would be brought back to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the motion and the potential cost implications.

Motion Update - Correspondence received from Minister of Justice - Stand alone Hate Crime Bill

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st November, the Committee had agreed that, to deal with some of the obstructive, threatening and abusive behaviour in the city centre, it write to the Minister for Justice 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.

It was reported that a response had been received at [Appendix 1](#).

Noted.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Draft City Centre Byelaws

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider draft bye laws for the city centre in relation to amenity issues and the display of graphic imagery.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- **consider the contents of this report;**
- **authorise officers to formally consult the Department for Communities in relation to both draft bye laws;**

- Note that a further update report will be presented to Committee after that formal engagement concludes before final approval of the bye laws is sought.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Members will recall that on 21 November 2025 Committee agreed:

- to write to the Justice Minister to, among other things, outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill.
- to write to the Chief Constable to seek clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9, 18 and 19 of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987

Committee noted that a report would be submitted to a future committee in relation to the display of promotional material (including graphic imagery) in the city centre.

Members will also recall that on 19th December 2025 Committee agreed:

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

This report will provide updates in respect of the above.

3.2 Correspondence from the Justice Minister and PSNI

Correspondence has been received from the Justice Minister, which states that proposed new legislative provisions in this Assembly mandate will modernise hate crime law in Northern Ireland and provide a more robust system to sanction offenders. These provisions will be delivered through a Sentencing Bill that the Minister plans to introduce to the Assembly in early 2026, and a Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill - planned for introduction in spring 2026.

No correspondence has yet been received from the PSNI.

3.3 Bye laws for Special Events

Officers met with representatives from the Department for Communities informally in relation to bye laws for special events in the city, such as the Fleadh. Those discussions remain ongoing but at this time, whilst it would be preferable to have the powers in relation to special events, it is considered unlikely to be necessary to have these powers in place prior to the Fleadh. This will be kept under review should the Council be successful in its bid for the Fleadh in 2027.

3.4 Graphic Imagery

Members will be aware that the set of draft bye laws published for consultation between 27th November 2023 and 4th March 2024 contained provisions relating to promotional literature and information.

As noted in the report that went to Committee on 21st November 2025, feedback from the public consultation indicated that the display of certain images in the city centre has a mixed reception. Whilst the majority of respondents indicated quantitatively that their experience was positive, the written comments of those not in favour of the display of graphic imagery (particularly with regards to abortion) expressed strong views to the contrary.

Respondents commented that images displayed by pro-life / anti-abortion groups are 'medically sensitive', 'highly triggering', cause 'stress', are 'disturbing', 'hugely traumatising for anyone that has been through a 'pregnancy loss' and 'should not be seen by children'. It was suggested that the use of 'very graphic images / contentious campaigns should only be used after 9:30 pm / similar to TV watershed', which would 'help balance equality with freedom of speech'.

Those whose experience of graphic imagery was positive commented that it is 'important that Belfast is a space for inclusive views which allows everyone to express and share them freely and openly', that it 'offers a diverse range of information' and that 'it helps people understand'. Respondents commented on the importance of freedom of expression, noting that 'people should be free to promote or protest whatever images they want'. Respondents commented that if people don't like certain imagery, 'they don't have to look at it'. Although respondents acknowledged that some graphic imagery 'might be difficult to look at', it should not be 'censored' and that it is important for 'raising awareness'. It was also noted that such imagery is less 'intrusive' than loud noise.

3.5 European Convention on Human Rights

It was clear from the consultation responses that respondents attached great importance to the (qualified) human rights afforded by the European Convention on Human Rights.

Members will be aware that freedom of expression is a fundamental right protected under the Human Rights Act 1998 by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is established that protection under Article 10 extends to the expression of views that may shock, disturb or offend the deeply held beliefs of others.

Article 10 is not an absolute but a qualified right; the rights of the individual must be balanced against the interests of society. The draft bye law in relation to graphic imagery seeks to strike the proper balance between those competing interests. When drafting the bye law, officers were conscious that any restrictions on freedom of expression must always be clearly set out in law, necessary in a democratic society for a legitimate aim, and proportionate.

In any situation where there is a proposed interference with freedom of expression, a balance must be struck between the right of the individual to express themselves and the broader public interest justifying the interference (for example, the protection of the rights of others). In particular, the restriction must be proportionate to the legitimate purpose that the state or public bodies are seeking to uphold.

The draft bye law therefore is deliberately narrow in scope, with clear and objective definitions. Members will note that the proposed bye law will not prevent those who are opposed to abortion from protesting, displaying posters, handing out promotional materials etc. Promotional materials which contain graphic imagery as defined in the bye laws are permitted but must be no more than A4 size and contained within an envelope bearing an appropriate warning.

The bye law is intended to address the display of graphic images intended to draw the public's attention whereby the sight of such material is unavoidable. It will not preclude the handing out of any leaflets, flyers or other small scale printed materials provided they are supplied in an opaque envelope with an appropriate advisory warning.

Furthermore, the bye law would only apply in the City Centre and not throughout the City.

3.6 Next Steps

Subject to Committee's agreement, officers will commence formal engagement with DfC in relation to both sets of Bye Laws and will also seek updated counsel opinion on the proposed bye law relating to graphic imagery.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7** There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. As outlined in the report tabled on 21st November 2025, there will be resource implications in enforcing the bye laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided before the final proposed bye laws presented to Committee for approval.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.8** An equality screening was carried out on the draft bye laws that were presented for public consultation. This draft screening will be updated in light of the consultation findings and brought back to Members for noting.

Further screening will be undertaken on the Bye Laws as they progress.”

Proposal 1

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

That the Committee agrees to amend the definition of “graphic imagery” as outlined in the Draft Graphic Imagery Bye Law be updated to include ‘generated and AI’ imagery.

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

Proposal 2

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

That the Committee, subject to the aforementioned proposal, agrees to accede to the recommendations in the report.

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

During discussion, in response to a Member's question in relation to the need for a review of all the draft City Centre bye laws included in the formal consultation, the City

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Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services advised that, once enacted, the City Centre Byelaws would be reviewed after one year.

The Committee:

- Agreed to authorise officers to formally consult the Department for Communities in relation to both draft bye laws;
- Agreed that the definition of “graphic imagery” as outlined in the Draft Graphic Imagery Bye Law be updated to include ‘generated and AI’ imagery;
- Noted that, once enacted, the City Centre Byelaws would be reviewed after one year; and
- Noted that a further update report would be presented to Committee after that formal engagement concluded before final approval of the bye laws was sought, together with detail on the enforcement process and how issues could be reported.

Planning Information

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

Online Pitch Bookings

The Committee considered a report in relation to the procurement of a standalone booking system for outdoor pitches, as the first step in reviewing potential wider online booking requirements that would also be needed in other areas of the council, including:

- Community Centres
- Recycling Centres
- City Hall events
- Hot desks
- Other Assets and resources

During discussion, the Committee raised issues in relation to accessibility, cancellations and reallocations, block booking requirements and protection for Teams, matches versus training displacement, the possibility of an open source approach and highlighted the importance of site staff being involved.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that officers investigate the issues raised by the Committee and a further report be submitted to the Committee in March in relation to the progression of an online booking system for outdoor pitches and wider Council areas.

#Not Just for Boys Initiative

It was reported that the #Not Just for Boys was an initiative led by Women’s Tec to support young women and girls to enter and sustain employment in sectors where they

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were underrepresented. It was highlighted that statistics showed that women and girls typically choose traditionally viewed career paths such as beauty or childcare.

The report stated that the #Not Just for Boys initiative was aimed at getting young females in schools to consider careers in the construction industry, in I.T. mechanics and manufacturing. The CEO of Women's Tec attended the Women's Steering Group on 3rd February and had requested that the Council considered becoming a #Not Just for Boys champion.

The Committee was advised that this initiative was fully aligned to the Council's Gender Action Plan, in particular, its aim to promote gender equality in employment within the Council and in the economy, across all sectors. The #Not Just for Boys Champions initiative was a strategic partnership between Women's Tec and employers to create training opportunities and pathways for females in non-traditional sectors.

It was reported that an annual fee of £500 was required, however, the emphasis was on collaboration and support. Signing up to this initiative would require the Council to work with Women's Tec to assist in a number of ways, for example:

- Hosting taster sessions in areas such as joinery or painting and decorating;
- Hosting site visits;
- Speaking at careers events;
- Facilitating work experience placements; and
- Donating unused equipment or materials.

Benefits for the Council would include:

- Use of #Not Just for Boys Champion digital logo on website and social media;
- Promotion of Council apprenticeships and other suitable job opportunities where females were currently underrepresented in the Council;
- Promotion of the Council's champion status on the Women's Tec website and social media pages.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to the Council becoming a #Not Just for Boys champion.

Social Supermarket Fund 26/28

(Ms. M. Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Support and Neighbourhood Integration, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To advise members on the outcome of the assessment of applications received through the Social Supermarket Fund 26/28 and seek members agreement in relation to the allocation of financial resources.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. Note the assessment outcome and agree a preferred allocation model based on the information contained in this report.
- II. Note that there is no current budget available to support applications to the Social Supermarket Fund 26/28 as this is funded almost 100% from the Department for Communities and confirmation of budget for 26/27 has yet to be received.
- III. Consider if they wish to release any funds to successful applicants in advance of receiving the DfC LoO so that activity can begin from 01 April 2026.
- IV. Grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue Letters of Offer on the basis of the agreed allocation model as budget becomes available through the Community Support Programme or other sources.
- V. Agree that if approval to release some funds is given, officers progress with the funding allocation process including; sending out letters of intent, agreeing programmes of work with applicants based on the recommended funding allocation, processing funding agreements and ensuring all monitoring requirements are implemented.

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1 In response to recommendations in the Welfare Reform Mitigations report, the Department for Communities (DfC) has operated a Social Supermarket Pilot programme since October 2017. Following positive evaluation of the Programme, funding has been made available through the CSP since 20/21 to all council areas.
- 3.2 The aim of a social supermarket is to offer a sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to help address the root causes of poverty rather than simply provide food. This is achieved by providing, in addition to food support, a referral network for wraparound support.
- 3.3 The key principles that models should take account of are:
- Providing support 'beyond food', such as, access to wraparound support services which transition people out of food poverty and respect the dignity of clients.

- Maximising existing structures, services, and partnerships to provide wraparound support.
- 3.4 Members will recall that at the June 25 meeting council agreed to roll over awards to organisations funded in 24/25 into 25/26 and asked officers to review the criteria used to assess applications. A new set of criteria was agreed at October council and full details of these are provided in Appendix ii.
- 3.5 This matter is normally considered by P&C committee but given the likelihood that no DfC funding will be received until after the beginning of the financial year, officers are presenting it to SP&R so that members can consider funding options and whether they wish to release funds in the absence of a DfC LoO.

Key Issues

- 3.6 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee granted approval on 19 September 2025 to operate an open call for grant applications to the Social Supermarket Fund for the years 2026/28. Members were advised at this point that because activity is 100% funded by DfC, there was a risk that funding to support successful applications might not be in place from April 26. At October committee, members agreed to allocate an additional £100,000 from council funds to projects in the 25/26 year.
- 3.7 The Social Supermarket Support Fund was opened on 17 October 2024 for applications and council launched a campaign to advertise and promote the fund. Advertisements were placed in local and regional newspapers and were also promoted across Belfast City Council website and social media. During November 2025, two information sessions were held to advise potential applicants on the process, a total of 23 attended. Officers also answered queries and provided one to one support to groups as requested.
- 3.8 The 2026/28 Social Supermarket Support Fund received 26 applications totalling £1,123,836 by the closing date of 12 noon on Monday 8 December 2026.
- 3.9 When an application is submitted, the following process is followed:
- Receipt and log of applications
 - Eligibility check of applications (allowing a 5 day response for omitted information)
 - Prepare and supply applications that have met eligibility criteria to Unit Officers to score against agreed set criteria

- Score each eligible application against the set criteria as outlined in the guidance notes
 - Moderate applications between scoring officers to ensure fairness and consistency in scoring
 - An independent assessment panel to review a sample of applications. The role of the independent assessment panel is 'to ensure that the scoring of applications has been undertaken in an appropriate fashion and to provide verification or validation of sampled applications and the overall process' (Williamson Consulting, 2012).
- 3.10 The independent assessment panels were satisfied with the scoring and application of the criteria for the grants and agreed to recommend the unit's recommendations for awards as shown in Appendix i.
- 3.11 Funding for Social Supermarkets is primarily drawn from the DfC Community Support Programme (CSP) Letter of Offer, which includes a 100% DfC funded funding stream for this work. Council has not yet received a Letter of Offer for 26/27 and Council does not have any budget to support activity that is 100% funded through the CSP in 26/27.
- 3.12 DfC officials have advised that the current position on the Social Supermarket budget for 2026/27 is that the draft budget is currently out for consultation until 3rd March 26. The Finance Minister has set out several areas where the Executive has previously committed to providing funding to Departments at the level required. For DfC, this includes earmarked allocations for Welfare Mitigations through which the Social Supermarket programme is funded. Allocations to the individual programs within this budget are yet to be finalised. Members should note that for the last number of years CSP Letters of Offer have not been received until July.
- 3.13 In order to support activity from 01 April 26, members are asked to consider whether they wish to release any funds to successful applicants in advance of receiving the DfC LoO. Based on a likely DfC budget of approximately £780,000, it is recommended that funding is provided to applicants who scored 51.25 and above, which would require total annual funding of £814,000. This would require an approximate annual contribution of £34,000 from council. It is recommended that organisations scoring over 51.25 are funded since using the next score of 61.25 would provide an annual allocation of only £699,000, which is likely to be less than the DfC LoO and would leave some funds unallocated.

- 3.14 Members should note that payments for all CSP large grants are paid on a 50/50 basis, therefore if members are minded to approve a payment to successful applicants, it is recommended that this is paid on a 50% basis to allow organisations to plan delivery for the first 6 months of the financial year.
- 3.15 In April 24, when council faced the same scenario, SP&R agreed to fund 21 projects 70% of their allocation in the absence of a Letter of Offer from DfC to fund this area of work, this funding was taken from underspends in the Hardship Programme. In April 25, council agreed to provide bridging support from council funds for 21 projects funded in 24/25 for the first 3 months of 25/26 delivery before the DfC LoO was received.
- 3.16 Members are also asked to grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue Letters of Offer on the basis of the agreed allocation model as budget becomes available from CSP or other sources.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.17 The budget received from DfC in 25/26 was £777,811 which has been used to support 19 projects. In November 2025, Council made an additional allocation of £100,000 to support social supermarkets, providing a total budget of £877,811
- 3.18 Members should note that there is currently no budget available to support this work in 26/27. Letters of Offer will be issued to groups on an annual basis. Officers will bring a paper to committee in February 27 to advise on funds available from DfC and whether any release of funds from council is required. Members agreed last September that although funding is primarily from DfC it would be beneficial for successful applicants to have increased security of funding by operating the Social Supermarket Fund on a two year basis rather than one.

Equality or Good Relations Implications /Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.19 The 26/28 Social Supermarket Fund open call is being screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications.”

The Committee:

- I. Noted the assessment outcome and agreed to the allocation of 25 per-cent bridging funding for those groups which scored 50% and above, as outlined in

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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Appendix ii of the report, to be released in the first quarter, in advance of receiving the DfC LoO so that activity could begin from 1st April, 2026.

- II. Noted that there was no current budget available to support applications to the Social Supermarket Fund 26/28 as this was funded almost 100% from the Department for Communities and confirmation of budget for 26/27 had yet to be received;
- III. Agreed that a report to be submitted to the Committee within the next three months to confirm the Department for Communities budget, outline how the remaining 75 per cent of funding could be allocated, together with options on how the three groups which had eligible funding but scored below 50% could be assisted;
- IV. Grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to issue Letters of Offer on the basis of the agreed allocation model as budget becomes available through the Community Support Programme or other sources;
- V. Agreed that, inline with the approval to release some funds, officers progress with the funding allocation process including; sending out letters of intent, agreeing programmes of work with applicants based on the recommended funding allocation, processing funding agreements and ensuring all monitoring requirements are implemented; and
- VI. The Committee also noted that a report would be submitted to a future Committee on general grant funding processes, eligibility criteria and thresholds.

Transformation and Efficiency Workshops Update

The Committee agreed to the proposed date, 27th March 2026, and focus of the next Transformation and Efficiency workshop and noted that officers investigate making the Workshops hybrid, so that some Members could attend online.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Asset Management (2)

The Committee:

- i) **Morton Community Centre – Licence Renewal with Streetwise Community Circus**
 - Approved the Council entering into a new licence agreement with Streetwise Community Circus for premises at Morton Community Centre.
- ii) **Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) – Licence Agreement with Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens**
 - Approved the grant of a licence agreement between the Council and Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens to cover their use of a portion of Botanic Gardens (Lower Section) up to and including 30th September 2026 then month to month thereafter up to a maximum of 6 further months with a one month notice period.

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**); and
- Noted the Meet the Buyer Event being held in City Hall on Wednesday, 25th March 2026 (**Section 7.0**);
- Following the discussion under the item 2(b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in relation to waste management services for the Fleadh, the Committee agreed that it approved the public advertisement of the tender for Waste Management Services to support the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, value TBA, as per Standing Order 37a, subject to engagement with the Trade Unions.

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)
Hire of marquees and equipment for Belfast City Council Events	Up to 3 years	£380,000	D Sales	BCC requires the hire of marquees to provide cover for traders, exhibitors, performers and for general public during our annual programme of events. Marquess will be used for music, dance, flower shows and for trading.	Y	N	N
IT Technical Research and Guidance	Up to 3 years	£72,300	P Gribben	Provides in-depth technical research and guidance to help Digital Services advance the initiatives/projects that support	N	N	N

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Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				execution of the Digital strategy.			
Supply, delivery and fitting of hydraulic hoses on vehicles and mobile plant	Up to 3 years	£100,000	D Sales	Essential parts and specialist fitting service to support the Council's Fleet Management Unit.	Y	N	N
Wavenet Mitel Software Assurance and Support	Up to 2 years	£220,000	S McNicholl	Support and software assurance for all Mitel servers and software including licencing which provide telephony services for all BCC sites including the Customer Hub.	N	N	N
Provision of coordination of services for delivery of Culture Night Belfast for 2026 & 27 with the cultural sector	Up to 21 months	£300,000	D Martin	Services to help support the delivery of Culture Night in 2026 and 2027 (subject to necessary approvals)	N	CGNR committee in February 2026.	N
Augment the City	Up to 1 year	£51,500	S McNicholl	Develop the Augment the City use case, utilising the existing Small Cell Indoor Public 5G connectivity in Belfast City Hall. This project will run for one year under the agreed trial terms and conditions and support model.	N	SP&R Committee January 2026	N
Procurement and installation of 26 SMART	One off Purchase	£93,444	S Leonard	To replace standard black litter bins within the City Centre. This is part of our	N	N	N

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Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
compactor litter bins				litter bin replacement programme and is an extension of the SMART bin pilot at City Hall and vicinity. Replacing the current ones which are rented.			
Supply and Delivery of Uniforms, Footwear and PPE	Up to 5 years	£1,500,000	S Grimes	This is a recurring contract for supply and delivery of specific uniforms, footwear and various PPE to BCC stores that are required throughout BCC for services to carry out their daily operations.	Y	N	N
Food Village operator to support the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann	Up to 2 years	Income based contract	K Forster	Operator required to co-ordinate and manage a number of local food and drink vendors to support delivery of the Fleadh 26 with option to cover Fleadh 27, if required.	N	SP&R Committee January 2026	N
The design and delivery of Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) Challenge Owner Readiness programme for the Belfast City Region Contracts for	Up to 1 year	£50,000	M McCann	With funding from BRCD, Belfast City Council wishes to commission technical support for the design and delivery of this CfI capacity programme. This will include workshops, training materials, and train the trainer support.	N	N	Y

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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)
Innovation programme.							

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Purchase of 6 x 7.5-ton column lifts	One off Purchase	£37,000	D Sales	Replacement lifts must be compatible with existing lifts and associated systems. The supplier the sole sales agents, authorised repair agents and the only company who carry out warranty work on behalf of Steril Koni UK on the Koni lift range installed in Ireland.	Search Workshop Supplies Ltd	3.
Delivery and off-loading of Forcing and Bedding Bulbs	Up to 5 years	£180,000	D Sales	A competitive tender process was undertaken for this requirement; however, no bids were received, leaving no provider to meet the Council's operational needs. Historically, this service has been delivered through quotation exercises, with Green Gardens consistently providing the required works to the necessary standard and best VFM.	Green Gardens	1.
Annual engagement of the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV)	Up to 3 years	£144,000	T Wallace	Specialist advice on rating matters including challenge to BCC assessments in the Valuation List (on going challenges include BWH/UH, Markets); advice on	IRRV	3.

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				rate implications of investment projects (2 Royal Avenue, student housing, build to rent);accuracy of BCC valuations in valuation list and advice for Business Rate Reform consultations The supplier is the only available provider of these services		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
Sustainable Food Partnership Support Q22-24	Up to 12 months & £29,000	Additional 3 months and £10,250	J Tully	There is a need for a further 3 months of Belfast Food Partnership support by the contractor so that there can be a sufficient handover of the work to a new Food Systems Coordinator who started in post in the Council in December 2025 and to finalise delivery of Sustainable Food Strategy. Due to recruitment challenges, there was a delay in them starting and therefore there is a need for further support from the contractor for the Sustainable Food Programme. Quotation now exceeds £30,000. Fully Funded.	Food Ethics Council

Request for Funding

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report to allow further information on funding streams to be provided.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 9th February, including:

Presentation from City of Sanctuary

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

Community Recovery Fund Update

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

PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted the contents of the report and agreed:
 - **CCD1 Interfaith and Belief:** to amend the learning resources and engagement with participants to include Key Stage 3 / Year 10 pupils,
 - **CCD2 Community Connections:** the 3 Welcome Hub locations as Morton, Horn Drive and Cregagh Community Centres, and
 - And recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agree the above recommendations and note the contents of the report.

Community Regeneration & Transformation Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommends that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report

Any Other Business

- The Deputy Chairperson and the Good Relations Manager welcomed Ms. Lynch to her first meeting of the Shared City Partnership.

Operational Issues

Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forums of 5th and 12th February, 2026.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below and also approved an additional event request from the Belfast Chaplaincy Service for a recruitment event to take place in April, 2026 for 30 people:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Belfast Bands Forum	9 March 2026	Commonwealth Day 2026 A Community Recovery funded programme to celebrate the music, dance, culture, and flavours of the Commonwealth and bringing people together. Numbers attending: 130	C	None
Belfast National Graves Association	24 March 2026	Easter Lily Launch 2026 - reception and speeches focusing on local history. Numbers attending: 80	C	None
Belfast Buildings Trust	24 April 2026	Grand Final of the NI Schools Debating Competition 2026 – annual event to encourage mature debate and civic engagement in young people Numbers attending – 140	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Confucius Institute	28 April 2026	South-Central Minzu University Performing Arts School Performance – cultural exchange event. The audience will be school children and teachers from schools learning Mandarin in Belfast. Numbers attending – 100	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Ulster Tatler Group	3 September 2026	Ulster Tatler Awards 2026 – Annual awards event with dinner and presentations Numbers attending – 400	B	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Education Authority Intercultural Service	15 October 2026	Schools o Sanctuary Awards Ceremony – speeches and presentations with performances from local school children Numbers attending - 100	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Franco-British Lawyers Society	16 October 2026	Dinner to mark the Franco-British Lawyers Society Society's Inaugural Universities Moot – The attendees will primarily be law students and young lawyers from France and the UK. Numbers attending – 300	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Irish FA Foundation	22 October 2026	McDonalds Irish FA Awards 2026 – is a celebration of grassroots local volunteers in the community Numbers attending – 200	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Tour Guides Northern Ireland	3 November 2026	10th Anniversary Celebration – with reception, dinner, speeches and entertainment to mark milestone for organisation Numbers attending – 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	5 November 2026	Celebration of Involvement 2026 - is a celebration event to recognise the contribution of service users to improve services. Numbers attending – 80	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Belfast Bands Forum	9 March 2026	Commonwealth Day 2026 A Community Recovery funded programme to celebrate the music, dance, culture, and flavours of the Commonwealth and bringing people together.	C	None

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
		Numbers attending: 130		
Belfast National Graves Association	24 March 2026	Easter Lily Launch 2026 - reception and speeches focusing on local history. Numbers attending: 80	C	None
Belfast Buildings Trust	24 April 2026	Grand Final of the NI Schools Debating Competition 2026 – annual event to encourage mature debate and civic engagement in young people Numbers attending – 140	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Confucius Institute	28 April 2026	South-Central Minzu University Performing Arts School Performance – cultural exchange event. The audience will be school children and teachers from schools learning Mandarin in Belfast. Numbers attending – 100	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
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**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
		Numbers attending – 300		
Irish FA Foundation	22 October 2026	McDonalds Irish FA Awards 2026 – is a celebration of grassroots local volunteers in the community Numbers attending – 200	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Tour Guides Northern Ireland	3 November 2026	10th Anniversary Celebration – with reception, dinner, speeches and entertainment to mark milestone for organisation Numbers attending – 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	5 November 2026	Celebration of Involvement 2026 - is a celebration event to recognise the contribution of service users to improve services. Numbers attending – 80	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

Minutes of the Social Policy Working Group of 16th February, 2026

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Social Policy Working Group of 16th February, 2026.

Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 10th February, 2026

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

Apologies

There were no apologies received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd February.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Murray and Bunting declared interests under the item 'Lagan Valley Regional Park' in that they were Council appointees to the board of that organisation. Since that organisation was a constituted charity, the Members, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, were not required to leave the meeting whilst the matter was under discussion.

Restricted Items

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

**People and Communities Committee,
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The Committee was advised that the content of the 'restricted' reports and any associated discussion must be treated as 'confidential information' and that such information could not be disclosed as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Bryson Recycling

At its meeting on 13th January, the Committee had agreed that an invitation be extended to representatives of Bryson Recycling to attend its meeting in February to discuss recent delays which had been encountered in the provision of collection services across Belfast. Accordingly, Ms. K. Fulton, Director of Recycling, was welcomed by the Chairperson and she proceeded to provide an overview of several resource and operational issues which had impacted upon collection services over the Christmas period. She outlined the steps which had been taken to address the issues and also the adjustments which had been put in place to ensure that services would be maintained should similar circumstances reoccur.

Noted.

St. Patrick's Day Off-Street Parking

The Committee was reminded that, at its previous meeting, it had deferred consideration of a proposal that the Council would provide free parking in its off-street carparks on St. Patrick's Day, 2026. That issue had arisen due to the fact that, on 17th March, 2025, forty-seven fines had been issued to individuals for parking in Council-managed car parks, despite the fact that the day was a bank holiday. It was pointed out that the Department for Infrastructure had exercised discretion and opted not to enforce parking penalties on individuals fined for parking in its on-street carparks on that date. The Committee, in January, had agreed to defer consideration of the proposal since, if approved, it would result in a loss of operating income to the department, the extent of which was unclear.

Accordingly, the Committee considered a further report which outlined several options, including how any loss of income might be offset from within a departmental underspend.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Murray and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that there be no change to the Council's off-street car parking charging arrangements on St. Patrick's Day, 2026, given the impact that the waiving of fees and charges would have on the Council's operating income and in accordance with the corporate policy of promoting active travel.

The Committee agreed also that the Council would consider allocating St. Patrick's Day as one of the 'designated days' available for the promotional use of Belfast Bikes.

Houses in Multiple Occupation - Review of Licence Scheme Changes

The Committee noted a decision of the Licensing Committee of 21st January in respect of the above-mentioned matter and noted further that the decision had been adopted by the Council at its meeting the previous evening.

**People and Communities Committee,
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Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group

The Committee approved the minutes of the above-mentioned working group of 14th January and adopted a recommendation to permit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to mark a further twelve graves within the Council's cemeteries.

Resources and Fleet – Christmas Period Update

(Mr. B. Murray and Mr. P. Doyle, Waste Management Service, attended in connection with this item).

At its meeting on 13th January, the Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would outline the reasons for a number of missed bin collections which had been reported over the Christmas period, particularly within the north and west of the City. Accordingly, the Committee considered a report in this regard.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and officers noted a range of Members' comments in relation thereto.

Lagan Valley Regional Park

The Committee noted correspondence which had been received on behalf of the Board of Lagan Valley Regional Park, together with correspondence from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, which related to the Board's correspondence. In addition, the Committee endorsed a course of action that would be undertaken by Council officers in addressing the matters raised.

Notice of Motion

Provision of Sustainable Burials

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 2nd December, 2025, it had adopted the undernoted motion, which had been moved originally by Councillor Abernethy and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks:

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

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 10th February, 2026**

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 updated report on any identified legislative, planning, infrastructural, or regulatory barriers that may impact the delivery of these sustainable end-of-life options locally.”

The Director of City Services presented a report which reminded the Committee that the former Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting on 5th November, 2010, had considered a report regarding the provision of sustainable burial alternatives within Roselawn Cemetery, and had authorised the undertaking of feasibility work, including a hydrogeological survey. However, no further work had been carried out at a site deemed suitable within Roselawn since it lay within a footprint of land identified for a new crematorium.

The Committee was reminded also that, given the shortage of burial land under the Council’s ownership, no provision existed currently for providing sustainable burial alternatives. The Director pointed out that the Council was seeking to identify a new site for the development of a cemetery. She added that, once that site had been acquired, the inclusion of sustainable burial alternatives, such as natural burial areas or woodland internment, would be thought as part of the overall planning for the site.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed to the closure of the motion.

Notices of Motion - Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on notices of motion or issues raised in advance which had been referred for its consideration. The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that, as of the date of the meeting, 54 matters fell within the Committee’s remit, an overview of which was appended to the report. He outlined the specific actions which had been taken by departmental officials to address the issues. Accordingly, he recommended that 17 of the 54 motions/issues raised in advance be closed.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the closure of 13 of the 17 issues/motions recommended, with the exception of the following, viz., (399) Knockbreda Road Crossing; (443) Council Dog Warden Service; (462) Lagan Gateway Pedestrian Crossing; and (435) ‘FIDO’ Dog Fouling Removal Vehicle/‘SCARABS’. In addition, officers undertook to provide updates in respect of several queries which had been raised by Members.

Operational Issues

Resources and Fleet – Update

The Committee noted the information provided within a report in the above-mentioned matter and officers undertook to provide update on a range of individual Members’ queries and comments in relation thereto.

Requests for the Use of Parks for Events

The Committee granted approval to the holding of the undernoted events, subject to the organisers meeting all of the stipulations as set out within the report:

- CardioSoc Colour Run – Ormeau Park;
- Belfast Photo Festival – Botanic Gardens;
- Belfast Marathon Half & Full – Victoria, Ormeau and Waterworks Park;
- Belfast Barrio Fiesta – Botanic Gardens;
- Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach – Dixon Park Playing Fields; and
- Belfast 24-Hour Run – Victoria Park.

Net Zero Neighbourhood: A Climate Action Plan for Improving Lives

The Director of Open Spaces, Resources, Fleet and Transport reported that the Council had been invited to participate in the above-mentioned project, which would be delivered in conjunction with Eastside Greenways and The Queen's University of Belfast. He reported that Eastside Greenways, as lead partners, had been successful in its application to the 'National Lottery: Climate Action Fund' to manage the project over a five-year period. The Committee was apprised of the aims and objectives of the project and the Council's role in its delivery. That role would see the Council collecting and mapping ecological data; developing toolkits and resources; and oversee work associated with the final evaluation process, in respect of which income in the sum of £130,000 would be received by the Council.

The Committee agreed that the Council would enter into a formal agreement for the delivery of the project and authorised officers to sign the appropriate documentation.

Social Supermarket Fund 2026/28

The Committee noted the contents of the report in respect of the above-mentioned matter and endorsed the arrangements that would be put in place to provide payments in lieu of the receipt of a funding from the Department for Communities for the financial year 2026/27.

Department for Communities Consultation - 'Notice to Quit' Periods

The Committee considered a draft response to a Department for Communities consultation exercise entitled, The Private Tenancies (Notice to Quit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025. The consultation sought views on a range of proposed new regulations for 'Notice to Quit' periods within the private rented sector, with the proposals suggesting extended notice periods of up to seven months for longer-term tenants, alongside shorter, exception-based notices of two to four weeks for anti-social behaviour or rent arrears.

The Committee adopted the draft response and agreed that it be amended to highlight the following points:

1. That the timescales associated with 'notices to quit' would place a disproportionate burden on tenants, and not landlords. Such 'notices to quit'

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would affect particularly those tenants who were victims of domestic violence, those suffering from serious and debilitating health conditions and those required to find alternative housing arrangements through no fault of their own;

2. that the proposed timescales, if included within the regulations, would not take account of the prolonged timescales associated with legal processes and could increase cases of homelessness. Any revised regulations should be drafted within the context of the overall obligations as set out under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998); and
3. that clarity be sought from DfC as to the proposed actual role of the Council in enforcing any revised regulations and how any additional Council staffing resources and administrative support, if required, would be funded by DfC.

Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Mill Valley Gardens, Alexandra Gardens, Appleton Park, Lagmore View Crescent, Clifftondene Gardens, Bearnagh Drive and Woodland Avenue.

**Irish Football Association -
Joint Ground Criteria Review**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor R. Brooks reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 5th November, 2024, it had agreed that an invitation be extended to representatives of the Irish Football Association (IFA) to present an overview of its review of grounds' criteria that would be applied to clubs participating in local leagues. In February, 2025, the IFA had indicated that it would not be in a position to attend a meeting until its review had concluded.

Councillor R. Brooks reported that, in January, 2026, a further request had been submitted to the IFA to attend the Committee. However, the organisation had indicated that, since the work associated with the development of the National Conference League had not been concluded, the review of grounds' criteria was ongoing. Therefore, the IFA had advised that it was not in a position to present to the Committee, but that it would continue to work with Council officials in respect of the review.

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Black and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that informal contacts between Council officials and the Irish Football Association would cease until the IFA had undertaken to attend the Committee to provide an update on the work associated with its review of grounds' criteria.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 11th February, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, de Faoite,
S. Douglas, Duffy, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons,
McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCormick, 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;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was received from Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 14th January and 9th February, 2026, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th February, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update', Councillor McCallin declared an interest in that member of her family was employed by an organisation which had applied to the scheme, Councillor Duffy declared an interest in that he had assisted an organisation with an application to the scheme, and Councillor Groogan declared an interest in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme. As this item did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to the item 'City Imagining Investment Programme - Cultural Multi-Annual Grants', Councillors McCabe and Groogan declared an interest in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for funding and left the meeting while this item was under consideration.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to the item 'Request to Present – Belfast Harbour Commissioners', in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting while this item was under consideration.

Presentation

Belfast One Business Improvement District

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:

- Introduce the plans for the BID One ballot which closes on 5 March 2026
- Secure Committee approval to submit council votes for properties located within the BID One boundary.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the update on the ballot for the third term of the Belfast One BID (Business Improvement District)
- Agree to return yes votes for the Council properties located within the boundary.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that there are three Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) in Belfast city centre: BID One which covers the main retail core and runs from the City Hall down to the junction of Royal Avenue and North Street; Linen Quarter which covers the office district to the north the City Hall including the new Transport Hub and Destination CQ which covers the Cathedral Quarter including the Ulster University campus.

3.2 Under government legislation, all BIDs operate on a five-year term. At the end of each term, a ballot must take place in order for the BID to continue its work. BID One is the longest standing of the three BIDs and began operations in April 2016. The ballot for the third term of BID One opened on 22 January 2026 and all votes must be submitted by 5 March 2026.

3.3 In order for the proposal to be successful at ballot, the result will need to meet, as a minimum, three independent criteria, namely:

- 1. There must be more yes votes than no votes (volume)**

2. Total rateable value of yes votes must exceed total rateable value of no votes (value)
 3. The turnout of ballot papers returned must be no less than 25% of the eligible rate payers entitled to vote in the ballot and total no less than 25% of the eligible rateable value.
- 3.4 The BID One area contains around 700 units that are eligible for votes. Each property must pay an annual mandatory BID levy – depending on the NAV (Net Annual Value) of the property. The council has seven properties within the BID One boundary including City Hall, 2 Royal Avenue and the former Digital Services building in Gloucester Street. The combined levy total for all properties is around £23,000 annually. The expected levy total for all properties (assuming 100% payment) is around £1million annually. This expenditure will be allocated in line with business plan priorities.
- 3.5 BID One works closely with the council on a range of issues related to safety, cleanliness and vibrancy in the city centre. The team and the Board are also represented on a number of city centre forums and working groups and, given their mandate, represent a strong conduit for engagement with city centre businesses operating in this geographical area. Their five-year business plan for the upcoming term proposes focusing resources on four main areas of work, namely:
- Promoting Belfast city centre
 - Enhancing the visitor experience
 - Supporting local businesses
 - Shaping a better city centre.
- 3.6 Given the ongoing collaboration, the planned engagement and the direct contribution of the BID (both financially and in terms of staff resources) towards shared priorities with the council, it is recommended that members support a yes vote on behalf of the council in the current ballot process.
- 4.0 **Financial Implications**
- Belfast City Council will be liable for levy payments relating to its properties and assets located within the BID One boundary. These levies are already included in recurring Council budgets.
- 5.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**
- No specific equality or good relations implications. The Belfast One designated boundary has been approved by DfC. Visitor insights demonstrate that the city centre is accessed by visitors from all parts of Northern Ireland and beyond.”

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The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Belfast One Business Improvement District (BID) Chair, Ms. L. Barr, and Chief Executive, Ms. M. Connolly.

Ms. Connolly presented the Committee with further information in relation to the work of the Belfast One BID over the previous term, 2021-2026, and set out its plans for the proposed third term, 2026-2031, subject to the BID receiving the required support in the ballot.

She stated that Belfast One BID had been established in 2016 and represented a diverse economic mix of over seven hundred businesses located within approximately one square mile of the city centre.

She outlined the BID's work over the previous term which contributed to the city's priorities and complemented statutory services. She stated that the work included partnership working within the city to improve safety, increase footfall, strengthen visitor experience, help address anti-social behaviour and improve confidence in the city for people to work, live and visit. She also outlined the BID's work in relation to the delivery of year-round animation and events to support local businesses.

It was reported that the BID's Business Plan for 2026-31 had been developed through extensive consultation with the business community and reflected the key priorities which had been identified, which included the need to strengthen collaborative working within the city centre to improve cleanliness and safety, enhance the environment, support local businesses and trading conditions, and help shape future development.

Ms. Connolly highlighted the BID's continued work with the Council on a range of initiatives within the city centre and requested that the Council's support Belfast One BID in the ballot for a third term to deliver its plan for 2026-31.

The Chairperson thanked the Belfast One BID representatives for their attendance at the meeting and the information provided within the presentation, and they left the meeting.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on the ballot for the third term of the Belfast One BID; and
- ii. agreed to return yes votes for the Council properties located within the BID's boundary.

Restricted Items

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

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

Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme, and which sought approval for citywide grant awards as recommended by the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following receipt of recent applications.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme, which would be supporting up to seventy-five businesses and organisations to locate or expand into long-term vacant units; and
- ii. agreed the recommended citywide grant awards as outlined within the report.

2 Royal Avenue Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the ongoing Expression of Interest (EOI) exercise for the future long-term use of the ground floor of 2 Royal Avenue.

The Director reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in November, 2025, the Committee had agreed a new two-stage EOI process, and associated criteria, which would be undertaken for the long-term future use of the ground floor of 2 Royal Avenue. She advised the Committee that the new EOI process had commenced on 6th January, 2026, and that a further report would be brought back to the Committee following completion of the EOI. She also drew the Committee's attention to correspondence which had been received from an organisation which had used 2 Royal Avenue raising concern in relation to its future use.

During discussion, the Director answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the EOI process, meanwhile use of the building, financial sustainability, and the need for the ground floor use to be complementary and compatible with the LGBTQIA+ Hub proposed for the first floor of the building.

In response to a Member's question in relation to the condition of the building and potential works that may be required to be undertaken by the Council, the Director advised that a building survey would be progressed. She highlighted that, at its meeting in October, 2025, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that 2 Royal Avenue Capital Works be added as a 'Stage 1 – Emerging' project within the Council's capital programme. She advised that this would allow for a business case to be developed to consider any potential capital works required, and enable the Council, as the landlord, to meet its obligations to prospective occupiers and ensure that the building would be fit for purpose.

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After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. the update on the ongoing expression of interest (EOI) process for the future long-term use of 2 Royal Avenue's ground floor; and
- ii. that a report would be brought back to a future meeting following the closure and review of Stage 1 of the EOI exercise.

Housing Association Grant (HAG) Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the ongoing assessment of the Department for Communities' changes to the Total Cost Indicator (TCI) and Housing Association Grant (HAG) rates.

The Director outlined the emerging implications for the delivery of social housing within the city, particularly in respect of the city centre, and set out the scope of the detailed analysis which would be brought back to the Committee following engagement with relevant delivery agents. She highlighted that the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) had been engaged to support the Council's work alongside the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA), two Housing Associations with experience of development within the city, and private sector partners to undertake an analysis of the impact of the policy changes.

The Committee:

- i. noted the interim findings and emerging issues outlined within the report;
- ii. noted the ongoing engagement with the Housing Associations, NIFHA (Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations) and private sector partners to inform an upcoming report which would be undertaken in conjunction with the UUEPC (Ulster University Economic Policy Centre);
- iii. agreed that officers would continue to develop the detailed evidence base and options and that a report would be brought back to a future meeting;
- iv. agreed that, following the completion of the work with the UUEPC, a Members' workshop would be held; and
- v. agreed that officers continue to engage with the Department for Communities and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to ensure the city's position is reflected in the ongoing review of social housing grant rates.

A Bolder Vision for Belfast Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the 'A Bolder Vision (ABV) for Belfast' strategy; set out the key moves to deliver ABV; outlined proposed supporting interventions, aligned to the Belfast Agenda 2024-28 and the Climate Change

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Act (Northern Ireland) 2022; and highlighted the opportunity to use ABV to frame the Council's response to the upcoming Eastern Transport Plan and other future consultation plans in relation to public realm, mobility and connectivity.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Communities to request a meeting in relation to the ABV, the Eastern Transport Plan, the Belfast Streets Ahead Programme and the Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 project.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on 'A Bolder Vision' (ABV) which included the schemes already delivering on the vision and the previously agreed key moves; and
- ii. agreed the proposed updated supporting interventions to enable the finalisation of the strategy as the Council's position on major infrastructure and policy consultations, with the understanding that any consultation responses would be brought back for Committee's approval prior to submission; and
- iii. agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Communities to request a meeting in relation to the ABV, the Eastern Transport Plan, the Belfast Streets Ahead Programme and the Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 project.

**City Imagining Investment Programme –
Cultural Multi-Annual Grants**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the item to enable further information to be submitted to a special meeting to be held on 24th February, 2026.

**Belfast Castle and Malone House
Scale of Charges 2026/27**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the proposed scale of charges for Belfast Castle and Malone House for 2026/27, and which sought approval for price increases for booking fees.

The Committee agreed the price increases for booking fees for Belfast Castle and Malone House, which would take effect from 1st April, 2026

Belfast Zoo Scale of Charges 2026/27

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the proposed scale of charges for Belfast Zoo for 2026/27, and which sought approval for price increases for existing categories of ticket types and products/services.

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The Committee agreed the price increases for existing categories of ticket types and products/services for Belfast Zoo, which would take effect from 1st April, 2026.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 in relation to operational planning, communication and engagement.

The Committee noted the update and that, at its meeting in January, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had:

- noted the progress to date on the development of the Fleadh Cheoil;
- agreed that an Expression of Interest exercise be undertaken in relation to a food market for local businesses; and
- agreed that a report be submitted to a future Committee in relation to Camp Site provision and Licensing requirements for traders.

Requests to Present

Visit Belfast

The Committee acceded to a request from Visit Belfast to present its annual Business Plan at the Committee meeting on 11th March, 2026.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

The Committee acceded to a request from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to present its draft Masterplan 2025-50 at the Committee's special meeting on 25th March, 2026.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

Events Update - Festive Lights

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To provide members with a report and overview of the 2025 festive lighting scheme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Note the contents of this report and request to facilitate a Members workshop for planning for 2026.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background and Programme Context

The Culture Team currently led on the delivery of the Council's Christmas Lighting Scheme, working in partnership with appointed contractors, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), internal Estates and Property teams, and private landowners to deliver a city centre-wide festive lighting programme.

In March 2025, a new tender was issued inviting proposals from contractors to deliver the city's Christmas lighting provision. This procurement process reflected a shift in approach, recognising the importance of festive lighting not only as seasonal decoration, but as a strategic cultural and economic intervention supporting city centre vitality.

The tender placed particular emphasis on the role of Christmas lighting in contributing to economic recovery, reinforcing Belfast City Centre's position as a major retail, leisure and cultural destination, encouraging increased footfall, and enhancing the overall visitor experience during the peak winter trading period.

This approach aligns with the broader principles of the City's Lighting Strategy, which positions lighting as a core component of public realm quality, place identity, safety, and the activation of the night-time economy.

3.2 Strategic Objectives of the Christmas Lighting Scheme

One of the core objectives of the Christmas Lighting Programme is to improve connectivity and coherence across the city centre, creating strong visual and experiential linkages between key destinations, including:

- Belfast Christmas Market at City Hall
- Victoria Square Shopping Centre
- CastleCourt Shopping Centre
- Primary pedestrian corridors such as Royal Avenue and Donegall Place

The lighting scheme is therefore not intended as a series of isolated installations, but as a coordinated city centre network that supports pedestrian movement, wayfinding, and dwell time across multiple retail, leisure and cultural anchors.

3.3 2025 Programme Delivery and Performance

2025 Infrastructure Uplift and Enhancements

As part of the 2025 programme uplift, Department for Infrastructure (DfI) lighting columns were upgraded in line with current electrical and safety standards. This enabled the

safe addition of column-mounted Christmas lighting features across the city centre.

Additional lighting was installed along Royal Avenue, including illumination of street trees. This intervention was widely recognised by BIDs and private landowners as having a positive impact on the inner-city core, contributing to improved ambience and increased evening activity.

New lighting curtain installations were introduced on Castle Place and Fountain Lane, alongside colour-controlled festoon lighting on Garfield Street. Going forward, both the Fountain Lane lighting curtain and the Garfield Street festoon installations will remain in situ, with no additional cost to the Council, providing ongoing value from the initial investment.

Some minor issues were recorded during the season, primarily relating to servicing and loading vehicles coming into contact with lighting elements. In total, there were approximately 6 contractor call-outs related to maintenance and minor repairs.

Festive Lighting Commission and Switch-On Event

The full festive lighting programme was safely installed and fully operational in advance of the official Christmas Lights Switch-On event. Delivery was achieved within required timescales and in compliance with all relevant health and safety requirements.

The Culture Team worked closely with: City Centre BIDs, Council Estates and Property Teams, and Private landowners and managing agents to secure approximately 84 wayleave agreements for the installation of eyebolts and fixings, enabling lighting infrastructure to be installed across privately owned frontages and buildings.

The successful completion of these agreements in advance of the Christmas period was critical to programme delivery and is acknowledged as a significant collaborative achievement across multiple stakeholders.

3.4 Issues for Long-Term Sustainability and Improvement

While the 2025 programme was delivered successfully, a number of structural and strategic issues have been identified which require longer-term planning and intervention to ensure future viability and growth of the programme. Delivery of enhancements as part of the future strategy would be dependent on additional finance being available

Benchmarking and Tourism-Led Lighting Models

Comparable cities such as Dundalk have demonstrated the economic value of treating festive lighting as a tourism product, capable of attracting regional visitors and extending dwell time.

In December 2025, representatives from the Culture Team, BIDs, the Night Czar's Office, Belfast Chamber and CGR committee undertook a benchmarking visit to Dundalk to review their Christmas programme and large-scale lighting installations, including programme structure, infrastructure models and governance arrangements.

Learning from this model will inform future strategic direction for Belfast's Christmas lighting offer.

It is suggested that a future strategy should address four critical and interdependent components:

- **City Spectacle:** Developing a format and programme capable of functioning as a large-scale tourism product.
- **City-Wide Reach:** Exploring how to achieve greater lighting density and presence beyond the core city centre.
- **Pathways:** Building local skills, knowledge and career pathways within cultural sector for lighting and production
- **Infrastructure:** Addressing key infrastructure challenges and mitigating future operational risks.

3.5 Infrastructure Challenges and Electrical Supply

The current Christmas lighting infrastructure is heavily reliant on private electrical feeds, which presents a number of risks:

- Increased health and safety considerations
- Reduced operational control for the Council
- Vulnerability to changes in property ownership, tenancy, or redevelopment

In addition, ongoing city centre development has led to the gradual loss of previously available fixing points and electrical connections. This has resulted in a resource-intensive annual process to maintain lighting density and secure new permissions and access arrangements.

This environment limits the Council's ability to plan multi-year installations or invest in more permanent and resilient infrastructure solutions.

Future Technologies and Adaptive Approaches

There is a need for a more agile and future-focused approach to festive lighting, recognising that:

- Lighting technologies are evolving rapidly
- Energy efficiency and sustainability expectations are increasing
- Audience engagement is shifting towards immersive and interactive experiences

Any future strategy should therefore allow flexibility to adapt to emerging technologies, sustainability standards and new artistic approaches over the next decade, rather than relying on static formats or short-term installations.

City-Wide Approach: Geographic Spread and Equity

At present, festive lighting remains heavily concentrated within the city centre core, with limited provision across city neighbourhoods and local high streets.

This raises concerns regarding:

- Equitable distribution of cultural investment
- Support for neighbourhood retail centres
- Opportunities for community-led festive identity and participation

Future models should explore scalable and adaptable approaches that allow festive lighting to support local place-making across a wider geographic footprint, while maintaining overall programme coherence and quality.

3.6 Stakeholder Engagement and Current Actions

The Culture Team is currently working with:

- City Centre BIDs to gather structured feedback from businesses
- The lighting contractor to evaluate operational improvements
- Internal Council departments to review infrastructure and permissions processes

This feedback is being collated to inform refinements to the 2026 programme and longer-term strategic considerations.

In addition, the Culture Team is developing a Members' Workshop, which will provide an opportunity to:

- Review current challenges and constraints
- Consider alternative delivery and infrastructure models
- Explore funding and partnership opportunities

- Begin development of a longer-term Christmas Lighting Strategy for the city

Next Steps and Strategic Direction

The intention is to move towards a more strategic, sustainable and place-based approach to Christmas lighting, which:

- Supports economic regeneration objectives
- Enhances the city's cultural offer and visitor experience
- Reduces operational and safety risks
- Builds local creative and technical capacity
- Enables more equitable city-wide participation

Following the Members' Workshop and further stakeholder engagement, officers will bring forward proposals outlining potential strategic options, investment requirements and delivery models for Member consideration.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

There are currently no financial implications attached to this report.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

There are no Equality or Good Relation Implications attached to this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report; and
- ii. agreed that a Members' workshop be held on the Festive Lights planning for 2026.

Culture Night 2026

The Director of Economic Development submitted the following report for the Committee's consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report / Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the proposed approach to the delivery of Culture Night 2026. The recommendations are informed by the draft independent evaluation of Culture Night 2025 undertaken by Thrive and build on the delivery model approved by Committee in April 2025.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

Note the contents of the report in relation to the delivery of Culture Night 2025.

Approve the proposed approach for Culture Night 2026 as outlined in this report including £150,000 commitment to delivery of Culture Night 2026 through a procurement process including an option to extend the contract to cover delivery of Culture Night 2027 upon successful delivery in 2026.

3.0 Culture Night 2025 Review & Recommendations

3.1 Background

Culture Night returned to Belfast in September 2025 following a six-year absence precipitated by the Covid crisis, and the host organisation (Cathedral Quarter Trust) folding operations. The 2025 event was delivered as a venue-led, city-wide programme, prioritising free, accessible and family-friendly activity and operating through a receiving house model. As a pilot to supporting a new approach to Culture Night delivery a number of artists, cultural organisations and venues were financially supported to participate, and no street-based programming or road closures were included. In August 2025, Belfast City Council commissioned Thrive to undertake an independent evaluation of Culture Night 2025. The evaluation assessed audience experience, participation, accessibility, economic impact and delivery effectiveness, and identified learning to inform future iterations.

3.2 Key Findings from Thrive Evaluation

The evaluation concluded that the pilot for a new approach to Culture Night 2025 was a success, generating positive audience experiences, sector goodwill and an estimated attendance of 50,000 people. Audiences valued the safe, welcoming and family-friendly atmosphere, while participants reported high levels of satisfaction and willingness to take part again

Areas identified for further development included improved signage and navigation between sites, earlier engagement with the cultural sector, including artists, venues and organisations, and continued strengthening of activity across all areas of the city beyond the city centre and Cathedral Quarter. Key findings are:

Economic Impact

- Estimated attendance of approximately 50,000 people across the city.
- Average spend per attendee who spent money was £33.33.
- Estimated total economic impact of approximately a minimum £1.67 million for the city.

Audience Feedback

- 86% of audiences rated their overall experience as good or very good.
- 95% of attendees spent two or more hours at Culture Night, with 33% spending five or more hours.
- 44% of audiences reported visiting venues or places they had not previously visited.
- Audiences particularly valued the safe, welcoming and family-friendly atmosphere.

Audience Profile

- Audiences were younger and more diverse than typical arts audiences in Belfast.
- 14% of attendees lived in the most deprived areas of Northern Ireland.
- 20% of respondents identified as disabled, including people with invisible and neurodivergent conditions.
- 14% of respondents identified as LGBTQ+.

Geographic Spread

- Events took place across all parts of the city, including North, South, East and West Belfast.
- 43% of events were located in Cathedral Quarter and 28% in the city centre.
- Venues outside the city centre experienced lower footfall, reflecting the event's first year back in a new format, and need to build on city-wide offer.

Programme and Participation

- A total of 158 events were delivered by 182 participating organisations, venues and artists.
- 73% of participants delivering events were taking part in Culture Night for the first time.
- 75% of events were suitable for all ages, reinforcing the family-friendly focus.

- Music was the most represented artform, accounting for 51% of events.

Funding and Artist Support

- 48% of events submitted for the programme requested financial support to participate.
- £49,482 was distributed to support artists and venues.
- 93% of participants stated they would like to take part again in future Culture Nights.

Safety and Management

- No incidents were recorded by Council or PSNI that were directly linked to Culture Night 2025.
- Audiences reported feeling safe across the city, supported by coordinated stewarding and emergency planning.

3.3 Proposal for Culture Night 2026

Culture Night 2026 is proposed to take place on Friday 18 September 2026, in line with other Culture Night events across the island of Ireland. The event will continue to build on the successful 2025 delivery model, while addressing areas for development identified through the Thrive evaluation.

Recommendations for Culture Night 2026

- Improve signage and site information through clear, visible and consistently branded signage across all event locations. This requirement can be embedded within the updated event specification.
- Continue strengthening Culture Night activity across all areas of the city by engaging working group and existing forums in North, South, East and West Belfast. These groups will support information sharing, coordination and collaborative event planning with local venues and participants.
- Provide increased lead-in time for artists, venues and organisations via an early 'Save the Date' communication will be issued for Culture Night 2026 to raise awareness and enable advance planning in tandem with the procurement process for a delivery contractor.

- **Maintain and build upon the successful event model by continuing to prioritise a free, accessible and family-friendly programme delivered through a receiving house approach, similar to Dublin Culture Night where activity is venue-based. This ensures most of the available budget is directed towards the payment to the cultural sector and artists for delivering the programme rather than large-scale production costs which come with increased risk and health & safety considerations.**
- **Plan proactively for any changes to key event locations. With the uncertainty of 2 Royal Avenue and ongoing construction at Cathedral Gardens, alternative suitable city centre locations for main event activity will be identified in advance to ensure successful delivery in 2026.**
- **Ensure city-wide engagement and participation through partnerships with neighbourhood cultural venues in North, South, East, West and community consultation.**

3.4 Next Steps

- **Subject to Committee approval, officers will commence planning for Culture Night 2026 from March, including initial engagement with cultural sector and opening the procurement process for Culture Night Delivery Contract via tender, this will include an option for contract extension to deliver 2027 Culture Night upon successful delivery of 2026.**
- **Officers will also explore options for an early engagement/ launching focused on ‘Save the Date’ messaging to secure diary holds and increase public and cultural sector awareness of the event in anticipation of the contractor coming on board for delivery by April.**
- **Officers will continue to engage with Department for Communities to understand possibility of any financial support within the 2026/27 financial year (see appended reply to previous correspondence).**

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

We are seeking approval for £150,000 Culture Night 2026 Delivery budget from the 2026/2027 Culture budget.

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

- **Culture Night 2026 will continue to align with Belfast City Council’s statutory duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and its commitments to equality, diversity and good relations under the EQIA for our city’s Cultural Strategy 2020-2030.**

The evaluation of Culture Night 2025 highlighted that audiences were younger and more diverse than typical arts audiences in Belfast, with participation from people living in areas of higher multiple deprivation, disabled audiences (including those with invisible and neurodivergent conditions), and LGBTQ+ communities. The free, city-wide and venue-led nature of the event supported broad access and positive shared experiences across communities.

For 2026, the continued emphasis on a family-friendly, accessible and free programme, alongside improved signage, clearer information and strengthened activity across North, South, East and West Belfast, will further support inclusive participation. Early engagement with venues and organisations will also allow for better consideration of accessibility requirements and community needs at a local level.”

During discussion, a number of Members thanked officers for the work that had been undertaken to deliver the successful Culture Night 2025 event.

A Member highlighted the correspondence which had been received from the Department for Communities in response to the Committee’s request for the Department to provide funding support for Culture Night going forward. The Member requested that, given the success of the 2025 event, the Committee write again to the Department to request that it provide funding support to help further enhance Culture Night going forward.

In relation to participation, a Member highlighted the importance of continued engagement with communities to promote participation and inclusion of people from all backgrounds in Culture Night.

In response to a Member’s question, the Director of Economic Development advised that he would explore the potential for the Belfast Bikes operator, Beryl, to offer discounted rates on Culture Night to encourage participation.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report in relation to the delivery of Culture Night 2025;

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- ii. approved the proposed approach for Culture Night 2026 as outlined within the report, which would include a commitment of £150,000 to the delivery of Culture Night 2026 through a procurement process, with an option to extend the contract to cover delivery of Culture Night 2027 upon successful delivery in 2026; and
- iii. agreed to write to the Department for Communities to request that it provide funding support for Culture Night.

Markets Licence Approval

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the granting of a market licence to Artisan Markets NI to hold a number of markets at Belfast Castle over the period April to November, 2026.

The Committee approved the granting of a licence to Artisan Markets NI.

Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted the following report for the Committee's consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Belfast Regeneration Place Based Growth Proposition.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. Note the update on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, including the completion of the business Case for Place-Based Investment which has been forwarded to UK Government for consideration.**
- II. Note the update on ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government in Westminster, including recent attendance at the Scottish Cities Alliance Devolution focused roundtable.**
- III. Approve attendance of the Chair of the City Growth & Regeneration Committee and the Council's nominated Elected Member / Chair of the BRCD Council Panel to attend UKREiiF as part of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership Delegation. As noted below this would include attendance at a planned Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting, and also provide an opportunity to participate in advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition.**

- IV. Note the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and ministerial level.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Committee will recall receiving an update in September 2025, followed by a further report to the SP&R Committee in November 2025, on the Belfast Place-Based Growth Proposition. The Proposition sets out the case for enhanced regeneration funding consistent with other UK cities, and aligned with a growth proposition which is underpinned by a full Business Case and aligned to city regeneration priorities.

3.2 As previously reported to Committee, Belfast faces a structural regeneration deficit that cannot be addressed through existing funding mechanisms. The city has experienced long-term underinvestment specifically aimed at regeneration, limited devolved powers and stalled development activity. Public spending on regeneration is approximately half that of comparable English cities, and key funding streams available elsewhere in the UK have not been extended to Northern Ireland, resulting in missed economic and social opportunities. The English Devolution White Paper signalled a significant shift in funding and powers for English cities. Without parity of targeted regeneration investment, Belfast risks falling even further behind in terms of growth and city competitiveness.

3.3 The Proposition seeks to secure targeted regeneration funding from the UK Government to support housing-led regeneration across all tenures; tackle dereliction; enhance infrastructure, connectivity, public realm and placemaking; unlock major regeneration schemes; and deliver high quality public and green spaces.

3.4 Development of the Proposition has been informed by extensive engagement with cross-sector stakeholders and aligns with the findings of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration & Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) Stocktake, which received political and stakeholder endorsement.

4.0 Main Report

4.1 Belfast Business Case for Place-Based Investment

As noted to Committee in September 2025, the Place Proposition is supported by a full five-part business case outlining the strategic, economic, commercial, financial and

management cases supporting the request to Westminster. It sets out how the Council has spent the past 18 months laying the groundwork to develop the Proposition and establish the conditions for successful delivery.

- 4.2** The business case sets out that the Council is seeking the powers and responsibilities required to drive growth and investment in the city, including the establishment of a new £250m City Regeneration Fund (CRF). The Fund is designed to deliver catalytic change through targeted investment in housing-led regeneration, green urban infrastructure, placemaking and the unlocking of strategic regeneration schemes. The Proposition and business case are framed as a Barnett Bypass, meaning it will not affect the core settlement, while highlighting that the Council remains committed to working in partnership with the Executive if successful, through a new model of collaboration.

Advocacy & Engagement

- 4.3** Engagement and advocacy activities to support the Proposition are ongoing, including engagement with the NI Executive and Westminster via Belfast MPs, government officials and elected representatives.
- 4.4** Attendance at the UK Government Investment Summit in September 2025 and the Labour Party Annual Conference in October 2025 facilitated engagement with senior party officials and representatives from HM Treasury, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), and the Northern Ireland Office.
- 4.5** Following completion of the business case in November 2025, it was submitted to the UK Government for consideration. Work continues at official and political levels to advance the Proposition, including a forthcoming meeting with the Northern Ireland Secretary of State. An update on the Proposition was provided to Belfast MPs in January and follow up discussions are on-going to support continued engagement at Westminster.
- 4.6** As previously reported, a joint Ministerial meeting with the Ministers for Finance, Economy, Infrastructure and Communities, held in conjunction with the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership, took place in September 2025, and the business case has been shared with senior departmental officials for consideration.

- 4.7 A wider communication and engagement plan, supported by messaging aligned to the business case findings, is being progressed. Continued support from Members in advocating for the Proposition, particularly through party political channels, will be important in raising its visibility within the NI Executive and Westminster at local, MP / MLA and Ministerial levels.

Scottish Cities Alliance

- 4.8 Following approval at SP&R Committee in November 2025, the Lord Mayor, the Council's nominated Elected Member BCRD Lead, and senior officers attended a devolution-focused roundtable with city leaders from Scotland and Wales in London in January 2026. The meeting was convened by the Scottish Cities Alliance (SCA), a collaboration between Scotland's eight cities and the Scottish Government. It brought together representatives from the SCA, the Cardiff Capital Region, and Belfast City Council to discuss evolving city-regional governance and devolution arrangements across the UK.
- 4.9 The discussion considered the implications of the accelerating programme of English devolution, particularly the establishment of Mayoral Combined Authorities, for the competitive positioning, investment prospects, and reform capacity of cities in the devolved nations. Attendees noted the increasing momentum behind English devolution deals, the continued extension of mayoral powers, and growing alignment between English city regions and UK Government funding, policy development, and institutional focus.
- 4.10 The meeting concluded that, without coordinated action, the pace and scale of English devolution has the potential to reshape the UK's economic and institutional landscape in ways that could disadvantage cities in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It was recognised, however, that through joint case-making, strategic advocacy, and confidence in diverse governance models, there is a strong opportunity to secure deeper, fairer, and more effective city-level devolution across the devolved nations, reflecting their respective strengths and circumstances.
- 4.11 Work is ongoing with representatives of the SCA and Cardiff Capital Region on a continued programme of engagement including plans for a follow-up Political Leaders meeting at UKREiiF.

- 4.12 UKREiiF, the UK real estate, investment and infrastructure Forum, will take place in Leeds from 19 to 21 May 2026. The annual event brings together more than 16,000 representatives from local authorities, government, institutional investors and developers to drive regeneration, development, and infrastructure investment. It is a key investment focussed showcase event within the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) annual programme of activity, which the Council supports.**
- 4.13 The Scotland and Wales delegations at UKREiiF will include central government officials, city leaders and senior officers from their respective devolved nations and cities. Committee approval is sought for the Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Council's nominated Elected Member / Chair of the BRCD Council Panel to attend UKREiiF. Senior Council officers will also be in attendance. It is proposed that Members will attend a planned Devolved Nations Political Leaders Meeting and participate in wider BCRPP activity at UKREiiF, including attendance at a Belfast City Region Showcase event.**

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 Financial impact directly associated with the proposition and business case recommendations will be brought back to Committee in due course following consideration by UK Government.**
- 5.2 Costs including travel and subsistence for Members attendance at UKREiiF will be met from the existing City Regeneration & Development Budget.**

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the update on the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition, including the completion of the business Case for Place-Based Investment which had been forwarded to the UK Government for consideration;
- ii. noted the update on the ongoing strategic engagement with the UK Government, including the recent attendance at the Scottish Cities Alliance Devolution focused roundtable;
- iii. approved the attendance of the Chairperson, and the Council's nominated elected Member/Chair of the Belfast Region City Deal

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(BRCD) Council Panel, to attend the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) as part of a Belfast City and Region Place Partnership delegation, which would include attendance at a planned Devolved Nations Political Leaders meeting and provide an opportunity to participate in advocacy and engagement activities to support the Belfast Place Based Growth Proposition; and

- iv. noted the continued role for Members in terms of political party engagement at local, MP and ministerial level.

Issues Raised in Advance

Newtownards Road Corridor – Vision and Intervention (Councillor R. Brooks to raise)

(Councillor R. Brooks attended in connection to this item.)

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor R. Brooks addressed the Committee in respect of a number of issues relating to the Newtownards Road.

Councillor R. Brooks reminded the Committee that she had attended its meeting in March, 2025, to speak in relation to the closure of the Connswater Shopping Centre and the impact on the local community. She highlighted that, following the closure of Connswater Shopping Centre, there had been further commercial properties which had closed on the Newtownards Road, which included the recently closed Wyse Byse store. She highlighted the impact of that the closures on the Newtownards Road and the local community, and the need for urgent interventions to address issues including land banking, dereliction and deterioration of buildings, to help restore confidence and footfall in the area.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor S. Douglas,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

“That the Committee agrees that Council officers convene an urgent meeting of the key strategic partners of the ‘Our Vision for Newtownards Road 2030’ Plan; that the current position of the plan be reviewed against the actions set out therein, with any necessary time-bound interventions identified; and that a report be brought back to provide an update on the plan’s delivery to date and proposed next steps.”

During discussion, a Member requested that the proposed report include also further information on the Council's statutory powers and functions in respect of addressing such issues across the city.

During further discussion, a Member highlighted the recent closure of the Wyse Byse store on the Cregagh Road and highlighted the potential impact to confidence and footfall on the Cregagh Road and Woodstock Road. The Member requested that Council officers engage with Members from the Lisnasharragh and Titanic District Electoral Areas

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(DEAs) in relation to the Cregagh Road and Woodstock Road and the impact of the recent commercial property closures.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed:

- i. that officers convene an urgent meeting of the key strategic partners of the 'Our Vision for Newtownards Road 2030' Plan;
- ii. that the current position of the plan be reviewed against the actions set out therein, with any necessary time-bound interventions identified;
- iii. that a report be brought back to provide an update on the plan's delivery to date, the proposed next steps, and further information in respect of statutory powers and functions; and
- iv. that officers engage with Members from the Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs in relation to the Cregagh Road and Woodstock Road and the impact of recent commercial property closures on those areas.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Tuesday, 24th February, 2026

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to the item 'City Imagining Investment Programme - Cultural Multi-Annual Grants', Councillor McCabe declared an interest in that she was employed by an organisation which had applied for funding and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion. Councillor Groogan also declared an interest in relation to the same item in that she was a freelance volunteer for an organisation which had also applied for funding and did not take part in the discussion.

Restricted Items

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

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

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**City Imagining Investment Programme –
Cultural Multi-Annual Grants**

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 11th February, 2026, it had agreed to defer consideration of the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants for 2026-28 to enable further information to be provided. The Director submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided further information on the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants process, proposals and options.

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, presented the Committee with an overview of the two strands of the funding programme, namely Festivals and Events, and Arts and Heritage. She also outlined the principles of the assessment process and set out a range of potential options and financial implications.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development and the Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, answered a range of Members' questions on the funding assessment, scoring criteria, and options set out within the presentation.

In response to issues raised by the Members during discussion, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy suggested that a report be submitted to the Committee's next meeting which would provide further information on the issues raised.

A Member also highlighted that, at its meeting on 20th February, 2026, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting on general grant funding processes, eligibility criteria and thresholds, and requested that the issues raised by Members in relation to the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants also be considered as part of that wider report.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed:

- i. to defer consideration of the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants 2026-28, to enable further information to be submitted to its meeting on 11th March, 2026; and
- ii. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the issues raised in relation to the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants be considered as part of the wider report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on general grant funding processes, eligibility criteria and thresholds.

Minutes of the Belfast Stories Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Belfast Stories Working Group of 18th February, 2026.

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Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 14, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, that the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 2nd March, 2026, for ratification.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 18th February, 2026

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Doran (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty;
Aldermen McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,
R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Carson,
P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, McAteer, McCann,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown and Smyth.

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

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor M. Donnelly.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st January 2026, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th February.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

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

The Committee noted the applications that had been issued under the Scheme of Delegation during January.

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.

Non-Delegated Matters

Fleadh Update on Licensing Matters

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report sets out the proposed approach to a number of licensing regimes operated by the Council in relation to the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

1.2 Location map for the Fleadh road closure area is attached as Appendix 1

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the information provided and to agree to the proposed approaches outlined, namely:

1. Note the Road Closure application procedures set out;
2. Note that the Building Control service will work to ensure that appropriate pavement café licences are in place for the Fleadh, but that suspension of some licences may be necessary in the lead up to or during the Fleadh for Health and Safety purposes;
3. Note that a further report Street Trading at the Fleadh will be brought to a future committee to determine location and process and agree that any applications received to date will be returned and refunded;
4. Note the ongoing work of the Building Control Service in relation to ensuring appropriate Entertainment Licensing is in place for the Fleadh; and
5. Agree that additional special meeting(s) may be required in July 2026 (dates to be determined)

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 The Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is to take place in Belfast on Sunday 2 to Sunday 9 August 2026

3.2 It is anticipated that the Fleadh will attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to the city for its duration. The successful hosting of the event will require input from a number of Council functions, communicating on a cross departmental basis within the Council and also multi agency liaison with external organisations. The ability to safely accommodate significant numbers of people within a designated city centre area will require a shared understanding of the programme of events and activities within this designated area in conjunction with planning for crowd safety.

3.4 As the Committee are aware, the Building Control service undertake a number of licensing duties across the city including determining road closure applications, pavement café licensing, street trading licensing and indoor and outdoor entertainment licensing. The Building Control Service therefore has a significant role to play in the event planning process and will be in continual communication with a range of internal and external partners in the lead in to and during this event.

3.4 As the event planning continues, the Building Control service will require the ability to make decisions that are compatible with ensuring the successful delivery of the event. This may require delegated authority on a number of issues that are detailed below.

Road Closure Order

3.5 Under the Road (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (NI) 2010 and the Road Traffic Regulation (NI) Order 1997 applications can be made to the Council for a Road Closure Order if an event is to be held on a public road.

The Building Control Service and statutory partners have been engaged in pre-application discussions with the Fleadh Event Team around the extensive road closures necessary to facilitate an event of this size to ensure the safety of citizens and visitors. This has led to significant engagement from the event team with businesses and city centre stakeholders which is being stepped up during February, with a number of further public engagement and information meetings scheduled.

3.6 The road closure application was formally submitted to Building Control on 9th February 2026 and the Service is now embarking on formal consultations with Statutory partners before publishing the public notification, including a list of affected roads with timings and restrictions applied, in local newspapers and on the Council website which is planned for March.

3.7 This will commence a 21-day statutory public notification period which gives an opportunity for members of the public to send written representations / objections to the Council.

3.8 In line with the current Scheme of Delegation if no objections are received during the notification period, the road closure order will be issued under delegated authority.

- 3.9 If any objections are received during the notification period that cannot be resolved, they will be brought along with the application itself, for consideration by the Committee at your May 2026 meeting,

Pavement Café Licensing

- 3.10 A pavement café licence authorises a person who operates a business supplying food or drink (in or from premises) to place furniture on a public area for use by customers. As Members will be aware, the Council is not responsible for alcohol licensing, which is administered by the Courts and enforced by the PSNI.
- 3.11 However, when a premises with a liquor licence, such as a pub, obtains a pavement café licence we inform the Courts, and their liquor licence is automatically extended to include the pavement café area.
- 3.12 Any business interested in providing such facilities at their premises for the Fleadh is advised of the need to apply in good time to allow the application to be properly considered. Any new pavement café licence applications should therefore be made by the end of April 2026 at the latest if they intend to operate during the Fleadh. These timescales are required for consideration of the application due to the processes that need to be followed in relation to notification, consultation and to allow time for any appeal should that be necessary.
- 3.13 Existing pavement café licensees are being reminded of their responsibilities in relation to pavement cafés and the Building Control Service continues to carry out enforcement of any illegal pavement cafes in the city centre area.
- 3.14 Some premises will want to maximise their sales footprint to capitalise on the business opportunity the Fleadh presents. Any proposals to extend an existing pavement café footprint must similarly be discussed with the Building Control service at least 3 months before the event to allow a variation application to be considered.
- 3.15 Modelling of crowd numbers and crowd management is currently being undertaken by the Fleadh team. This may determine that there are concerns around expected crowd density in certain locations. It may therefore be necessary to suspend some pavement cafes for health and safety reasons, potentially for the duration of the Fleadh, for set periods during the week of the event or as a result of crowd movement during the Fleadh event. Potential crowding risk

may necessitate that pavement café furniture be removed to enable the free-flow of people on the footpath/street.

3.16 It will be important that information on locations that require pavement cafés to be removed due to crowd density and health and safety, and areas where pavement cafés could remain or even be expanded is provided as soon as possible to allow decision making on individual pavement cafes to be clearly communicated to licensees. It is expected that crowd modelling will be able to determine in the next month whether pavement café licences may need to be suspended.

3.17 In line with the relevant legislation, there are two mechanisms to suspend a pavement café licence or have furniture removed. For the purposes of doing so during the Fleadh the most appropriate options are:

- 1.** Where a potential health and safety risk has been identified through crowd modelling prior to the event, a licensee will be notified of a reasonable request to remove furniture and / or barriers at least 21 days before the event (to allow time for any representation or appeal to be made). A licence condition is applied to all pavement café licences (previously agreed by Committee) and this will be used to make the reasonable request. This states:

The Licensee will comply with any reasonable request from a duly authorised officer of the Council to remove such furniture and barriers from the licensed area as is necessary to facilitate the safety of the public, including the safe movement of vehicles, during special events*. Licensees will be notified of any such special events at least 14 calendar days before the event where possible.

***Special Events**

A special event includes, but is not restricted to, an event such as a rally, procession, marathon or other sporting event or an open-air concert.

- 2.** Where a health and safety risk is identified during the event and immediate action is needed to in the public interest to remove any risk from a pavement café (and / or its furniture), the power delegated to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy as outlined in the Corporate Scheme of delegation, (I) v. below will be used:

- (i) Exercising all powers in relation to the issue, but not refusal, of pavement café licences, including the setting of trading hours in relation to pavement café licences, but excluding provisions relating to:
 - i. applications for the grant, renewal or variation of licences where adverse representations are received;
 - ii. compulsory variation of licences;
 - iii. revocation of licences;
 - iv. setting of licence fees;
 - v. suspension of licences except where in the public interest the Strategic Director, in consultation with the City Solicitor, considers that there are particular circumstances which make it necessary to suspend a licence immediately;
- 3.18 Prior to the commencement of the Fleadh, notice will be given to any licensed premises where it is believed a health & safety risk may be posed in relation to crowd safety and the placement of temporary street furniture is required to be suspended.
- 3.19 Where a premises does not hold a pavement café licence, direct formal action will be commenced to ensure the removal of any temporary furniture.
- 3.20 During the Fleadh, it is planned to have an enforcement team on hand to remind premises, if necessary, that for health and safety reasons the placing of furniture in a particular location has been suspended and, should compliance not be achieved, to promptly remove any furniture that may be deemed to be potentially hazardous.
- 3.21 It is hoped that with prior notification and engagement, formal enforcement action will seldom be required.

Street Trading Licensing

3.22 Existing Stationary Street Traders

The locations of all designated pitches that have a current operating licence within the city centre have been mapped out and provided to the Fleadh team for consideration and inclusion in their planning.

- 3.23 It has been established that there are 3 licensees who may be affected by the proposed event plan trading Hot and Cold Food & Drink on pitches at Writers Square, as this location is proposed for the official event merchandiser. Discussions are

being held to accommodate those traders or provide alternative pitches for the duration of the event within the Food Village area being set up in the Cathedral carpark.

- 3.24** The modelling of crowd numbers and crowd management currently being undertaken by the Fleadh team and ongoing discussions on the Road Closure Order and health and safety arrangements will determine where there are opportunities for Street Trading within the proposed pedestrianised zone. Once those opportunities have been identified, a further report will be brought before the Licensing Committee to agree the locations and commodities to be sold (e.g not food and drink).
- 3.25** Committee will also then be able to consider how any identified pitches can be operated and whether applications will be taken from individuals to operate from those locations. If applications are to be invited, it is likely that this will be within a certain timeframe and that delegated authority will be sought from the Committee for officers to determine between any competing applications. This would save significant time as such matters would then not have to be referred to Committee for determination.
- 3.26** The Council has, however already received a number of applications for street trading during the Fleadh. In order to ensure fairness if applications are to be invited within a set timeframe it is proposed that all applications received to date are returned and refunded.
- 3.27** Due to crowd control health and safety measures that are being implemented during the event it will be necessary to robustly prevent the setting up of illegal stalls or any illegal activity that causes the infringement of free flow of people especially in areas that are known to have limited space.

Entertainments Licensing

- 3.28** The Building Control Service has a well-established regime to complement an Entertainment Licence granted by the Council. This involves engagement with licensees, and their consultants, at the initial grant of their licence. Further to this, engagement continues at the renewal and/or variation stage(s) of their licence. Additionally, these processes are then complemented with a during performance inspection process involving unannounced inspections of venues when entertainment is being facilitated.
- 3.29** In preparation for the Fleadh, when it is anticipated that an increased footfall will be experienced by the hospitality sector, an enhanced frequency of during performance

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inspections has been introduced across licenced venues in Belfast. In delivering this, the Service has sought to remind licensees of their responsibilities to manage their venues in accordance with the Entertainments Licence granted to them by the Council. In particular, licensees of indoor venues and their staff, are being encouraged to be familiar with the conditions set out within the BCC Rules of Management; conditions which they must adhere to when granted a licence. This inspection regime will continue over the duration of the Fleadh.

- 3.30** Recognising that entertainment will not solely be confined to indoor venues, the Service have been proactive in its consideration of outdoor entertainment. To upskill relevant parties, an invite to attend training delivered by an internationally recognised expert on crowd management was extended to, and availed of by the Fleadh team.
- 3.31** Many event spaces in the city which are commonly used for outdoor entertainment continue to be licenced and may therefore be available for activities associated with the Fleadh. The Service remains available to assist event organisers in developing their event management plans when using such spaces.
- 3.32** For operators of any venue who wish to consider providing indoor or outdoor entertainment, or existing licensees who wish to modify their venues in preparation for the Fleadh, it is essential that engagement with the Service takes place prior to commencement of any work. It is a statutory requirement to have in place an Entertainments Licence prior to any such offering. Notification, or discovery, of entertainment being provided without an Entertainments Licence will result in investigation by the Service.
- 3.33** To assist operators of venues which do not currently have an Entertainments Licence, the Service advises that any submission of an application for the grant or variation of an Entertainments Licence should be made before the end of April 2026 to allow at least three months for consideration of the application. These timescales are required for consideration of the application due to the processes that need to be followed in relation to notification, consultation and to allow time for any appeal should that be necessary.

Licensing Committee

- 3.34** The last planned Licensing Committee before the Fleadh is scheduled for the 17th June 2026. Given the extent of organisation underway for the Fleadh and the expectation that

this will continue to involve licensing issues up until the date of the event, officers believe that it may be prudent for the Committee to have a special sitting in July 2026 to cater for such matters.

- 3.36 In addition, where Committee is being asked to make decisions on certain matters, this may be accompanied by a recommendation to agree that the decision is not subject to normal call-in processes. This would allow more responsive decisions to be made in the lead into the event in association with any delegated authority sought. This will be vital in ensuring that the licensing functions of the City Council can be undertaken quickly to address any health and safety issues identified. Any report will be clear as to whether this is required for a particular decision.**

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

- 4.1 There is an additional resource requirement for the carrying out of enforcement activities in the run-up and during the Fleadh period, a time when particularly outdoor musical entertainment is already at its peak in the City.**

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 5.1 There are no issues associated with this report.”**

In response to a Member’s query regarding pavement cafes, the Director of Planning and Building Control confirmed that, if a business already held a Liquor Licence, then any pavement café licence would extend their premises and they were entitled to serve alcohol within that area.

Regarding street traders who wished to operate in the City Centre during the Fleadh period, she outlined that a report would be brought before the Committee in the coming months, asking it to consider setting certain parameters within which officers could determine applications, including delegated authority to determine competing applications should the situation arise. She explained that the Committee might wish to, for example, recognise those traders who were already paying significant rates for premises within the City.

A further Member raised the importance of mobility and accessibility concerns for large scale events and requested that further information be submitted for the Committee’s consideration regarding the enforcement powers and staffing for the week long, City-wide event.

In response to a further Member’s query, the Director emphasised that an upcoming public notice would advertise the proposed road closures in and around the City Centre and that any representations arising from it would be brought to the Committee.

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Wednesday, 18th February, 2026**

She added that, once the crowd modelling had been completed, officers would be engaging with those businesses with Pavement Café licences to ensure that they were aware of the City-wide event and of their responsibilities in terms of their outdoor furniture.

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

Model Conditions - Caravan Licensing

The Director presented the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report sets out how the model conditions for Caravan and Campsites have been updated by the Department for Infrastructure in July 2025.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the background to the model conditions and the updated model conditions for Caravan and Campsites (in Appendix 1 and 2 on mod.gov) and agree that they will be adopted by the Council and referenced on our website.

3.0 Main report

Under the [Caravans Act \(Northern Ireland\) 1963](#) ('1963 Act') the development of caravan sites and their physical standards are controlled through:

1. planning permission granted for the use of land as a caravan site and
2. the 1963 Act's site licensing system.

Applications for a caravan site licence must be made to the Council. There is no charge to apply.

There are currently no licensed caravan or camping sites in the Belfast Area.

Before applying for a licence, the operator must have:

- Secured planning permission,
- Sufficient insurance,
- Met the appropriate licence conditions.

The Department has a role in providing Model Licence Conditions regulating the layout and provision of facilities,

services and equipment for caravan sites including water supply, electricity and fire points.

In drawing up the conditions which will attach to any licence, councils must have regard to the Model Licence Conditions.

Updated model conditions were published by the Department for Infrastructure on 1 July 2025. These conditions revise and update the Model Licence Conditions for Caravan Sites 1992 (Holiday Caravan Sites) and Model Licence Conditions 1994 (Residential Caravan Sites) and apply to:

- permanent residential caravan sites;
- holiday caravan sites; and
- touring caravan sites

This review has been prompted by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Travellers' Accommodation in NI' investigation report published on 6 March 2018. The report made a number of recommendations for public authorities, including that the Department should:

'review the legal and policy framework concerning site licences. This should include the development of a model site licence setting out the minimum standard of provision and safety requirements for each type of Travellers site in NI, along with enforcement powers for any breach.'

The Department has accepted this recommendation and has published a stand-alone set of Model Licence Conditions for Traveller Sites.

While addressing the report's recommendation the Department has also taken the opportunity to update and amalgamate the current Model Licence Conditions for holiday caravan sites as well as residential caravan sites into one document, creating greater clarity and ease of reference for councils and stakeholders.

Although the conditions remain largely unchanged there are some revisions and updates including to emergency telephones, flood risk and fire safety measures.

The updated licensing conditions represent what would normally be expected as a matter of good practice on all caravan sites and should be applied with due regard to the particular circumstances of each case, including the physical character of the site, any facilities or services that may already be available within convenient reach, and other local conditions.

4.0 Financial & Resource Implications

4.1 There are no financial or resource implications that arise as a result of this report.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

5.1 There are no issues associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Request for the Exhibition of Unclassified Films

The Director outlined that a request had been received from the Nerve Centre Belfast, to screen three unclassified films at the Queen’s Film Theatre (QFT) on Saturday, 28th March, 2026.

The Committee was reminded that the Council licensed cinemas and other venues under the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, which primarily focused on technical aspects such as structural stability and fire safety. Typically, cinema licenses required films to be classified by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). However, the Council had the authority to permit the screening of unclassified films under specific conditions, including imposing age restrictions. She reminded the Committee that it had previously approved similar requests for unclassified film screenings.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. B. Brennan, Nerve Centre, to the meeting. He confirmed the details of the screening requests.

The films had been produced by students of the Nerve Centre as part of a six-month program funded by the Department for Communities, which aimed to provide young people aged 16-19 with opportunities to learn about the creative industries while working on their own projects.

The screenings would be invitation-only, free of charge, and not open to the general public. The Nerve Centre had proposed age classifications for the films, with two films rated PG and one rated 15, based on their content.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McCann,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to permit the screening of the three unclassified films in accordance with an age classification of 15, the highest rating specified by the Nerve Centre.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 17th February, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan,
T. Brooks, Carson, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas,
Garrett, Groogan, Magee, McCabe,
McCann and Whyte.
- Also attended: Councillor R. Brooks.
- In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management),
Ms. C Reville, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd February, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Carson declared an interest in the following three items in that he had previously discussed the applications with the applicants and officers, and he left the meeting whilst the applications were being considered:

- LA04/2023/2633/F - Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 3G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities - St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights;
- LA04/2025/1896/F - Proposed mixed use development comprising of 77 No. social housing units (mix of 26

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dwelling and 51 apartments) and a new children's centre, car parking, landscaping, open space, access and all associated site works including the installation of a new substation.(amendment to planning permission ref: LA04/2024/0122/F). - Former Belfast Metropolitan College Campus Whiterock Road; and

- LA04/2024/1389/F - Community garden and improvements to existing unused space, scheme to include multi-use play-court, allotment area, pizza and BBQ area and pathways. - Newhill Youth and Community Centre, 261 Whiterock Road.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to the presentation, in that he had previously worked with a housing association, and he left the meeting whilst the Committee received the presentation.

Presentation

Mr. Seamus Leheny, Chief Executive at Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. S. Leheny to the meeting, who was in attendance following a request from the Committee to discuss the obstacles Housing Associations face with regard to partnering with housing developers in order to provide social housing.”

Mr. Leheny addressed the Committee and provided an update with regard to delivery of housing in the city and outlined some of the barriers and obstacles that developers face in relation to mixed tenure developments.

Following a question-and-answer session with the Members, the Chairperson thanked Mr. Leheny for his attendance and he retired from the meeting.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visit

The Committee noted that the previously scheduled site visit had not taken place and would be rescheduled.

Pre-emptive Site Visit

The Committee agreed to undertake a pre-emptive site visit to the following application site:

- Pre-emptive Committee site visit: LA04/2025/0837/F - Demolition of Mount Masonic Hall, erection of 35 no. social housing units in 2 no. blocks with associated private, shared, communal, and public space, 29 no. private car

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parking spaces, vehicle and pedestrian access from Park Avenue, improvements to pedestrian steps linking Strandburn Drive to Sydenham Park, and demolition of 1no. garage. - Land of the former Mount Masonic Hall, 45 Park Avenue.

Notifications from Statutory Bodies

Traffic Control Measures

The Committee noted the proposed waiting restrictions at Bedford Street.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in January, 2026.

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

Review of Implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Committee agreed the draft response to DfI's request in relation to second review of the Implementation of the Planning Act (NI) 2011.

Review of Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) Fees

The Committee noted the proposed increased PAD fees and the fundamental review of PAD fees over the next financial year

Local Applications Subject to NI Water Objections

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

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Planning Applications previously considered

LA04/2022/0809/F - Amendments to approved schemes ref. Z/2008/0993/F (erection of 53 No. dwellings) & ref. Z/2013/0120/F (erection of 46 No. dwellings); to reduce overall density from 99 No. dwellings to 92 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 outlined the application to the Committee and explained that the application had been approved in December, 2025 and was back before the Committee as the proposal had been amended to remove a small area of third-party land from the application site which had resulted in a reduction of the scheme by two dwellings.

He provided an overview of the amended site location and layout plans and stated that no additional representations had been received following the previous re-consultation on the application and that the proposal was considered to remain acceptable, the Section 76 planning agreement had been agreed in principle and that there were no outstanding matters.

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, and 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 provided that they were not substantive.

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

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application for the Committee and outlined the following key areas:

- Principle of short term let at the location;
- Character, design and appearance; and
- Impact on amenity.

She reported that a final response had been received from the Waste Management Team which was content with the proposed waste management arrangements and that 37 objections had been received and the issues raised had been considered within the report.

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She stated that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor R. Brooks to the meeting who attended to speak in objection to the application.

Councillor R. Brooks stated that she didn't believe that the proposal was in line with the intent of the Belfast Local Development Plan, particularly with regard to the housing policies.

She stated that the assertion that the site sits within an existing tourism cluster was incorrect as the Oval football grounds was a periodic match day venue, organised tours were on an enquiry led basis and were very infrequent. She explained that the report referred to Eastside Visitor Centre, CS Lewis Square and Templemore Baths Heritage Experience and stated that, whilst they were important civic and heritage assets, they functioned primarily as a daytime attraction within a wider city tourism offer and that overnight accommodation demand would remain within the city centre.

She stated that, with regard to policies HOU1 and HOU2, insufficient weight had been given to the strategic housing objectives of the Local Development Plan and she referred to previous comments from the Housing Executive which asserted that there should be a residential development on the site and that a previous proposal for the application site had failed, not because the site had been unsuitable for housing but because the design had not met the required standards.

She concluded that land was limited in the east of the city and should be prioritised for housing rather than the provision of short-term lets and that the proposal was not compliant with policies HOU1, HOU2 and HOU13.

A number of Members questioned how the proposal met Criterion (c) of Policy HOU13, concerned that the site was not located within an existing tourism cluster or in close proximity to a visitor attraction and pointed out that there was a lack of clarity as to what qualified as a visitor attraction.

A Member pointed out that the social housing potential in the area should be maximised and that the application presented a cohesion issue with the local community. In response, the Principal Planning Officer stated that the application site was not on land that had been zoned for housing.

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Proposal

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte

“That the Committee refuses the application on the grounds that it is contrary to:

- Policy HOU1, in that the proposal would result in the loss of a sustainable urban site located in an area of demonstrable and increasing housing need;
- Policy HOU2, in that the proposed short term let accommodation represents an inefficient use of the land and would permanently displace the opportunity to deliver housing in a sustainable location; and
- Policy HOU13(c), in that a tourism cluster needs to demonstrate a generated sustainable overnight need that the application would not facilitate and the area did not represent a meaningful tourism cluster.”

In response to the proposal, the Planning Manager explained that, with regard to Policy HOU1, the land was not zoned for housing and therefore it was not applicable. He added that Policy HOU2 applied to Windfall Housing and was therefore not applicable as the proposal was not a housing scheme. He explained that, to reject the application site as being within or in close proximity to a tourism cluster, would be inconsistent with the Planning Appeals Commission’s approach to recent decisions for short-term let accommodation and that community cohesion was not an applicable policy issue.

Subsequent to the advice of the Planning Manager, Alderman Lawlor amended his proposal, seconded by Councillor Whyte, to read as follows:

“That the Committee refuses the application on the grounds that, the proposal is contrary to Policy HOU13(c), in that a tourism cluster needs to demonstrate a generated sustainable overnight need that the application would not facilitate and the area does not represent a meaningful tourism cluster.”

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

Accordingly, the Chairperson put the case officer’s recommendation to the Committee and the Committee agreed to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

Planning Applications

LA04/2024/0015/F - Erection of 53 residential units (including 43 dwellings and 10 apartments) including creation of access, internal roads, landscaping and associated works (revised information). - Lands at Cabin Hill, Upper Newtownards Road

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application in order to review additional information following a recent fire at the application site.

LA04/2023/2633/F - Proposed extension to existing clubhouse to provide indoor sports hall, changing rooms, reception, and fitness suite. Proposed relocation of grass pitch and new 3G training pitch with integrated ball walls. Proposed annex building with club store and matchday shop. Site works including increased parking, fencing, catch nets, floodlighting, dugouts, paths, and other associated amenities - St Teresa's GAC, 2 Glen Road Heights

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

- Principle of the proposed use;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area;;
- Impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Access and transportation;
- Climate change;
- Health impacts;
- Wastewater Infrastructure;
- Flood Risk;
- Environmental protection;
- Impact on Built Heritage;
- Impact on Natural heritage; and
- Trees.

She reported that statutory consultees had not raised any objection, that since publication of the case officer's report, DfI Rivers had returned a response of no objection and that final comments from Shared Environmental Services (SES) were outstanding.

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She informed the Committee that, following advertisement in the local press and neighbour notification, 14 letters of objection had been received from local residents and that the issues raised had been considered within the case officer's report.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered acceptable and it was recommended that planning permission be approved.

In response to concern from a Member with regard to a condition which required the windows of the gym to be closed during operating hours, the Principal Planning Officer advised that she would explore the removal of the condition and should removal of Condition 10 not be viable, that she would bring the application back to the Committee for further consideration.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions to include the removal of Condition 10, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to resolve a response from SES, finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2025/1896/F - Proposed mixed use development comprising of 77 No. social housing units (mix of 26 dwellings and 51 apartments) and a new children's centre, car parking, landscaping, open space, access and all associated site works including the installation of a new substation.(amendment to planning permission ref: LA04/2024/0122/F). - Former Belfast Metropolitan College Campus Whiterock Road

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of housing and community facility in this location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Public realm;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and

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- Pre-application Community Consultation.

She explained that previous permission for the application site was granted by the Committee in December 2024 and pointed out that the key difference between the proposals was the amalgamation of Apartment Block A and the children centre to create an additional 15 apartment units and that previous proposals for Apartment Blocks B and C remained unchanged.

She reported that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was supportive of the social housing proposals and that there was an outstanding response from Environmental Health but that, given the comments Environmental Health provided on the previous approval, it was not considered that there would be any significant concerns that could not be overcome through planning conditions.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission be granted.

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

**LA04/2025/2183/F - Removal of conditions 14
and 15 from the permission referenced
LA04/2024/0714/F (Contamination). - Units 2a
and 2b 38 Boucher Road**

The Principal Planning Officer reported that the application sought planning permission for the removal of Conditions 14 and 15 of approval LA04/2024/0714/F and explained that Condition 14 was not necessary as no remediation was required and Condition 15 was no longer required as it related to the verification report linked to Condition 14.

She stated that, following consultation with Environmental Health, which had previously suggested the conditions, it had concluded that it was content with their removal.

She informed the Committee that, having had regard to the development plan, relevant planning policies and consultation responses, it was considered that the removal of the conditions be approved.

The Committee approved the removal of Conditions 14 and 15 from the permission referenced LA04/2024/0714/F (Contamination) and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and deal with any other matters that might arise provided that they were not substantive.

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LA04/2025/1716/F - Proposed change of use from, Use class B1(a) office, to short term Transitional Care Unit, Use Class C3 b) comprising of 73 no. ensuite beds, associated ancillary facilities including café, rehabilitation suites and treatment rooms, laboratory, consulting rooms, 2 no. external terraces and all other ancillary, staff and storage rooms. Development includes ambulance drop off bay, replacement of existing windows, and all other associated site and access works. - Santander House, 1 Mays Meadow

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application for a change of use and outlined the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of health facility in this location;
- Impact on transport infrastructure and road safety;
- Flood risk/ drainage;
- Health Impacts;
- Environmental impact;
- Climate change; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

She reported that, since the publication of the case officer's report, DfI Roads had provided a consultation response which offered no objection, subject to the conditioning of the provision of weather protected cycle parking and hard surfaced areas, in operation and in accordance with the Service Management and Travel Plans.

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

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

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LA04/2025/0288/F - Retrospective change of use from taxi passenger terminal, cafe, office and newsagent to a Homeless Centre, Category D1(B). The centre will provide meals, washing and changing facilities and an internal social amenity area for users.. The centre will operate Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday each week from 4:00 pm up until 10:00 pm (Amended Description) - Existing taxi passenger terminal and former retail unit located within 35a King Street

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application on the grounds that there was an outstanding Environmental Health report.

(Councillor Carson retired from the meeting.)

LA04/2024/1389/F - Community garden and improvements to existing unused space, scheme to include multi-use play-court, allotment area, pizza and BBQ area and pathways. - Newhill Youth and Community Centre, 261 Whiterock Road

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

- Principle of proposal;
- Impact on amenity;
- Access and transport;
- Climate change;
- Environmental protection; and
- Natural heritage.

She stated that the proposed works were considered subservient to the existing building and was sympathetic to both the character of the area and the setting of the surrounding residential use.

She reported that consultation with Environmental Health had resulted in conditions having been offered with regard to times of operation to protect neighbouring amenity from noise and risk of unknown ground contamination and that one third party objection had been received and the issues raised had been addressed within the case officer's report.

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

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the

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

LA04/2025/2216/LBC - Installation of Facade Lighting. - Ulster Hall, 30 Bedford Street

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application for Listed Building Consent for the installation of new LED linear and spotlight lighting to the exterior of the Ulster Hall.

She outlined the impact on the setting of the Listed Building and reported that the DfC Historic Environment Division had been consulted and had offered no objection to the proposed works, subject to conditions.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other relevant planning polices and material considerations, it was considered that the proposal be approved.

The Committee granted listed building consent, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other issues that might arise, provided the issues were not substantive

LA04/2025/1135/F - Demolition of first floor rear return, first floor rear extension and additional site works - 57 Knock Eden Park

The Principal Planning Officer summarised the application and stated that the proposal was compliant with the relevant housing and design policies, built heritage policies and the residential extensions and alterations supporting planning guidance.

She reported that there were existing extensions of a similar scale located in the area and that, on balance, the proposed extension was considered acceptable. She added that no third-party objections had been received.

She stated that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

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

Chairperson

F284

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th February, 2026

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Mr. O. Crolly, Local Energy Systems Advisor;
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate); and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was recorded from Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th February.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in Item 2a, UPSURGE EU Horizon Project Update, in that she was employed by Queen's University Belfast, but she advised that she did not feel it was necessary to leave the room for the item.

Installation of Solar PV on Donegal Pass Community Centre

The Local Energy Systems Advisor presented the Committee with the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To provide an update on delivery of the solar photovoltaic (PV) installations on Donegal Pass Community Centre - funded through the Shared Island Fund.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note that:

- I. €46,620 was secured from the Shared Island Fund to install solar PV on Donegal Pass Community Centre with an additional €4,500 secured allowing for the installation of battery storage;**
- II. Donegal Pass Community centre will be used as a test site to explore renewable energy generation potential for other council sites; and**
- III. Engagement is planned with the centre's users to build awareness about the advantages of solar PV.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

In 2023 Belfast City Council partnered with Cork City Council on a Shared Island funded feasibility study that assessed the solar PV potential on a number of high consuming council sites in both Cork and Belfast. In Belfast, the potential solar PV generation for 25 council owned buildings was estimated and linked with electricity consumption.

The results of the study were then used to complete a joint application with Cork City Council last summer to access capital funding to install solar PV on three community centres in Belfast (Donegall Pass Community Centre) and Cork (Fairhill Fairfield Community Association and St. Vincent's Hurling and Football Club). One of the conditions of the funding was that it had to have a community focus. These community buildings were selected due to their high potential solar PV generation matched to high energy consumption levels as highlighted in the feasibility study.

3.2 Progress to date

The panels have since been installed and have the potential to generate 37,898kWh/year against a current energy consumption of approximately 19,000kWh/year (ie the panels will produce approximately double the amount of energy currently used). This would reduce carbon emissions in the city by approximately 13 tonnes CO₂e/kWh annually (equivalent to charging a smart phone 120,000 times) and save around £7000 per year on the electricity bill. A further application was submitted to request additional funding to purchase batteries to store excess electricity generated

during times of high generation and low usage. The aim is to use the Donegal Pass Community Centre to test the workings of solar array and battery storage and explore its potential on other council sites across the estate.

3.3 Funding process

Belfast City Council (Property and Projects) issued the tenders for the installation of the panels. The tender included the replacement of the electric board with a separate additional section for the quotation of retrofitting of battery equipment. The battery installation was not part of the initial grant offer, however the opportunity to access reserve funding arose and the council was able to take advantage of this to purchase battery storage.

One of the main conditions of the funding was that the project had to be completed within 18 months (by February 2026) and it has been completed successfully on time.

3.4 Community engagement

The Climate team is currently working with the Energy Manager, outreach staff and community centre staff to engage with the centre's users to build awareness about the benefits of the solar panels, how they reduce carbon emissions from the centre and save money allowing for funds to be redirected to other activities.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

The project was funded through a €51,120 grant from the Shared Island Fund.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

During discussion, a Member requested that information be provided to the Committee illustrating the percentages of cost savings which had been generated from the solar PV on Council sites across the City.

A further Member queried the potential use of geothermal energy in the City. In response, the Climate Commissioner advised that officers had an upcoming meeting with Causeway Geothermal regarding a high-level feasibility study.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 12th February, 2026**

After discussion, the Committee noted that:

- i. €46,620 had been secured from the Shared Island Fund to install solar PV on Donegal Pass Community Centre with an additional €4,500 secured allowing for the installation of battery storage;
- ii. Donegal Pass Community centre would be used as a test site to explore renewable energy generation potential for other council sites;
- iii. Engagement was planned with the centre's users to build awareness about the advantages of solar PV; and
- iv. The rescheduled site visit to Leeds, regarding the District Heating Network, was being planned for as soon as possible after elections, which were taking place in Leeds on 20th May, 2026, and that the agreed dates would be circulated to Members in due course.

Update on the GROW Community Garden

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor provided the Committee with an update on the €30,000 Growing and Greening capital program, funded through the Shared Island Fund, which aimed to support community-led sustainable urban food growing and biodiversity initiatives in Belfast.

The program, developed in partnership with Cork City Council, Wild Belfast, Brink!, and Belfast Healthy Cities, focused on enhancing the GROW NI site at The Waterworks.

It included the installation of innovative facilities such as a solar energy array, a 200litre hot composting system, a community shelter, and a composting toilet. The upgrades aimed to extend the teaching season, increase volunteer engagement, and serve as a demonstrator for other community projects. The capital investments totalled £21,351.

The Members were advised that the solar energy array would quadruple energy generation, while the hot composter would reduce composting costs and time. The community shelter would enable workshops to be held year-round, potentially doubling the number of participants. The composting toilet aligned with the ecological values of the project and addresses practical challenges.

The project was on track for completion by the end of February 2026, with plans to utilise any remaining funds for additional relevant capital items.

The Committee was advised that the GROW NI site had also been selected as one of four satellite sites for the EU Horizon-funded UPSURGE project, which focused on urban sustainability. The designation allowed the site to serve as a test bed for innovative solutions, such as the solar energy system and composting toilet, and share knowledge with other community growing initiatives.

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The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor explained that a knowledge-sharing event was planned for February 2026 to showcase the project's achievements. The event would include demonstrations of the hot composter and tours of the upgraded site, aiming to inspire other community groups and council staff to adopt similar sustainable practices across the City.

In response to a Member's query, the Project Support Officer outlined why the Team had purchased the particular hot composter, highlighting that, as the site was close to housing, there were certain health and safety considerations which had to be taken into consideration, as well as its potential to produce long-term savings.

In response to a further Member's query, she confirmed that the site was scalable and that the items on site were moveable.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. the installation of facilities to increase the volunteer base and extend the teaching season of a community growing project led by GROW NI at the Waterworks site including a solar energy array, an innovative hot composting system, a shelter for hosting workshops, and a composting toilet;
- ii. that the site was also one of four sites selected to serve as a satellite site to the demonstrator site at Lower Botanic funded through the EU Horizon funded UPSURGE project;
- iii. the support of community partners Wild Belfast, Brink! and Belfast Healthy Cities in project design and management;
- iv. the consultative processes used for selecting the site and the cross-departmental collaboration and support provided across Council departments to ensure the project was delivered on time;
- v. the opportunity for sharing knowledge, replicating across other community growing sites, with a knowledge sharing event scheduled for February 2026;
- vi. that delivery was scheduled for completion by the end of February 2026 and that opportunities for utilising any underspend were being pursued; and
- vii. a final report would be brought back to Committee in due course.

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Request to Present at a Future Meeting

**Great Big Green Week –
Councillor T. Brooks to raise**

At the request of the Members, the Committee agreed to invite Ms. Sara McCracken, Climate Coalition, to a future meeting to present on the Great Big Green Week which would take place in June.

Issue Raised in Advance by a Member

UPSURGE project - Councillor T. Brooks

Councillor T. Brooks posed a number of questions in relation to the UPSURGE project at Botanic.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy advised the Committee that the “Pitches Programme – Proposed Phasing and Implementation Plan” would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March, which would include an impact assessment on the UPSURGE project.

A number of Members stated that they were of the understanding that the UPSURGE project was a learning project, for meanwhile use and that there should be no surprise that the site would be brought back into use as a pitch.

The Climate Commissioner stated that the agreement surrounding the UPSURGE project pre-dated most of the Members and Officers present and that discussions had been held with the EU and the UPSURGE Project Manager to better understand the history of the project and the obligations in the grant agreement.

During further discussion, where some Members raised concerns regarding the legal processes and ramifications if the site was to be brought back into use as a pitch, the Committee agreed that it be provided with an update in respect of the UPSURGE project, considering the questions raised, in due course.

Chairperson

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 24th February, 2026

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor and McCullough; and
Councillors Bower, Bradley, Carson,
de Faoite, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas, Long,
Lyons, Magee, McAteer, McCallin, McCormick,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin and Murphy.

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

Apologies

There were no apologies received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th January, 2026, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th February, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to the motion 'Call for the NI Executive to Introduce a Basic Income for Artists Scheme' in that his wife was a Northern Ireland Executive Minister. Councillor R. McLaughlin also declared an interest in relation to the same motion in that his partner was a Junior Minister within the Northern Ireland Executive. The Members did not participate in the discussion or vote on that motion.

Motions

Call for the NI Executive to Introduce a Basic Income for Artists Scheme

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

“That the Committee agrees that the motion, which had been proposed by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, be adopted.”

**Standards and Business Committee,
Tuesday, 24th February, 2026**

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin,

“That the Committee agrees that the motion, which had been proposed by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, be referred to Council for debate at its meeting on Monday 2nd March, 2026, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.”

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the motion, which had been proposed by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) and seconded by Councillor de Faoite, be referred to Council for debate at its meeting on Monday 2nd March, 2026, with no restriction to be placed on the number of speakers.

Ormeau Arts Centre

The Committee noted that the motion, proposed by Councillor de Faoite and seconded by Councillor McKeown, would be referred, in the first instance, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes

The Committee agreed that, in accordance with Standing Order 14, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 2nd March, 2026, for ratification.

Chairperson

Call for the NI Executive to Introduce a Basic Income for Artists Scheme

This Council notes that:

The arts, culture and creative sectors are central to Belfast's social fabric, wellbeing, identity, and local economy.

Many artists, performers and creative workers in Belfast and across the North continue to experience insecure, low and irregular incomes, worsened by the long-term impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

The Irish Government introduced a Basic Income for Artists pilot in 2022, providing an unconditional weekly payment to artists and creative workers, which has been independently evaluated as improving financial stability, wellbeing, and time spent on creative practice.

The Irish Government has now committed to making this scheme permanent, recognising the structural precarity faced by those working in the creative industries.

This Council believes that:

- Artists and creative workers should not be forced out of their professions due to financial insecurity.
- Belfast's creative sector is a vital public good, contributing to community cohesion, regeneration, tourism, mental health, youth engagement and cultural life.
- A Basic Income for Artists scheme in the north would help protect creative livelihoods, retain local talent, and strengthen the city's cultural ecosystem.

This Council resolves to:

- Call on the Executive to introduce and fund a Basic Income for Artists scheme, modelled on the Irish Government's programme, providing regular, unconditional income support to eligible artists and creative workers.
- Request that the Minister for Communities lead on the development of this scheme, in partnership with the Department for the Economy and the Department of Finance, engaging directly with the arts and creative sectors in its design.
- Write to the First Minister and deputy First Minister urging that this proposal be treated as a priority within the Executive's Programme for Government and budget-setting process.

Proposer: The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty)

Seconder: Councillor de Faoite

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