

Public Document Pack

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

28th September, 2026

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

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

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Thursday, 1st October, 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 - 12)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 13 - 40)
7. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 41 - 46)
8. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 47 - 62)
9. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 63 - 66)
10. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 67 - 72)
11. Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 73 - 76)
12. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 77 - 90)
13. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 91 - 92)
14. Notices of Motion
 - a) Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men (Pages 93 - 94)

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

John Walsh

Chief Executive

Council

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Tuesday, 1st September, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in relation to the item 'Planning Update' in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillor Black declared an interest in relation to the item 'Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)' in that she was employed by Grosvenor Community Centre.

Councillors Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting' in that they were employed by or associated with organisations which were in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillors Duffy, Groogan and Verner also declared an interest in relation to the item 'Area-Based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building' in that they were employed by or associated with organisations which had applied for funding.

Councillor Nelson declared an interest in relation the item 'Belfast Hills Partnership - Request for Increase to Annual Funding', in that he was on the Board of the partnership.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

He also declared an interest in relation to the item 'Correspondence received – Department of Justice – Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler and E-Scooter Use in Belfast Response' in that his partner was named in the correspondence.

As the above-mentioned items did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item 'Request for Illumination of City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026' in that he worked for the Public Health Agency and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

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

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update' in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme. As this item did not become the subject of debate or discussion, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Notices of Motion

Councillors Long and R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to the motions 'Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza' and 'Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men' in that their partners were members of the Northern Ireland Executive and left the meeting whilst those items were under consideration.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor R.M. Donnelly),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 1st and 10th July, 2026, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, congratulated and thanked all staff and volunteers for their work and contribution to the successful delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann which was held in the city in August. A number of Members echoed the comments of the Lord Mayor.

The Deputy Lord Mayor stated that he had recently attended the Intercultural Community Development Foundation's 'Young People Talent Showcase' which celebrated the creativity and skills of young people. He shared some of the comments of the young people from a range of cultural backgrounds on their experiences of living in Belfast.

Councillor Lyons thanked all those who had contributed to the rediscovery, restoration and rededication of the grave in Balmoral Cemetery of John McCredy McAlery who had introduced association football to Ireland in 1878 and had founded Cliftonville Football Club in 1879.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

Alderman Lawlor marked Orange Victims Day, which remembered members of the Orange Institution who had been murdered and extended his thoughts to the victims' friends and families.

Councillor Murray referred to the wide range festivals which took place within the city over the summer period, and which highlighted the city's diversity and support for culture, music and the arts.

Councillor de Faoite highlighted that a fundraising gig would take place at the First Presbyterian Church on Rosemary Street on 4th September, 2026, in aid of Muscular Dystrophy Ireland.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor extended condolences on behalf of the Council to the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, Jim Girvan, on the recent passing of his sister.

Councillors M. Donnelly and de Faoite expressed their condolences to the family of retired Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer Eoin Doyle who had recently passed. At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Lord Mayor agreed to write to the family on behalf of the Council to extend its condolences.

Councillor de Faoite also expressed his condolences on the recent passing of Dolly Parton and commended her for her charitable work and efforts, including the Imagination Library programme which gifted free books to children.

Congratulations

The Lord Mayor congratulated Councillor Flynn and his husband on their recent marriage and wished them well for the future.

Councillor Lyons and Brennan congratulated the Antrim Ladies teams which won the All-Ireland Junior Football and the All-Ireland Intermediate Camogie Championships in August. At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Lord Mayor agreed to mark the recent successes of the Antrim teams with a reception in City Hall.

Councillor M. Donnelly congratulated West Belfast's Coran Madden, formerly of Cliftonville Football Club, who had recently signed his first professional contract with English Premier League club Brentford.

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated McArthur Nursery School which had celebrated its 90th anniversary in June; Nettlefield Primary School which would be celebrating in its 90th anniversary in September; and Euston Street Primary School and Nursery Unit which would also be celebrating in September to mark its centenary.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated Bredagh GAC's senior reserve hurlers who had recently won the Betsy Grey Shield. At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Lord Mayor agreed to mark the recent success of Bredagh GAC's senior reserve hurlers.

Councillor Kelly congratulated Garyn McAllister from Sandy Row who had won a bronze medal for Team NI in the men's 90kg boxing at the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. At the request of Councillor Kelly, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations to Garyn on his recent success.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

Requests to address the Council

Gaels Against Genocide – Notice of Motion
‘Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza’

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the notice of motion on the agenda ‘Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza’.

The Council acceded to the request, and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Michael Doherty and Mr. Aidan Thornbury of Gaels Against Genocide.

Mr. Doherty highlighted that the United Nations had reported that 94 percent of hospitals within Gaza had been either damaged or destroyed, which had left pregnant women and newborn babies without essential care. He stated that, in response, a fundraising campaign had been established across Ireland in 2024 which had raised funds to enable the construction of three medically approved mobile maternity units in Cairo, Egypt, which would then be transported to Gaza. He advised that, due to the ongoing border restrictions, the Israeli Government had prevented the transport of those mobile maternity units from Cairo to Gaza, which had denied women and newborn babies in Gaza the access to urgent and potentially life-saving care.

Mr. Thornbury concluded by calling on the Council to support the notice of motion on the agenda and put pressure on the Executive, the Irish Government and the UK Government to urge the Israeli Government to allow those mobile maternity units unrestricted entry into Gaza.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for attending and they left the meeting.

Northern Ireland Food To Go Association –
Christmas Market

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the item within the minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, ‘Christmas Market Expansion Plans’.

The Council acceded to the request, and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Michael Henderson, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Food To Go Association.

Mr. Henderson welcomed the potential expansion of the Christmas Market but stated that all effort should be made to ensure that any potential expansion plans focused on providing meaningful opportunities for local traders. He congratulated the Council on the successful delivery of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and highlighted that it had demonstrated the appetite and demand for local traders and artisan vendors. He added that the Christmas period was an opportunity to showcase the significant contribution made by local traders to the city’s offering and visitor experience. He outlined some of the challenges which local independent traders had faced during the Christmas period, including costs and lack of opportunities, and called on the Council to prioritise local producers and vendors when considering any potential expansion plans.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Henderson for attending and he left the meeting.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

**Open Doors UK and Ireland – Notice of Motion
‘Open Doors World Watch 2026’**

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the notice of motion on the agenda ‘Open Doors World Watch 2026’.

The Council acceded to the request, and the Lord Mayor welcomed to the meeting Mr. Chris Phillips, Northern Ireland Lead for Open Doors UK and Ireland.

Mr. Phillips informed the Council that Open Doors UK and Ireland had supported persecuted Christians around the world by providing practical aid, advocacy and Christian resources. He advised that each year Open Doors had published a ‘World Watch List’, which ranked the countries where Christians had faced the most extreme persecution. He reported that 388 million Christians worldwide had faced high levels of persecution and discrimination, and that during the most recent reporting period, of the 4,849 Christians which had been killed, 3,490 of those had occurred in Nigeria. He highlighted the attacks faced by Christian communities in Nigeria and need for the UK Government to support and encourage the Nigerian Government to ensure the protection of all vulnerable communities. He added that freedom of religion was a universal right and that people of all faiths and those of no religious belief should be safeguarded. Mr. Phillips concluded by calling on the Council to support the notice of motion on the agenda which would be a significant step to highlight the issue, display solidarity with the residents of Belfast who had family, friends or church connections to those affected, and to urge the UK Government to prioritise the freedom of religion or belief in its foreign policy and diplomatic engagement and press the Nigerian Government to take action to ensure that vulnerable communities are protected and that those responsible for violence are brought to justice.

The Lord Mayor thanked Mr. Phillips for attending and he left the meeting.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor I. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

Amendments

**Request for Illumination of City Hall
to Mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026**

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Request for Illumination of City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day 2026”, be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees not to illuminate City Hall to mark International Safe Abortion Day on 28th September, 2026.”

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

On a vote, eighteen Members voted for the proposal, thirty-six against and one no vote and it was declared lost.

Belfast Region City Deal - Annual Report

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Belfast Region City Deal - Annual Report”, be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to defer consideration of the report to enable further information to be brought back to the Committee in respect of the AI Adoption Programme, including details of the fund and the environmental and economic impact.”

On a vote, five Members voted for the proposal, forty-nine against and two no votes and it was declared lost.

**Independently Managed Community Centres
(IMCC's)**

At the request of Councillor Brennan, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)”, be amended to provide that funding would continue until the review of the IMCC's was complete.

TEO Rapid Response Funding

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “TEO Rapid Response Funding”, be amended to provide that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources in respect of the removal of any offensive signage displayed throughout the city.

Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan”, be amended to provide that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which would provide further information on the expenditure associated with the implementation of the Irish Language Policy.

**Minutes of the Disability Working
Group of 14th August, 2026**

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Minutes of the Disability Working Group of 14th August, 2026”, be amended to provide that a workshop be held for all Members by the end of October in relation to the delivery of a strategic roadmap to create an accessible city by 2035.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

**Correspondence received –
Removal of Ring-fenced Protection for
Youth Service Funding – Department of Education**

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, under the heading “Correspondence received - Removal of Ring-fenced Protection for Youth Service Funding - Department of Education”, be amended to provide that the Council writes back to the Minister of Education to highlight its concern that the Education Authority’s youth services budget would no longer be ring-fenced and to call on the Education Authority to ensure that funding for youth services would be protected.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st August, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Call-In - Proposed New Crematorium at Roselawn

The Council was provided with a copy of the legal opinion which was obtained in relation to the call-in of the Council decision of 20th February, 2026, in respect of the proposed new crematorium at Roselawn.

The Council agreed to defer consideration of the call-in and that it be referred back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026 be approved and adopted.”

Amendments

Resources and Fleet/Waste Management – Update

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, under the heading “Resources and Fleet/Waste Management - Update”, be amended to provide that, in consultation with Council staff, union representatives and elected Members, a street cleansing strategy be developed and brought back for the Committee’s consideration within eight weeks.

**DAERA Consultation re: Draft Air Quality (Amendment)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, under the heading “DAERA Consultation re: Draft Air Quality (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026”, be amended to provide that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to odour complaints.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

**Abandoned Bins Protocol and Improvements
to Bulky Waste Collections**

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, under the heading “Abandoned Bins Protocol and Improvements to Bulky Waste Collections”, be amended to provide that additional resourcing of the Council’s Dog Warden Service be considered as part of the rate-setting process for 2027/28.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the People and Communities Committee of 11th August, 2026, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 26th August, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the special Licensing Committee of 22nd July, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 18th August, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Doherty, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 13th August, 2026 be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough and

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 25th July, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Notices of Motion

Mobile Maternity Units for Gaza

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Doherty,
Seconded by Councillor McCusker,

“This Council notes with grave concern the continuing genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and the devastating impact on pregnant women, newborn babies and families requiring urgent medical care.

The Council further notes that three mobile maternity units, funded through fundraising initiatives across Ireland, including significant efforts by Gaels Against Genocide and communities here in Belfast and the North, have been developed to provide safe and secure maternity care for expectant mothers in Gaza.

The Council is deeply concerned that these units are being blocked from entering Gaza, despite the urgent need for maternity and newborn care.

This Council believes that humanitarian medical aid must never be blocked, and that pregnant women and babies must be protected in all circumstances.

The Council agrees to write to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and all Executive Ministers, calling on the Northern Ireland Executive to make urgent representations to the Irish Government, UK Government and relevant international bodies to secure the immediate and unrestricted entry of these mobile maternity units into Gaza.”

On a vote, thirty-eight Members voted for the motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Open Doors World Watch 2026

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

“Belfast City Council notes with profound concern that more than 388 million Christians around the world face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.

The Council further notes the findings of the Open Doors World Watch List 2026, including that 4,849 Christians were killed worldwide during the reporting period because of their Christian identity, of whom 3,490 were killed in Nigeria.

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

The Council expresses particular concern at the extreme levels of violence, persecution and displacement faced by Christians in Nigeria and recognises that these events will also be of particular concern to members of Belfast's Christian and Nigerian communities, including those with family and community connections to Nigeria.

The Council further notes the recent European Parliament resolution condemning the ongoing persecution of Christians in Nigeria and calling for greater protection and accountability.

Therefore, this Council commits to:

- Endorsing the Open Doors World Watch List 2026 Advocacy Report;
- Condemning the persecution, discrimination and violence faced by Christians around the world;
- Writing to the UK Government urging it to continue to promote and protect freedom of religion or belief as a leading priority in foreign policy and diplomatic engagement;
- Urging the UK Government, through its engagement with Nigeria, to press the Nigerian Government to take effective action to protect vulnerable communities, tackle the culture of impunity surrounding attacks, and ensure that those responsible for violence against Christians and other civilians are brought to justice; and
- Highlighting the findings of the World Watch List 2026 and the plight of persecuted."

Amendment

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

"The Council acknowledges that Christians continue to experience persecution and discrimination in many parts of the world. It equally recognises the persecution faced by people from other religious traditions, as well as those targeted because they hold no religious belief.

The Council unequivocally supports freedom of religion or belief for everyone, wherever they may be.

The Council welcomes the most recent United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution: A/RES/80/202 on protecting the right to 'Freedom of religion or belief'

The Council notes with deep concern the rise in hate crime and hate incidents across the North, particularly those directed towards minority ethnic communities, religious communities and members of the LGBT+ community.

The Council unequivocally condemns all forms of racism, sectarianism, religious intolerance, homophobia and other identity-based hatred. An

**Meeting of Council,
Tuesday, 1st September, 2026**

attack on any community is an attack on the values of equality, dignity and mutual respect.”

The amendment was put to the Council and on a vote, twenty-six Members voted for the amendment and seventeen against and it was declared carried.

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

**Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing
Radicalisation and Supporting the
De-Radicalisation of Young Men**

The Council agreed that the motion standing in the name of Councillor Whyte and seconded by Councillor de Faoite on ‘Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men’ be deferred to its meeting on 1st October, 2026.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th September, 2026

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor I. McLaughlin (Chairperson);
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting,
Carson, Cobain, Doran, de Faoite, Garrett,
Long, Lyons, Maghie, R. McLaughlin, Murray,
Murphy, Nelson, Ó Néill, Smyth and Verner.
- In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport and
Open Spaces and Street Scene;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st August, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September, subject to the following amendments:

- ***Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCC's)*** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that funding would continue until the review of the IMCC's was complete.
- ***TEO Rapid Response Funding*** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources in respect of the removal of any offensive signage displayed throughout the city.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

- ***Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan*** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee which would provide further information on the expenditure associated with the implementation of the Irish Language Policy.
- ***Minutes of the Disability Working Group of 14th August, 2026*** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that a workshop be held for all Members by the end of October in relation to the delivery of a strategic roadmap to create an accessible city by 2035.
- ***Correspondence received – Removal of Ring-fenced Protection for Youth Service Funding – Department of Education*** - the Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that the Council writes back to the Minister of Education to highlight its concern that the Education Authority's youth services budget would no longer be ring-fenced and to call on the Education Authority to ensure that funding for youth services would be protected.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to item 2.g) North Foreshore, Councillor Long declared an interest, in that his wife was the Justice Minister, Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest under the same item, in that his partner was a Junior Minister, and they both left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

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.

Request to Present – NI Water PC28 Business Plan

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from Northern Ireland Water at a future meeting.

Restricted Items

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

Revenue Estimates and Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Committee considered an update on the key issues influencing the rate setting process for 2027/28.

The Committee:

- noted the challenges since the last update to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting;
- agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2027; and
- noted that the next Transformation and Efficiency Workshop had been scheduled for 15th October, at 5pm.

Area-based Community Planning and Community Wealth Building

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty provided an update on the proposed next steps in relation to the development of area-based community plans alongside enabling communities to bring forward proposals to transform local places through demonstrator projects.

The Committee agreed to allocate funding to take forward the proposals submitted for South Belfast, as outlined in 3.6 of the report.

Governance Review update

The Committee noted that a report on the Governance Review would be presented for consideration in October. It was further noted that any governance issues identified by the Committee during discussion of other agenda items could be incorporated into that report for consideration.

Belfast Alleyways Transformation programme update

The Director of Resources, Fleet, Transport and Open Spaces and Street Scene presented an update on the 'Belfast Alleyways Transformation' programme, including work that was commencing on the piloting and scaling phase.

During the discussion, and in response to a request from Members, the Director advised that the resilience and sustainability of the programme would be included in future update reports. He also noted that the potential future use of alley gates could be addressed as part of engagement with community groups, and that other options for closing-off access could also be explored.

After discussion, the Committee:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

1. Noted the progress on the Belfast Alleyway Transformation programme, including the appointment of the Programme manager;
2. Approved the allocation of £300,000 to support the 800+ resident engagement and pilot;
3. Approved £100,000 to the alleyway assessment and options model; and
4. Noted the visit of the Bloomberg team to Belfast in October.

Leisure Update

The Director of Property and Projects provided an update on Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, the last project of the £105m Leisure Transformation Programme.

She advised the Committee that approval was also sought on the proposed USPs at Shankill and Whiterock, which had been agreed to be brought forward under the next phase of the Council's leisure programme, together with future site optimisation at both sites.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that the planning application for the current Girdwood Plan be progressed in relation to the sporting facility.

After discussion, the Committee:

£105million Leisure Transformation Programme - Girdwood

- noted the update on Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility and agreed that the planning application for the current Girdwood Plan be progressed in relation to the sporting facility.

Next phase of leisure – Shankill, Whiterock

- agreed to the proposed USPs for Shankill and Whiterock;
- noted the update in respect of site optimisation plans for Shankill and Whiterock;
- agreed that further sites visits be undertaken reflecting the proposed USPs at Shankill and Whiterock; and
- Shankill – agreed to progress the refurbishment of the reception area at Shankill and introduction of new Padel product in the main hall in Shankill, as an interim measure ahead of the future Shankill leisure transformation project to be funded by GLL as part of their ongoing investment programme.

The Committee also noted that a report on how smaller community leisure centres could be supported would be submitted to a future meeting.

New Crematorium Update

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report until a special meeting on 2nd October so that further information could be provided.

North Foreshore Update

(Following advice from the City Solicitor, the Members of the Planning Committee: Councillors Brennan, Carson, Doran, Garrett, Lyons and Murphy left the meeting.)

The Director of Property and Projects provided an update on the proposed development at North Foreshore.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Verner,

That the Committee agrees to grant approval for an application to be made to Department for Communities in relation to the disposal of the land in accordance with the details of the report.

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

Accordingly, the Committee:

- noted the proposed development at the Northforeshore;
- granted approval for an application to be made to Department for Communities in relation to the disposal of the land in accordance with the details of the report; and
- noted that this was subject to further due diligence and the necessary Council and Ministerial approvals.

Bye Laws Update - City Hall

The City Solicitor provided a verbal update on the Bye Laws at the City Hall.

The Committee:

1. Agreed that the signage at City Hall would be updated to ensure that the public are aware of the Bye Laws;
2. Agreed that the only signage/material erected by Belfast City Council would be permissible at City Hall; and
3. Noted that the Bye Laws only applied to City Hall grounds, including its railings. Therefore, the cobbled area remained unaffected.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

The Committee also noted that a report on the wider enforcement of the Bye Laws would be submitted to the Committee in October for consideration.

Irish Language Policy – Implementation Plan

The City Solicitor provided the Committee with an update in relation to the Irish Language Policy Implementation Plan.

In response to a Member's request to defer consideration of the report pending the provision of further financial information, the Democratic Services Manager advised that, as the report was presented to provide an update and for notation only, a proposal to defer its consideration would not be competent.

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

Minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee noted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 10th September, 2026.

The Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services provided an update on a request which had been received in relation to the use of a Council contractor.

The Committee agreed to allow access to the Council's contractor by the Department for Infrastructure.

The Committee also agreed to delegate authority to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, where necessary, to consider and determine any future requests for the use of this contractor and noted that further updates would be provided to Party Group Leaders.

Contracts Update

In relation to the "Curation of Fringe Programme for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann" tender (Table 1), the Committee agreed that a report on the feedback from the Fleadh Fringe Programme 2026 be submitted to a future meeting before consideration of that tender.

The Committee approved the other recommendations as outlined in the report.

Matters referred from Council/Notices of Motion

Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update

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

The City Solicitor highlighted that officers were exploring measures to improve the management, tracking and reporting of Member Motions and Issues Raised in Advance. In order to establish clear arrangements for the management of Motions and Issues

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

Raised in Advance that related to correspondence, it was proposed that if no response had been received after a period of three months, a follow up correspondence would be sent by officers. After a further three month period, any Motions and Issues Raised in Advance that had received no or partial responses would be reported back to committee. In this way, Motions and Issues Raised in Advance would be addressed in a timely fashion.

During discussion, one Member requested that the motion titled Cost of Living (ref 243) remained open to enable a further report to be submitted to the Committee.

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that it was responsible for;
- Agreed to the closure of the following motions 51, 375, 394, 417, 457, 460, 479 and 514;
- Agreed the proposals for the timely management of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance; and
- Agreed that the Cost of Living motion (ref 243) remained open to enable a further report to be submitted to the Committee on a review of the Council's Hardship Fund, to include a horizon scan of initiatives being undertaken by other councils, future options and associated costings, and engagement with the Department for Communities regarding resourcing arrangements pending the introduction of an Anti-Poverty Strategy.

**Notice of Motion – Ensuring Fair Access to Funding
for Faith-Based Organisations Tackling Addiction**

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of report or summary of main issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Notice of Motion received for the meeting of the Council on 2nd February 2026 in relation to Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisations Tackling Addiction.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note that, following a review of the Council's current funding arrangements and eligibility criteria, there does not appear to be any unnecessary obstacles that would exclude faith-based organisations from applying for and receiving support.**

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 Members will recall that a Notice of Motion was received for the meeting of the Council on 2nd February 2026 in relation to Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisation Tackling Addictions, the contents of the report are as follows:

Ensuring Fair Access to Funding for Faith-Based Organisations Tackling Addiction

“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% 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.”

Proposer: Alderman Dean A. McCullough
Seconder: Councillor Sarah Bunting

The motion calls upon the Council to review funding arrangements and eligibility criteria.

Legal Services have reviewed the Council's current funding arrangements and the eligibility criteria outlined therein and have concluded that there does not appear to be any unnecessary obstacles that would exclude faith-based organisations from applying for funding. Whilst it is recognised that the eligibility criteria of certain funding streams might differ slightly due to the nature of that particular funding stream, Legal Services have been unable to identify any that would preclude Faith Based Organisations from applying.

Members should note that this conclusion is based on an overarching view of faith-based organisations and their governance structure against the Council's funding criteria. Legal Services have reviewed the governance structure of Teen Challenge Belfast as highlighted in the original notice of motion, and this review supports the conclusion that they would be eligible to apply.

Members should further note that although Legal Services have concluded that there are no governance barriers to Faith-Based Organisations applying for funding, their proposed project would thereafter be subject to the same assessment against project specific eligibility criteria which are applied to all organisations on a project by project basis before grant funding decisions are made.

3.2 Financial and Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

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

None associated with this report.

The Committee noted that, following a review of the Council's current funding arrangements and eligibility criteria, there did not appear to be any unnecessary obstacles that would exclude faith-based organisations from applying for and receiving support.

Strategic Issues/Belfast Agenda

Planning Update

The Committee noted the update on Major planning applications and applications that had been determined by the Planning Committee.

Northern Ireland's Draft Artificial Intelligence Strategy – Consultation

The Deputy Chief Executive provided the Committee with an overview of the Northern Ireland Draft Public Sector AI Strategy and sought approval for Belfast City Council's draft response to the consultation - which closed on 7th October, 2026.

She advised that the Council's response, as set out in [appendix one](#), sought to strengthen the Strategy through greater recognition of local government, stronger adoption mechanisms, improved collaboration and a continued focus on inclusive growth, environmental considerations, trust and responsible innovation.

During discussion, Members raised concerns, including energy costs, AI bias and EU legislation.

After discussion, the Committee approved the draft response to the Northern Ireland Draft Public Sector AI Strategy as the Council's corporate response on the matter and noted that Parties could submit their own responses independently, if required.

Regional Balance Bill Call for Evidence

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members for the attached response to the Economy Committee's Call for Evidence in relation the Regional Balance Bill.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Consider and approve the submission attached at Appendix 1, as the Council's response to the NI Assembly's Committee for the Economy.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 The [Regional Balance Bill](#) is a Private Member's Bill introduced by Foyle MLA Sinéad McLaughlin to the Northern Ireland Assembly on Monday 8 June 2026. The Bill seeks to improve regional economic balance across Northern Ireland. It seeks to do so by imposing a duty on the NI Executive to develop and implement a framework setting out how disparities in regional economic performance and living standards are to be addressed and to review the effectiveness of the framework.**

The Northern Ireland Assembly's Committee for the Economy launched a call for evidence and is inviting individuals and organisations to share their views on the Regional Balance

Bill. The evidence received will play a role in informing the Committee's scrutiny work, which will include evidence sessions with stakeholders; clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, and recommendations to the sponsor of the Bill and the Department for the Economy.

- 3.2 The Bill gives statutory recognition to regional balance (i.e. the difference in economic performance and living standards between geographic regions) as an Executive-wide priority, requires the Executive to adopt and maintain a Regional Balance Strategic Framework, imposes a duty on departments to pay due regard to the Framework when developing policies, strategies and plans, and requires annual reporting to, and scrutiny by, the Assembly. The Department for the Economy (DfE) is given a lead role in monitoring, reporting, issuing guidance and conducting research to support delivery.

This latter point is important, as the Bill is seeking to balance recognition that departments need to work together in the context of an overall, strategic framework with the expertise and lead responsibility resting with the DfE. This means that the Framework will have a clear owner in terms of reporting and recommending improvements, whilst ensuring the Executive drives it across the board.

- 3.3 During the initial 12-week online public consultation conducted between November 2024 and February 2025 (which received 115 responses) there was strong support for many of the provisions in the Bill. However, concerns were raised about the potential impact on Belfast as an economic driver and the possible neglect of the region's capital city, should government become more focused on 'left-behind' places. This is a point the Bill Sponsor is alive to, but notes that the legislation is seeking to drive greater regional balance and lift opportunity and standards of living overall, giving the Executive appropriate discretion to make policy choices on that and justify them accordingly. It is the Bill Sponsor's firm belief that regional balance will result in an improved settlement for left-behind areas, whether within the capital city which contains an extensive share of more deprived wards, especially in North and West Belfast, or more peripheral areas such as the North-West.

It was highlighted that regional economic statistics are limited, and any reliance will need to take account of the fact that small regions mean statistics are distorted by the fact many people live in one region and work in another, while a business may be based in one region but employ people from throughout NI or further afield. The Bill Sponsor considers that these are important contributions which should be addressed by the Department through more effective data collation and

improved monitoring. In fulfilling their responsibilities under the Bill, Departments can set out their operating assumptions and approach to any targets they have been assigned.

- 3.4 The proposed response (attached at Appendix 1) supports the principle of addressing regional disparities but raises concerns that the Regional Balance Bill, as currently framed, could unintentionally negatively impact Belfast's role as Northern Ireland's primary economic driver as set out in the Regional Development Strategy.

We set out five key points for the Committee's consideration:

1. The Belfast economy has performed well over recent years;
 2. The city's strong economic performance drives growth across the whole region;
 3. The city's economic performance does not automatically translate into improved living standards or economic benefit for all its residents;
 4. Research consistently shows that cities drive productivity; and
 5. Belfast has spent years playing catch-up – we must maintain that focus rather than take our eye off the ball.
- 3.5 The Council argues that Belfast's economic competitors are comparable UK, Irish and European cities rather than other parts of Northern Ireland and warns that diverting policy attention or investment away from the city could weaken overall regional prosperity. It highlights Belfast's significant contribution to the economy, accounting for around one-third of Northern Ireland's GVA, 30% of all jobs and more than a quarter of net job growth since 2013, while also serving as the region's main hub for inward investment, innovation and high-value sectors.
- 3.6 The draft response emphasises that strong economic performance does not automatically translate into improved outcomes for all residents. Despite economic growth, Belfast contains some of Northern Ireland's most deprived communities, with six of the ten most deprived wards located in the city, significant skills deficits, high levels of economic inactivity and marked inequalities in employment, educational attainment and life expectancy. It therefore contends that any regional balance framework should consider both intra-city deprivation and objective need, alongside disparities between geographic regions.
- 3.7 Drawing on national and international evidence, the Council argues that cities are key drivers of productivity, investment and economic growth, and that policies should focus on

enabling places to realise their own economic potential as well as redistributing growth. The Council advocates an inclusive approach that strengthens Belfast's competitiveness while ensuring that economic benefits are more widely shared. The draft responses recommends that the Bill recognises Belfast's strategic economic role, avoid creating barriers to investment and infrastructure delivery, and ensure that efforts to reduce regional disparities are balanced with measures to raise overall economic performance and living standards across Northern Ireland.

3.8 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

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

The Bill's Explanatory and Financial Memorandum states: "An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken. Engagement between the Bill Sponsor and the Equality Commission on the outline proposal did not raise any potential adverse effects on initial reading and the Bill Sponsor is happy to engage on this further. Indeed, if the Bill contributes to achieving its policy objectives it may positively affect some groups subject to disadvantage. By promoting action to reduce geographic disparities, the Bill is expected to have positive equality impacts. Transparent reporting and a duty to pay due regard to the Framework support compliance with existing equality obligations. The Bill Sponsor is therefore satisfied that the Bill will not have an adverse effect on any of the groups identified in section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The duties imposed by the Bill will be subject to obligations under Section 75."

During discussion, Members raised concerns in relation to the limitations of the proposed response, together with the economic priorities and balance of investment within Belfast and across Northern Ireland.

The Committee approved the submission as outlined in [Appendix 1](#) of the report, as the Council's corporate response to the NI Assembly's Committee for the Economy and noted that individual Parties could submit separate responses, if they so wished.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme

The Committee:

Capital Programme Stage Movements

- **Corporate Staff Accommodation** – Duncrue - Agreed that the project be moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development 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.

Project Updates

- **Belfast Stories** – noted the project update provided and agreed that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of any tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) for the next phase of the project (up to the submission of the Full Business Case [FBC]) be progressed in order to ensure that the project remained on programme. The FBC would be brought back to the Committee in Q2 2027 for approval to submit to the Department, in line with the Contract for Funding (CFF).

Asset Management

The Committee:

- i) **Hannahstown Hill – Land Swap**
Approved a land swap between Belfast City Council and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in respect of lands situated at Hannahstown Hill
- ii) **Duncrue Industrial Estate – Boundary Rectification (Plot 17)**
Approved a Deed of Rectification being entered into, to regularise the physical boundary of Plot 17 under the Head Lease.
- iii) **Duncrue Estate – Deed of Variation (Plot 21)**
Approved the extension of the current term of the ground Lease at Plot 21 Duncrue Estate to an unexpired term of 125 years, from 1st November, 2026, and approved the variation of the rent to reflect the extended lease term and an amendment in the rent review cycle from 7 years to 5 years from November 2026.
- iv) **Clement Wilson Park – New Lease**
Approved entering into a new 5-year lease with DfI for the siting of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park.

Area Working Groups Update

The Committee considered the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Area Working Groups.

During the discussion, Members highlighted the need for capital investment to be distributed equitably across the city, including all constituencies, and emphasised that investment in the city centre should not be to the detriment of neighbourhood funding.

After discussion, the Committee approved the minutes of the following meetings:

- South Area Working Group – 24th August;
- West Area Working Group – 27th August, subject to the addition of the request for dog park facilities at Falls Park and Woodvale Park to be investigated;
- North Area Working Group – 2nd September, subject to the addition that authority be delegated to officers to undertake the necessary due diligence in respect of the allocated £5,000 Get Active NI Programme funding; and
- East Area Working Group – 3rd September.

Pitches Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the work ongoing in respect of pitches including the Pitches Strategy.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- the update on the Pitches Strategy Consultation;
- the update on current minor pitch improvement projects and agree the proposed projects for this year as outlined at 3.5 ;
- that a rolling programme of condition surveys is being commissioned to inform the development of a costed maintenance programme;
- that a detailed report will be brought to Committee next month with further detail on the £1m Partner

**Enhancement Fund, Pitches Implementation Plan and
Events Space;**

- that a response has been received from the Minister for Communities regarding the requirements under the new Northern Ireland Amateur Football League, National Conference League criteria and agree that officers meet with the IFA/Northern Ireland Amateur Football League to discuss the proposed National Conference League criteria.

3.0 Main Report

Pitch Strategy 2026 - 2036 Consultation

- 3.1 At its meeting on 30th April 2026, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the draft Pitches Strategy 2026 – 2036 and approved that the draft Strategy would be subject to formal consultation which would also consider any equality implications. Members will be aware of the significant consultation and engagement that has been undertaken as part of the work on the Pitches Strategy and on the agreed overarching Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy. The former included co-design, online surveys, as well as further focused surveys, public consultation events and interviews.
- 3.2 Members are asked to note that it is anticipated the consultation will open for 8 weeks via the Yoursay platform in mid-October, closing in December 2026. An equality screening document will also accompany the consultation along with a FAQ document.
- 3.3 It is estimated that feedback from the consultation will be brought back to Members in February 2027.

**Pitch Projects – Developments already undertaken or planned
for 2026/2027**

- 3.4 Alongside the development of the Pitches Strategy, officers have progressed a number of initiatives which have previously been agreed by Members. These are designed to improve pitch provision across the city, using the Pitches Programme budget allocated. These include:
- Clarendon Playing Fields: Installation of two 6m x 30m long ballstop fences at the grass soccer pitch. Works were completed in March 2026.
 - Fall Park: Installation of 1.2m high spectator fence, 6m high ballstop sections and spectator hardstanding at

grass soccer pitch. Works are progressing well, completion expected by end of September 2026.

- **Wedderburn Playing Fields:** Installation of 2.4m high boundary fence and 1.2m high spectator fence. Works are programmed to commence in October 2026, with completion expected by December 2026. In this regard, a meeting for local councillors will be organised for the end of September with consultation sessions at the start of October.
- **Marrowbone 3G Pitch:** Installation of 1.0m high ballstop netting system to the existing ballstop fence. Fencing is now on order with works programmed to commence in November 2026, completion is expected by mid-December 2026.

3.5 Furthermore, the following projects are proposed to be taken forward utilising the allocated Pitches Programme budget. Again these are small scale works designed to improve pitch provision across the city.

- **Woodlands Playing Fields:** Creation of additional junior GAA pitch, installation of 3no. ballstop nets, 1.2m fence to car park and new player access ramp to the pitch area.
- **Cherryvale Park:** Surface improvement work to existing grass GAA training pitch and installation of dugout areas.
- **Henry Jones Playing Fields:** Installation of 2no. player dugouts.
- **Loughside Playing Fields:** Installation of 4m high ballstop fence to boundary of small sided, grass soccer pitch.
- **Westlands Soccer Pitch (Waterworks Upper):** Construction of new spectator hardstanding at grass soccer pitch.
- **Dixon Park:** Installation of additional 1.2m high spectator fencing with ballstop section and new car park kerbing.
- **Strangford Playing Fields:** Installation of ballstop nets.
- **Brook 4G –** following a condition survey of the playing surface at Brook, a re-crumbing exercise will be completed to improve the playing surface.

Members are asked to agree the minor pitch improvement projects outlined above. If agreed works will be carried out by end of March 2027.

Partner Enhancement Fund – Update

- 3.6 At February 2026 Committee, Members agreed to ringfence £1million from the current Pitches Programme budget towards a Partner Pitch Enhancement Programme. This Fund is aimed at supporting partner organisations, who can demonstrate projects with community benefits, that will provide increased pitch availability to help address the deficit of pitch hours, as outlined in the Pitches Strategy. Work on this is being finalised and Members are asked to note that further detail will be brought back to Committee next month, outlining the open-call application process, eligibility criteria and assessment process.

Condition Surveys

- 3.7 Members will be aware that a rolling programme of condition surveys is being carried out across the Council's buildings with surveys currently underway of all the community centres. This is to inform the development of a full evidence based planned maintenance programme. To ensure that the Council has a full understanding of all future maintenance requirements it is proposed that a programme of condition surveys of the Council's pitches both grass and 3G is undertaken.
- 3.8 A spec for this work is currently being finalised and an update on the timeline will be brought to Committee as part of a future update.

National Conference League – DFC response

- 3.9 Recent proposals presented by new Northern Ireland Amateur Football League, National Conference League facility criteria, was discussed at the special SP&R (30th April 2026). The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to engage the IFA in relation to the impact on football clubs on the level of pitches available that meet this criteria and request that interventions are made.
- 3.10 A response has been received from the Minister for Communities, indicating that whilst he does not have any direct influence over the structures, criteria or regulations governing leagues, he will support the continued engagement with Irish FA and league operators, around the impact of the onerous and challenging facility requirements introduced. A

copy of this is attached at Appendix 1. It is proposed that officers meet with the IFA/Northern Ireland Amateur Football League to discuss the proposed National Conference League criteria.

Next Steps

3.11 Members are asked to note the work that has been ongoing in respect of pitches and note that it is proposed to bring a detailed update to Committee next month covering

- Pitches Strategy – Implementation Plan – proposed next steps following the outcome of the feasibility studies
- Proposed procurement strategy
- Update on the Event Space - extensive work on this piece of work has been undertaken and extensive engagement with promoters and other key stakeholders has taken place, with continued dialogue ongoing.
- Continue to engage with Minister for Communities and Northern Ireland Amateur Football League regarding new requirements under the Northern Ireland Amateur Football League, National Conference League and officers to meet with the IFA/Northern Ireland Amateur Football League to discuss the proposed National Conference League criteria.

3.12 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None in relation to this report.

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

The legislation requirements have been met including screening.

All physical projects are designed for people and are inherently inclusive and accessible.

During discussion, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and the Director of Property and Projects answered a range of questions in relation to the status and timelines of pitch improvements across the city and highlighted that a further detailed report would be brought to the Committee next month to include information on the outstanding queries raised.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

- the update on the Pitches Strategy Consultation;
- the update on current minor pitch improvement projects and agreed the proposed projects for this year as outlined at 3.5;
- that a rolling programme of condition surveys was being commissioned to inform the development of a costed maintenance programme;
- that a detailed report would be brought to the Committee next month with further detail on the £1m Partner Enhancement Fund, Pitches Implementation Plan and Events Space and the other queries raised at Committee in relation to the Pitches Strategy; and
- that a response had been received from the Minister for Communities regarding the requirements under the new Northern Ireland Amateur Football League, National Conference League criteria and agreed that officers meet with the IFA/Northern Ireland Amateur Football League to discuss the proposed National Conference League criteria.

Finance, Procurement & Performance

Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2025/26

The Director of Finance provided an overview of the Statement of Accounts of the Council, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the period ending 31st March, 2026.

He highlighted that the Statement of Accounts were an important element of the council's overall corporate governance framework as they provided assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.

He advised that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March, 2026, (appendix 1), had been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025/26 based on International Financial Reporting Standards and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 07/2026.

He pointed out that, following further technical advice which had been received from the Local Government Auditor, there was a required change to the Balance Sheet in relation to the specified reserve after the report had been published.

The Committee:

- Agreed that the report was not subject to call-in on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decision would result in a breach of statutory duty in publishing the Council's Statement of Accounts by the legislative deadline of 30th September 2026;
- Noted that, following further technical advice which had been received from the Local Government Auditor, there was a required change to the Balance Sheet in relation to the specified reserve after the report had been published; and

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

- Approved the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March, 2026.

**Response to Department of Finance
consultation on Business Growth Accelerator
and Non-Domestic Vacant Rating**

It was reported that, on 29th June, 2026, the Minister of Finance had announced that a further public consultation was being taken forward on two measures relating to the non-domestic rating system:

- a Business Growth Accelerator, providing temporary, targeted relief for businesses taking practical steps to expand; and
- Non-Domestic Vacant Rating, including how any increases in liability levels should be introduced

The Committee considered the draft response by the Council to the Department of Finance consultation on Business Growth Accelerator and Non-Domestic Vacant rating.

It was highlighted that the closing date for responses was 23rd September, 2026 and the proposed response, if agreed, would be submitted subject to Council ratification.

The Committee agreed the response to the consultation included in [Appendix 2](#) of the report and noted that the response would be submitted, subject to Council ratification.

Request for Funding for Halloween event in City Centre

(Ms. L-A O'Donnell, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism
attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The report details a request from BID One for part funding to support Halloween activities in the City Centre.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the request.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Belfast One is aiming to create a joined-up Halloween experience that is highly visible, accessible and enjoyable for residents and visitors, bringing the giant Halloween monsters back to landmark buildings across the city centre, alongside the Belfast One Pumpkin Patch, activities at 2 Royal Avenue, business promotions and community participation.**

2025 Halloween experience

- 3.2 The 2025 Halloween programme demonstrated the strong appeal of a coordinated city centre event. The giant monster installations created a highly visible trail across Belfast, encouraging people to explore the city, take photographs and share their experience online. The installations generated more than 1.2 million total views and reached approximately 500,000 people across social media.
- 3.3 At City Hall, the Belfast One Pumpkin Patch distributed 1,300 pumpkins and welcomed around 5,000 visitors. Visitors were also directed to other Halloween activities across the city centre by an interactive map, helping to extend their visit and encourage movement between locations.
- 3.4 The Spooktacular Activity Centre at 2 Royal Avenue welcomed more than 5,000 visitors over the weekend, with pumpkin painting, face painting, crafts and the Creepy Crawly Farm. Quiet sessions were also provided each morning for children with additional needs. Together, these activities created a fun, inclusive atmosphere while supporting footfall and engagement across Belfast City Centre.
- 3.5 Members are advised that the 2025 programme was part-funded by Belfast City Council with £50K from departmental budget and reserves created to support city animation. In 2024 £40K was provided through grant funding.

Proposed 2026 Halloween Experience

- 3.6 The total proposal for 2026 BID One activity is a continuation of this activity with an estimated total delivery cost of £125K
- 10 Giant inflatable monsters on buildings across Belfast City Centre, creating a strong visual attraction and encouraging visitors to explore and share content online.
 - A free, ticketed two-day Pumpkin Patch at City Hall, linked to pumpkin decorating and carving activities at 2 Royal Avenue.
 - Family-friendly creative and interactive activities, including storytelling, workshops and displays developed with local community and cultural organisations at 2 Royal Avenue
 - A Halloween trail map and participating business offers to encourage footfall and spend.
- 3.7 The two city centre shopping centres will also fund and deliver activity in their areas as part of the wider programme and the

overall programme will be supported by marketing campaign involving promotion across digital, social media and other relevant channels.

3.8 BID One have identified the following expected outcomes and impact from the programme of activity:

- Increase footfall across Belfast City Centre during Halloween.
- Create a positive, safe and memorable experience for families, residents and visitors.
- Support local businesses through increased visibility, visitor movement and promotions.
- Generate strong social media engagement through highly visual installations.
- Increase community and cultural participation.
- Strengthen Belfast City Centre's reputation as a fun and family-friendly Halloween destination.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

BID one are seeking financial support from BCC on par with 2025 of £50,000 to support the delivery of the programme

Funding for city animation was included as a growth proposal for 2026/2027 but as Members will be aware, following the quarter 1 financial report, funding is not available to support further growth proposals at this time. It is understood that In the absence of funding from Belfast City Council whilst monster installations would still be delivered, potentially at a reduced level, the Pumpkin Patch would not go ahead and other elements of the programme would either be removed or be significantly scaled back.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.

During discussion, Members suggested that, when considering the extended cultural package for 2027, Halloween and New Year's Eve events should be included in those discussions. One Member also suggested that community organisations be considered for the direct delivery of events at City Hall and that consideration be given to expanding such events along arterial routes. In response, the Director of Finance advised that both the events and future years' requirements would need to be factored into the rate-setting process.

After discussion, the Committee agreed, in principle, to allocate £50,000 to BID One to support the delivery of the Halloween Programme and delegated authority to the Director of Finance to authorise the funding, subject to the availability of a specified reserve.

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 the 2nd September, including:

Members Updates

- Updates were received from the PSNI and are noted in the minutes for members information.

Asylum Dispersal Programme – Update

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

TEO - Rapid Response Funding

- The Shared City Partnership noted the report.

PEACEPLUS – Local Community Action Plan Secretariat Update

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

Community Regeneration and 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 Good Relations Manager updated in terms of the meeting with MEARS, Migrant Help, TEO and the Home Office and updated in terms of the New Good Relations Framework and views being sought by the Executive Office. It was agreed representatives of the Shared City Partnership would meet week commencing 7th September to complete the online form.

Operational

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 of the report:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	CHARGES
The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)	10 December 2026	PEACEPLUS Prosperity Stakeholder Consultation – event for Greater Belfast voluntary community sector and any other interested parties on the PEACEPLUS successor programme 2028-2034 Numbers attending - 200	Yes	- ROOM HIRE OF £1250 - Any applicable additional charges
Confucius Institute at Ulster University	5 February 2027	Confucius Institute Chinese New Year Event is a celebration event with awards following a schools' competition, speeches, performances and lunch to celebrate the Chinese New Year Numbers attending - 220	Yes	- ROOM HIRE OF £1250 - Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>
Memory Stones of Love/ Cruse Bereavement Care NI	14 March 2027	Covid-19 National Day of Reflection , coinciding with the UK wide commemoration day this local group plans to remember all those who were lost during the pandemic with stories, poems and music. Numbers attending – 200	Yes	- NO ROOM HIRE - Any applicable additional charges <i>With 20% charity deduction applied to final total</i>
Ulster Obstetrical & Gynaecological Society	4 June 2027	Ulster Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society 75th Anniversary , celebration event to mark historic anniversary with reception, dinner, speeches and live music.	Yes	- NO ROOM HIRE - Any applicable additional charges

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

		Number attending - 150		
--	--	------------------------	--	--

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel minutes of 11th September

The Committee noted the key issues arising at the meeting and approved the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 11th September 2026 at Appendix 1.

Request for the use of Botanic Gardens

The Committee granted authority to the applicant, Belfast Film Festival, to host an outdoor cinema screening at Botanic Gardens on the 3rd October, 2026, subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organisers:

- I. resolves all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- II. meets all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and
- III. shall consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.

The Committee also noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

**Request for the use of Bowling Pavilion –
Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park**

The Committee granted authority to the applicant, East Belfast Football Club, to host a supporter and volunteer dinner in Alderman and Tommy Patton bowling pavilion on 26th September, 2026, subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organisers:

1. resolves all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
2. meets all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and
3. shall consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.
4. The Committee also approved the free use of the facility to include the staff costs to open, close and manage the building during the event.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 18th September, 2026**

The Committee noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Fleadh 2027 – Musicians Fund

In response to the request from Councillor R. McLaughlin for a budget to be created for schools, community groups in and other associated groups in Belfast to get funding for instruments and other associated costs to help train aspiring musicians for Fleadh 2027, the Committee agreed a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be brought back to the Committee.

Ethical Procurement Policy Update Request

In response to the request from Councillor Brennan in relation to an update on the Ethical Procurement Policy, including a timeline of the Working Group meetings, the Committee agreed that an update report would be brought back to the Committee.

During further discussion, a Member raised a request arising from the Governance Review, highlighting delays in a number of work programmes, including Leisure Transformation, Dual Language Street Signs, the New Crematorium, Bye-Laws, the Pitches Strategy, the Irish Language Policy and the Ethical Procurement Policy. The Member proposed that the scope of the Governance Review be extended to include the development of a framework for monitoring the implementation and delivery of Committee decisions across all departments.

In response, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the matter would be considered as part of the performance management work programme at the forthcoming Transformation and Efficiency Workshop.

Noted.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 8th September, 2026

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Maghie (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Abernethy);
and Councillors Beattie, Black, Bower, Bradley,
R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain,
de Faoite, M. Donnelly, Doran, Flynn, Garrett,
Magee, Murray, McKeown and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Open Spaces,
Resources, Fleet and Transport;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building
Control; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apology

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

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

- The Council agreed that the minute under the heading 'Resources and Fleet/Waste Management – Update', be amended to provide that, in consultation with Council staff, union representatives and elected Members, a street cleansing strategy be developed and brought back for the Committee's consideration within eight weeks;
- The Council agreed that the minute under the heading 'DAERA Consultation re: Draft Air Quality (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026', be amended to provide that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to odour complaints; and
- The Council agreed that the minute under the heading 'Abandoned Bins Protocol and Improvements to Bulky Waste Collections', be amended to provide that additional resourcing of the Council's Dog Warden Service be considered as part of the rate-setting process for 2027/28.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th September, 2026**

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Canavan reported that she was related to an individual who worked for the applicant named in the item 'Request for the Use of Botanic Gardens'. She left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the following reports was restricted under Part 1, Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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 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.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2026/27

The Committee noted the contents of the above-mentioned report and the information which was contained within the associated financial reporting pack.

Waste Update - Shared Alleys and Entries Action Plan

The Committee noted the contents of a report in relation to the above-mentioned matter and approved the 'Shared Alleys and Entries Action Plan: Empowering Behavioural Change', together with the 'Fair Usage Protocol' as set out therein.

Request for the Use of Botanic Gardens

The Committee considered a request which had been received seeking the use of Botanic Gardens for the hosting of an event in August 2027.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the request to enable further information to be provided in relation to the date on which the event would take place; its proposed scale; and also for it to be considered within the context of other events, such as the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, scheduled to take place in Belfast in August 2027.

Memorial Bench in Woodvale Park

The Committee acceded to a request which had been received seeking approval for the installation of a memorial bench within Woodvale Park. It was noted that the Committee had, in this instance, exercised its discretion in granting approval.

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 12th May, 2026, it had noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting to examine how the Council might, amongst other things, facilitate public acts of remembrance across its parks and open spaces. That report had been in response to a motion which had been moved by Councillor Bower and seconded by Councillor Maghie. It was noted that work relating to the report was ongoing.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th September, 2026**

Motions

Parks Outreach Team

In accordance with the decision of the Standards and Business Committee of 25th August, the Committee considered the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McKeown and seconded by Councillor de Faoite:

“This Council recognises the value of our parks and open spaces and the role they play in our communities; and acknowledges the significant and positive work of the Parks Outreach Team in engaging with people and communities across the city; and agrees that to support and enhance this work further, promote environmental and horticultural educational opportunities, facilitate community-focused activities and social engagement, and support biodiversity initiatives.

Accordingly, the Council will develop a new strategic approach for the identification and establishment of outreach hubs within the parks estate, and associated programming; will use this new approach to consider how our parks and green spaces can be better used by residents and community and voluntary groups, including any adaptations required to identified locations to enable this; and establish a long-term programme of activity to complement the existing work of the Parks Outreach Team.”

The Committee agreed that a report in this regard be submitted to a future meeting.

**Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)
Tenancy Succession Policy**

At its meeting on 23rd June, the Committee had adopted a motion, which had been moved by Councillor Canavan and seconded by Councillor Black, in relation to the above-mentioned matter. That motion had called on the Minister for Communities to undertake a review of the tenancy succession policy operated by the NIHE with a view to introducing safeguards to prevent the eviction of individuals following the death of a tenant, particularly where long-term residency and community-based ties existed.

It was reported that a response had been received on behalf of the Minister on 11th August which had indicated that there existed no plans to review the rules regarding tenancy succession. The correspondence had indicated that the Minister’s primary focus remained on addressing housing need through the Social Housing Development Programme.

The Committee noted the receipt of the response from the Minister’s office and agreed that the motion be closed.

Operational Issues

Extension to an Existing Street

The Committee granted approval for the naming of the extension to an existing street as Lady Ishbel Avenue.

Dual Language Street Signs

Arising from discussion, it was noted that clarity would be sought at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th September in respect of the continued consideration by the Committee of applications for dual language street signs in advance of the receipt of legal advice on the current policy and during the policy review period.

Tea and Coffee Provision at Council Playing Fields

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services reported that enquiries had been received from sports clubs and site users seeking to formalise the provision of tea and coffee services for spectators attending games at Council-owned playing fields. He indicated that officers had been made aware that clubs were providing the services and it was recommended that the Council should seek to regularise existing operations. He reported also that the Council would oversee a procurement exercise in 2027/28 and that the provision of such services could be included within the scope of that exercise.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to support the continued provision of tea and coffee through the means outlined and that officers would seek to identify and regularise existing operations. In addition, it was agreed that permission be extended to interested clubs to operate at sites across the Council's playing fields, subject to the clubs adhering to all of the conditions stipulated by the Council.

Summer Scheme Grants

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services presented a report which sought the Committee's approval to deliver the Council's summer schemes in 2027/28 through the provision of two grant funds, that is, the Summer Scheme Grant and the Summer Scheme Grant for Children with Additional Needs. He outlined the proposed terms for the operation of the schemes in 2027/28 and the associated costs.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and authorised officers to progress the two summer scheme grants as outlined; and noted further that any additional information collected relating to the scope and extent of the grant schemes would be reported to the Committee in due course.

Toy Safety - Consultation Response

The Committee adopted a response to the above-mentioned consultation exercise, subject to the inclusion of amendments, if any, made by the Council at its meeting on 1st October. The response was made available on the [Council's website](#).

Parkrun Initiative

Further to its decision of 26th June, the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services spoke to a report which highlighted the successes of the *Parkrun* initiatives across the city, particularly those held within the Council's parks and open spaces. The report indicated that the first *Parkrun* had taken place in the Waterworks Park in 2010; and, presently, Belfast hosted ten senior and six junior events each week. Since the initial *Parkrun* in 2010, it had been estimated that over 140,000 participants had completed an event.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 8th September, 2026**

The Committee noted the achievements of the *ParkRun* initiative, together with the level of Council-supported activity. In addition, it was agreed that officers would engage with the various providers to establish if additional support was needed and that a report be submitted to the Committee for consideration.

Request for the Use of Parks

The Committee granted authority for the hosting, in 2026, 2027 and 2028, of the following events, subject to the applicants adhering to the terms and conditions set out within the report:

- Pitt Park Residents Association – ‘Row on Row Remembrance’ at Pitt Park; and
- Velo Club Glendale – ‘Falling Leaves Irish National League Race’ at Falls Park.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Recognition of GAA Green Clubs Scheme

Councillor de Faoite requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting to examine the feasibility of recognising sports clubs who use Council facilities and actively support biodiversity, climate action and placemaking. Such a report would examine best practice initiatives – such as the Gaelic Athletic Association’s Green Clubs Programme – which had supported clubs in taking simple and effective sustainability actions.

The Committee agreed that a report in this regard be submitted to a future meeting.

Toilet Provision in Parks

Councillor Flynn outlined several issues relating to the current toilet provision at Victoria Park and Orangefield Park. It was noted that a report in the matter would be submitted in due course.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th September, 2026

MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor J. Duffy (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor; and
Councillors Black, Bower, Bunting, Collins,
de Faoite, Groogan, Kelly, Lyons, McAteer,
McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McKay,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Meenehan,
Nelson and Ó Néill.

Also attended: Councillor Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. R. Campbell-Palmer, Culture Development Manager;
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business Research and Development
Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th August, 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 1st September, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan and McCabe declared an interest within the item 'Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2026/27' in connection to the discussion regarding the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants scheme in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for funding through the scheme. The Members left the meeting whilst this matter was under consideration.

Councillor Groogan also declared an interest in relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme' in that her employer had been in receipt of a grant through the scheme but was not required to leave the meeting.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report which provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and which sought approval for recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the receipt and assessment of recent applications.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which would be supporting up to 87 businesses/organisations to locate or expand into long-term vacant units; and
- ii. agreed the recommended citywide grant awards as outlined within the report.

Artist Studios Organisational Grants 2026/27

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Artist Studios Organisational Grants for 2026/27 and which sought approval for recommended grants.

Proposal

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

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that a report be submitted to its next meeting on the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants scheme, which would include further information on its impact and the discretionary transition fund to support organisations which had incurred a reduction in funding; and to write to the Minister for Communities to outline its support for the Arts sector and to highlight the value of the sector to the city.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th September, 2026**

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report;
- ii. agreed the recommendations for artist studio grants, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting in respect of the Cultural Multi-Annual Grants which would include information on impact and funding; and
- iv. agreed to write to the Minister for Communities to outline its support for the Arts sector and highlight the value of the sector to the city.

Belfast Zoo Q1 2026/27 Performance Update

The Director of Economic Development submitted a report which provided an update on the performance of Belfast Zoo for Quarter 1 of 2026/27, including information on its visitor and education services, animal collection and welfare, marketing and events, health and safety and financial performance.

The Director reminded the Committee that the next meeting of the Council's Zoo Long-Term Financial Sustainability Group would be held on 17th September, 2026.

The Committee noted the update on the performance of Belfast Zoo for Quarter 1 of 2026/27.

Belfast Bikes Q1 2026/27 Performance Update

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes Scheme for Quarter 1 of 2026/27, including information on its operator contract, operational performance, marketing activity, expansion of the scheme and sponsorship.

The Director highlighted that a new dockless e-bike scheme had been launched within the city in July, 2026, and that it had no connection to the Belfast Bikes scheme.

During discussion, a number of Members raised concerns in respect of the dockless e-bikes being left on pavements after use and highlighted the potential impact on pedestrians, including those with accessibility issues such as wheelchair users. In response, the Client Manager advised the Committee that officers would continue to engage with the Department for Infrastructure, the operator and the Council's Legal Services in relation to dockless e-bikes.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy (Chairperson) and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would provide an update on engagement with the Department for Infrastructure, operators and the Council's Legal Services in respect of dockless e-bikes.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th September, 2026**

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the performance of the Belfast Bikes Scheme for Quarter 1 of 2026/27; and
- ii. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would provide an update on engagement with the Department for Infrastructure, operators and the Council's Legal Services in respect of dockless e-bikes.

Markets Quarterly Update

The Director of Economic Development submitted a report which provided the Committee with a quarterly update on the city's markets, including St. George's Market, Smithfield Market, and the 2026 Christmas Market, and which sought approval for a market licence to be granted for an external market.

In relation to the update provided on Smithfield Market, the Senior Manager, Economy, provided the Committee with further detail in relation to the ongoing work of repairs to address outstanding maintenance issues.

The Senior Manager reminded the Committee that, at its previous meeting in August, 2026, it had agreed for an update to be provided on the potential expansion of the Christmas Market, and she drew the Committee's attention to the update set out within the report. She advised the Committee that the Council-led market would likely remain focused on City Hall for 2026 and provided an update on the potential extension of the market from 2027 onward. The Senior Manager outlined for the Committee's information the wide range activities planned across the city for the 2026 Christmas period.

During discussion, the Senior Manager answered a range of questions from the Members in relation to the potential expansion of the market, the programme of events planned over the Christmas period, the marketing of the city's collective Christmas offering, festive lighting, and the ongoing repair and maintenance works at Smithfield Market.

During further discussion, a Member highlighted the number of visitors from the Republic of Ireland to the Christmas Market and St George's Market over the Christmas period and the need to ensure that reduced fares and regular departures from Dublin are maintained. The Member expressed concern in relation to the recent announcement by the Irish National Transport Authority that public transport fares would increase from 2027, and the potential impact that the planned fare increases might have on the Enterprise rail service route between Belfast and Dublin.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Lyons and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Irish Government's Minister for Transport to request that all efforts be made to ensure that fares on the Enterprise rail service

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th September, 2026**

route between Belfast and Dublin would not be increased, in light of the Irish National Transport Authority's announcement that public transport fares would increase from 2027.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the performance and financial update for Quarter 1 of 2026/27;
- ii. noted the feedback on the additional market activities during the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann;
- iii. noted the ongoing and planned works at Smithfield Market;
- iv. noted the update on plans for the extension of the Christmas Market;
- v. approved an external market licence for Cast and Clay to run a market in Carlisle Memorial Church in November, 2026; and
- vi. agreed to write to the Minister for Infrastructure and the Irish Government's Minister for Transport to request that all efforts be made to ensure that fares on the Enterprise rail service route between Belfast and Dublin would not be increased, in light of the Irish National Transport Authority's announcement that public transport fares would increase from 2027.

Financial Reporting - Quarter 1 2026/27

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted a report which presented the Committee's financial position for Quarter 1 of 2026/27.

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

Growing Businesses and the Economy

International Relations Quarterly Update

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide a quarterly progress update on delivery as part of the council's new International Relations Framework 2025-2028, as agreed at the November 2025 Committee meeting, and to seek approval to progress imminent and planned activity in the second part of the year.

2.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the progress of the last five months delivery of the International Relations Framework (April 2026 – August 2026);
- Note proposed activity for September 2026 to March 2027, as set out in Appendix 1, including opportunities for Member engagement;
- Approve the participation of an officer and the Chair or Deputy Chair of Committee to attend the EuroCities Gothenberg conference with costs fully covered by EuroCities;
- Approve the participation of the Lord Mayor and two officers in a civic and business visit to Boston and Chicago in Spring 2027, at an estimated cost of up to £12,000;
- Approve an EU & International Events & Conference financial contributions budget with a maximum budget of £40,000 for the financial year 2026/2027; and
- Approve a £5,000 contribution to the annual Belfast International Homecoming in October 2026 as a part of this Conference support scheme.

3.0 Main report

- 3.1 At the November 2025 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, members approved the International Relations Framework 2025 – 2028, along with an action plan for 2026/27 activity.
- 3.2 The three-year Framework document is intended to be a supporting document to other key strategies and plans such as the Belfast Agenda and the Corporate Plan – setting out how priority objectives and ambitions in those documents can be achieved through international connections, networks and opportunities. Its purpose is to identify areas of collaborative advantage and help focus resources on opportunities that can maximise return on investment, in keeping with city priorities.
- 3.3 Members agreed that there would be quarterly reports back to the Committee outlining progress and key activities, as well as a look ahead to the coming quarter, including opportunities for Member engagement.

Progress highlights April to August 2026

- 3.4 Since approval of the new framework, a range of international relations activities has been undertaken by council teams and their partner organisations. Under the themes of the framework, key activities include:

Trade and Investment

- Participation in the June 2026 New York New Belfast annual Business and Investment conference and programme in partnership with Invest NI, Belfast Chamber and the NI Bureau in North America. The Belfast delegation met with key individuals including Comptroller di Napoli who has invested \$110million to date in NI scale up companies and is committed to a further investment. Meetings also took place with a company currently considering Belfast as an investment location, as well as with Bloomberg Philanthropies
- The former Lord Mayor undertook a brief visit to Nashville ahead of the North American Comhaltas Convention in Chicago. The Nashville programme focused on neighbourhood development, tourism product development, youth employment and skills and educational collaboration. This work has shaped the inward Nashville Sister Cities Belfast Visit planned for 18-22 October 2026
- Ahead of the early October 2026 Nashville life and health sciences business mission, the council and its partners hosted a planning visit in March 2026. Attendees included nine key Nashville economic partners in the field of life and health sciences. Local partners engaged in the programme development work included the Global Health Connector NI, Catalyst, HIRANI, both universities, Invest NI, Department of Health and City Deal projects such as Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) and Momentum 1.0. The early October visit will include targeted businesses, innovators and investors from the Greater Nashville area who are seeking to develop collaborations with local companies or explore trade and export opportunities
- The International Team provided key connections for the visit to Nashville by the former Health Minister Mike Nesbitt MLA in March 2026. Minister Nesbitt's visit focused on exploring good practice in connected health innovations and he met with potential investors and collaborators in this field
- Participation at UKREiiF - the UK's leading built environment showcase event in May 2026 in Leeds as part of the Belfast City & Region Place Partnership. The Belfast delegation attended a series of key meetings and engagements with senior UK Government Ministers, institutional investors and developers, other cities and city

regions. This is part of a wider programme of engagement to attract external capital investment into the city and the wider city region

- Ongoing support for Belfast-based partners seeking connections and introductions through our Sister City and other networks. Over the course of the last five months, the international team coordinated seventeen inward visits ranging from civic-based dignitaries, international students, exploratory business fact finding visits and potential future investors. Significant visits included the New York company mentioned above, who have already created twenty jobs in the city ahead of officially launching this year, and the US Teamsters' Union and Massport who have made introductions to high profile investors
- The team has also made introductions on behalf of twenty-eight organisations in this five month period ranging from inclusion of international artists into the Fleadh programme, to Belfast musicians connecting into key contacts in Nashville; as well as connecting two high growth Belfast companies with US-based investors and NI investment diaspora, and introductions leading to 5G investment in the Northern Ireland health estate.

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

- The Council's Climate team continues to participate in an EU Horizon-funded project, "Pathways to Resilience", launched in Budapest earlier this year. This is a €200,000-funded programme to support the development of a Climate Resilience Baseline report, a Climate Resilience Strategy, Action Plan and Investment Plan
- In April, Belfast joined several Learning Cities from across Europe and North America in the UNESCO Learning City of Cork to exchange ideas, build momentum and accelerate the journey toward a European and North American Learning Cities network.

City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development

- The Council's Culture team continues to engage in the EuroCities Culture Forum as Vice Chair of the "Culture for Inclusive Cities" Working Group looking at Older People's participation in culture
- The culture team participated in Spancirfest, Varazdin, Croatia, in August 2026 with an opportunity to host Belfast

musicians at an inaugural Belfast Music stage at future iterations of the festival

- The council also took its first steps to re-engage with Europe through attendance at the EuroCities annual conference in June and also attended the inaugural “Liverpool Welcomes Europe” Summit in June. Topics covered included some of the biggest opportunities and challenges facing cities today – AI, Innovation, place-based leadership and city centre growth. Belfast was one of four Core Cities asked to present at a private Cities Roundtable
- The Council participated in the inaugural UK-China Cities Alliance, led by Bristol, to begin to look at best practice engagement with China. The NI Executive Office is also looking at how to encourage and develop China-NI relations into tangible outcomes, and Belfast City Council will follow this work closely
- The International Unit engaged with TG4 with respect to Nashville Sister City music links, resulting in Nashville artists performing as a central component to the TG4 opening concert on their live stage at the Fleadh on 6 August
- City Hall was the venue for PRONI’s launch of its publication “Ulster American Treasures: The Migration Story”. City Hall was also illuminated in USA national colours on 4 July.

3.5 Looking forward – outline plan for rest of financial year

The draft action plan for the coming year is attached in Appendix 1. Priority actions that members may wish to note include:

Trade and Investment

- Planned inward economic and innovation mission led by the Greater Nashville Chamber and Global Health Connector US bringing twenty Nashville businesses, investors and economic development leads from 5-7 October 2026 to connect with city anchor institutions
- Participation in the annual Belfast International Homecoming programme 7-9 October. The council will support visit programmes for key delegates as appropriate. Outcomes of the Homecoming 2025 include plans for Belfast Harbour and net zero tenant companies to collaborate with New York State’s Red Hook terminals on green hydrogen, and potential future US investment in NI

scaling companies. Members are asked to agree a financial contribution of £5,000 towards the event delivery through the unit's Conference and Events support budget

- Development of new promotional materials and revamp of Invest in Belfast website by year end, to ensure consistent messaging across FDI investment and capital investment materials as well as development of new innovation-focused investment prospectus
- Undertaking a new programme of work for the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership, with re-focused planning for attendance at MIPIIM in March 2027 and UKREiiF May 2027
- Exploratory and planning work on a potential business mission to Boston and Chicago in Spring 2027. The Boston programme will focus on profiling trade and investment opportunities in key growth sectors, particularly life and health sciences while the Chicago visit will build on connections established in the course of last year's participation in last year's North American Comhaltas Convention, particularly focusing on cultural and tourism linkages, and capitalising on the impact of this year's Fleadh. While initial engagements with local partner organisations and key contacts in both host cities has helped shape an outline itinerary, further scoping of additional engagements and opportunities will be undertaken subject to Committee approval of this proposal. Updates on progress will be shared as part of the next quarterly update.

Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

- Visit to Belfast by Head of Mayors' Challenge programme at Bloomberg Philanthropies on 22-23 October to meet with Chief Executive and Lord Mayor
- Participation in significant global innovation events 2026, including Mobile World Congress and Smart City World Congress in partnership with Global Health Connector, pending Council approval (separate approval process)
- City Innovation Team will attend the UK-France Local Government event in Bordeaux in November to promote the City Council's work in AI and innovation programmes
- Chief Executive participation in the Bloomberg LSE European City Leadership Initiative with thirty other European Mayors and Chief Executives.

City Positioning, Tourism Promotion and Cultural Development

- Reviewing and planning for VIP support delivery for Fleadh 2027, including early engagement at UK, ROI and NI government level for VIP participation, working with interested international artists to integrate into the programming, and also targeted sponsorship activity, including live interest from international partners
- Hosting a Nashville Sister City delegation with a cohort of fifteen politicians, diplomats, University representatives, music and cultural leads 18-22 October. The focus of the engagement will be to explore collaboration in culture, music, academia via teacher and student exchange, and political peer to peer cooperation
- Ongoing engagement and collaboration as part of UNESCO city of music network with a September 2026 sub-network meeting planned in Sanliurfa, Turkey to plan UNESCO Music partnerships for the year ahead
- Sixteen Irish traditional artists will be supported to take part in the Oulu Irish Festival in September 2026, with a strong Fleadh promotion planned
- UNESCO Creative City of Film, Galway will host a Belfast artist/band at their own sub network of film meeting in September 2026
- Participation as speaker and Vice-Chair of Working Group, Culture for Inclusive Cities at EuroCities Culture Forum in Gothenburg 30th Sept – 2 Oct 2026. Opportunity for one officer and Chair or nominee to attend. Special ‘Political Track’ events on 1 October
- Facilitation of the all-party delegation to Brussels to participate in the annual EU Week of Cities and Regions in October 2026 to re-engage with EU peers, explore relevant funding and policy opportunity and develop connections with other UK and Irish cities active in EU activity, including exploring potential for engagement opportunities as part of Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU (from July-December 2026). Culture Unit to present a paper on heritage collaboration at the event
- Participation in the annual commemoration for the Founding of the Chinese People’s Republic, September 2026, and the inaugural celebration of India’s National Day in January 2027
- Participation in the 15-16 October meeting of the European and North American Learning Network in the Learning City

of Lausanne, Switzerland. Purpose of the meeting is to define how the network will operate with opportunity to explore city to city exchange and joint projects/funding bids

- The World Monuments Fund are organising a delegation of their donors to Belfast for an event known as “Escapades”. As part of their programme there is a planned reception in City Hall on Thursday 17 September.

3.6 Measuring EU & International Activity impact

As previously noted as part of the November 2025 report to Committee, it can be challenging to track outcomes of much of the international relations activity. This is because progress can often come from an initial introduction that we made, but that takes a while to develop. In order to track the impact of our work more effectively, a new CRM system is now operational. This should allow more effective tracking of our impact, as well as facilitating data collection.

3.7 Supporting EU & International Conferences and Events

The EU and International Team is regularly asked to sponsor/financially support events and conferences in areas that – to a greater or lesser extent – are associated with the unit’s priorities, as set out above. While these events can often act as a useful promotional vehicle for Council interventions and can help position Belfast internationally, some of can be last-minute requests for relatively small amounts of money and/or provide little measurable return or opportunity for promotion of the council’s investment.

In order to assess the impact of the requests, officers have developed a process to measure and score these requests based on their alignment to the International Relations Framework. The total budget to support contributions to events and conferences in this financial year is £40,000 and it is proposed that each application for support will be capped at a maximum of £5,000. Objectives and outputs will be agreed through a funding agreement with the event organisers and this will be signed off by the Director under delegated authority. This approach will help ensure that our resources are focused on areas of maximum return and will provide an objective rationale for assessing the relative merits of individual applications. Any events that will have wider corporate impact will be brought back to the Committee for consideration and endorsement.

4.0 Finance and Resource Implications

- Establishment of an International Unit Conference and Events fund of £40,000 for the 2026/2027 financial year
- Annual sponsorship and participation in the Belfast International Homecoming at a maximum cost of £5,000
- A maximum of £12,000 to deliver a business and tourism mission to Boston and Chicago in Spring 2027.

The EU and International Relations budget was approved as part of the 2026-27 estimates setting process. The amounts indicated above were included within those estimates. Budgets for individual activities (apart from those set out above) are the responsibility of the respective teams.

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

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

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that the Council engage with Dublin City Council in relation to the potential for joint funding bids, including, but not limited to, those which would be strategically aligned to the vision of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the progress update in relation to the delivery of the International Relations Framework over the period April to August, 2026;
- ii. noted the proposed activity for September 2026 to March 2027, as set out within the report, which would include opportunities for Member engagement;
- iii. approved the attendance of the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson and one Council officer to attend the 2026 Eurocities Culture Forum in Gothenberg and noted that the costs would be fully covered by Eurocities;
- iv. approved the attendance of the Lord Mayor and two Council officers in a civic and business visit to Boston and Chicago in Spring 2027, at an estimated cost of up to £12,000;

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th September, 2026**

- v. approved the establishment of an EU and International Events and Conference contributions budget for the financial year 2026/27 up to a maximum of £40,000;
- vi. approved a contribution to the annual Belfast International Homecoming in October, 2026, as a part of the conference support scheme, up to a maximum of £5,000; and
- vii. agreed that the Council engage with Dublin City Council in relation to the potential for joint funding bids, including, but not limited to, those which would be strategically aligned to the vision of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notices of Motion Quarterly Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the twelve motions and issues raised in advance which it was responsible for.

The report recommended that the motion 'Artist and Creative Studio Space' (ID 465) be closed given that the Committee had approved the first year of the Artist Workspaces five-year action plan which had included an action which addressed the motion.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees that the motion 'Artist and Creative Studio Space' remain open given the Council's ongoing work in relation to this matter and the challenges facing the sector.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on all the notices of motion and issues raised in advance which it was responsible; and
- ii. agreed that the motion 'Artist and Creative Studio Space' (ID 465) would remain open.

Translink Consultation on Fare and Services Changes - Council Response

In accordance with the Committee's agreement at its previous meeting in August, 2026, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy submitted a report which set out draft Council responses to Translink's public consultation as part of its Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) on a range of potential changes to services and fares.

The report stated that, under the statutory duties contained within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Translink gave an undertaking to carry out an equality

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 9th September, 2026**

impact assessment (EQIA) on each policy where screening had indicated that there might be significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 categories. It was reported that there were two policies which might have an impact, namely, 'Bus and Rail Evening Service Adjustments' and 'Amendment to Translink Commercial Discounted Fares and Purchase of Singles Only Onboard NIR Services'.

Accordingly, the report set out responses to the consultation stage of the EQIA in relation to each policy.

The Committee:

- i. noted the details of each policy which Translink had anticipated might have significant implications in relation to one or more of the nine Section 75 categories; and
- ii. approved the draft consultation responses as set out within the report for submission to Translink by the consultation deadline noting that they would be subject to ratification by the Council at its meeting on 1st October, 2026.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 16th September, 2026

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor T. Brooks (Chairperson);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Bradley, R. Brooks,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas,
Ferguson, Kelly, McCann, McCallin,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown
and Smyth.

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

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Bell and McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the Special meeting of 22nd July, 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 1st September.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

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

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted the licence applications which had, since its last meeting, been issued under the Scheme of Delegation.

Application for the variation of an Entertainments Licence - Hilton Hotel Belfast

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that an application had been received from Pandox Hilton Ltd, for the variation of its 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence based on the Council's standard conditions, to provide music,

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 16th September, 2026**

singing, dancing or any other entertainment of a like kind for the Hilton Hotel at 4 Lanyon Place.

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

- Monday – Saturday 11:30am to 1.00am the following morning
- Sunday 12:30pm to 1.00am the following morning.

She outlined that the variation applied for, was to extend the hours during which entertainment may be provided to 3.00am the following morning, Monday to Saturday. The applicant had stated that the request was to accommodate requests from larger groups of guests who would be staying in the hotel and to facilitate the arrival of non-hotel customers and increased visitor accommodation capacity, in line with their business strategy. The areas of the hotel licenced for entertainment were the bar and restaurant on the ground floor and the ballroom, foyer and Lisburn Suite on the first floor.

The Committee was advised that public notice had been placed in the newspaper and no written representations had been received.

The PSNI and the NI Fire and Rescue Service had both been consulted in respect of the application and had confirmed that they had no objections.

The Members were advised that no noise complaints had been received by the Service in the past 12 months.

The Committee approved the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence, to vary the hours during which entertainment may be provided as requested, to 3.00am the following morning, Monday to Saturday subject to any special conditions considered necessary by officers.

Non-Delegated Matters

Notices of Motion Annual Update

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented an update on the Notices of Motion for which the Committee was responsible, in line with the agreement of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that all standing committees would receive regular updates.

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed that the motion relating to drink spike testing kits in licensed premises would remain open.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the closure of the "Know Your Rights" motion, given that a campaign for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) had been launched, providing ongoing guidance for tenants and awareness campaigns targeted at students.

Noted.

Restricted Item

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 item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were 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.

Houses in Multiple Occupation Licences issued under Delegated Authority

The City Protection Manager provided the Committee with an update on the HMO register and advised that a further update would be provided in the coming months.

The Committee noted the update and the licences which had, since its last meeting, been issued under the Scheme of Delegation.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 15th September, 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,
Garrett, Groogan, Magee,
McCabe, McCann and Whyte.

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

Apologies

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

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Matters Referred by the Council/Motions

Notice of Motion - Embedding Community Food Growing in the Planning Process for New Housing Developments

The Committee agreed that officers bring back a detailed report examining the planning mechanisms, policy options, legal considerations and practical implications of embedding community food-growing spaces within the planning process for new social and private housing developments.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 15th September, 2026**

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in August, 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

**Consultation on a Historic Environment
Policy for Northern Ireland by the
Department for Communities**

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager provided the Committee with a draft Council response to the Department for Communities' consultation on the Draft Historic Environment Policy 2027-20237.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the Department's consultation document;
- Approved the proposed Council response as outlined within the report;
and
- Authorised officers to submit the response to the Department for Communities.

**Consultation on the Tree Protection Bill
for the Northern Ireland Assembly**

The Acting Development Planning and Policy Manager provided the Committee with a draft Council response to the Northern Ireland Assembly's Tree Protection Bill – Call for Evidence.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the Assembly's consultation document;
- Approved the proposed Council response as outlined within the report;
and
- Authorised officers to submit the response to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 15th September, 2026**

**Consultation on proposed changes to the
Classes and Thresholds in the Schedule to
the Planning (Development Management)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 by the
Department for Infrastructure**

The Director of Planning and Building Control presented the Committee with a draft Council response on the Department for Infrastructure's public consultation on its review of the Development Management Regulations which was seeking views on proposed changes to the classes and thresholds in the Schedule of Regulations.

The Committee noted the content of the report and approved the Council's response as set out in the report.

The Committee delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the Council's response with any additional comments made by Members of the Committee.

Planning Applications

**LA04/2026/0216/F - Single-storey rear
extension and 2-storey rear and side
extension - 1 Cricklewood Crescent**

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

- Design and impact on the character of the area;
- Impact on neighbouring amenity;
- Road safety and car parking; and
- Matters raised in representation.

She explained that 13 letters of representation had been received from two neighbouring properties and that the issues raised had been addressed within the case officer's report. She added that DfI Roads had been consulted and had offered no objection to the proposal, subject to condition.

She stated that, having regard to the Local Development Plan and all other material considerations, the application was recommended for approval.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. J. Campbell, Mr. B. McConnell and Ms. P. Bradshaw MLA, to the meeting who were speaking in objection to the application.

Mr. Campbell stated that approval of the application would be setting aside a conceded daylight breach and would rely on an unenforceable condition to excuse overheight and massing.

He explained how the case office's report stated that the single storey element would break the 45 degrees angles test from the adjoining habitable window but that it was not to a detrimental level. He refuted the claim and stated that the proposal would directly block

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 15th September, 2026**

sunlight and added that hedging should not be relied upon to deal with unacceptable massing and was unenforceable as visible opacity provided by hedging could not be relied upon year-round.

He concluded by stating that the application would breach daylight rules for a vulnerable resident and attempted to rely upon an unenforceable hedging condition and that approval would be procedurally unsafe.

Ms. Bradshaw MLA added that the application site was situated on a small, narrow cul-de-sac and increasing the property to five bedrooms could impact on parking and accessibility for vulnerable local residents.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. T. McGlinchey to the meeting, who was attending on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. McGlinchey stated that the application would not contribute to overshadowing and that the area had ample parking space. He asked the Committee to uphold the recommendation from the case officer and approve the application.

In response to a question from a Member with regard to the breach of the 45 degrees angles test, the Principal Planning Officer explained that test was not a rigid standard and that the breach had not been considered to be detrimental to the property as, due to its orientation at the rear and being east facing, sufficient sunlight and daylight would remain to the neighbouring property.

Proposal

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

“That the application be refused on the grounds that the proposal is over dominant, the size of the proposed extension was extensive and that it breached the 45 degrees angles test from the adjoining habitable window.”

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

The Chairperson put the officer’s recommendation to the Committee and it passed.

Accordingly, 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 that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 15th September, 2026**

LA04/2026/1207/LBC - Enabling works for safe access and asbestos removal to allow condition survey to occur. - Wilmont House, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, 243 Upper Malone Road

The Principal Planning Officer outlined the application for the Committee and stated that DfC Historic Environment Division (HED) had been consulted and had offered no objection to the proposed works.

She stated that, having regard to the Development Plan, relevant planning policies and other material considerations, it was recommended that the proposal be approved.

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 that they were not substantive.

LA04/2026/0890/F - The proposed regeneration of an existing open space. The scheme includes permeable surfaces, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), surface water management, improved/new paths and associated landscaping works. - The open space directly to the south of 2-20 Distillery Street and 9-11 Blackwater Way

The Committee considered the case officer's report and 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 that they were not substantive.

Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 15th September, 2026

Restricted Items

LA04/2024/0570/F - Change of use of an existing hotel, conference centre and offices (sui generis) to a 97-bed care home (Use Class C3(b)) and 1,559sqm diagnostic medical facility (Use Class D1(a)), associated access, car parking, landscaping and open space. - Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road; and

LA04/2024/0569/O - Outline planning permission with all matter reserved for independent living (Use Class C1) units and up to 62no. assisted living units (Use Class C3), associated internal access roads, communal open space, revised access from Castlevue Road, associated car parking, servicing, amenity space and landscaping and demolition of dwellings at Castlevue Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30) and Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22) (amended description). - Stormont Hotel, 587 Upper Newtownards Road BT4 3LP and adjacent properties at Castlevue Road (nos. 2, 4, 6, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 & 30), Summerhill Parade (nos. 18, 20 & 22), and rear of 160 Barnett

The Divisional Solicitor provided the Committee with Counsel's opinion in respect of the call-in of the above two Committee decisions.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the legal opinion;
- noted that the call-in was not considered to have merit on either procedural grounds or community impact grounds; and
- noted that the decisions to approve would be issued in accordance with the terms of the Committee's original decisions.

Quarter 4 Finance Report - 2025/2026

The Committee considered the report which outlined the Quarter 4 Committee financial position and associated financial reporting pack.

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

Chairperson

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 14th September, 2026

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

Members present: Councillor McAteer (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Alderman McCoubrey); and
Councillors Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,
Canavan, Collins, Ferguson, Flynn,
McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McDowell,
McKay, Ó Néill, Walsh and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. K. Forster, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. R. McConnell, Chief Executive, Belfast Waterfront
and Ulster Hall Ltd.;
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate
Services, Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.;
Ms. A. Fox, Assets Development Officer;
Mr. F. Grant, Operations Development Manager; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th June, 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 1st July, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Restricted Items

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

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

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 14th September, 2026

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

Annual Report and Financial Statement 2025/26

The Committee was provided with a copy of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall (BWUH) Ltd. Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March, 2026.

The Committee noted the annual report and financial statements for 2025/26.

Performance Update Quarter 1 2025/26

The Chief Executive of BWUH Ltd. provided the Committee with a snapshot overview of BWUH Ltd.'s performance for Quarter 1 (Q1) of 2026/27 and stated that it had been a strong first quarter across customer experience, economic value and audience reach. He highlighted the progress which had been made within the quarter in respect of sales, entertainment, event operations, and people and culture.

BWUH Ltd.'s Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services outlined BWUH Ltd.'s financial performance for Q1 which included information on its overall actual income and expenditure against targets, net position and occupancy rates.

In relation to community impact, the Committee was provided with an update on BWUH Ltd.'s social initiatives, engagement with charities, and its commitment to provide opportunities for young people across the city to gain experience and an understanding of the career pathways within the events, tourism and cultural industries through its work experience, placement and apprenticeship programmes.

BWUH Ltd.'s Chief Executive concluded by highlighting the recent success of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, which was held across the city in August, 2026. He stated that major competitions and performances were held in both the Waterfront and Ulster Halls, and that a food village and family zone took place outside the ICC and Waterfront Hall. He acknowledged the work and effort of all staff across the venues to help deliver the programme of events successfully and reported that positive feedback had been received from those who had attended the venues and the food village throughout the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann.

During discussion, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, Risk, and Corporate Services of BWUH Ltd. answered range of questions from the Members in relation to the economic impact of the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, staff development, and BWUH Ltd.'s ongoing work in respect its impact within community including its engagement with charities and social initiatives.

After discussion, the Committee noted the update which had been provided on BWUH Ltd.'s performance for Q1 of 2026/27.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 14th September, 2026

**Collective Partnership Targets –
Proposed KPIs/Annual Targets**

The Director of Economic Development reminded the Committee that at its previous meeting in June, 2026, it had agreed to defer, for further information to be provided, its consideration of the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out within each of the new Collective Partnership Targets which had been agreed following the Committee's approval for the commencement of a five-year contract extension for BWUH Ltd. to operate the ICC Belfast, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall.

The Director submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which outlined the agreed Collective Partnership Targets and the associated proposed KPIs, which included information on the rationale, measurement and targets for 2026/27. He advised that the proposed KPIs would apply during the period of the contract extension and would be used to report progress on a quarterly and/or annual basis.

The Committee agreed the proposed Key Performance Indicators as set out within the report.

Reserved Matters

The Committee noted that there were no reserved matters which required its approval.

The Committee noted also that BWUH Ltd. would soon undertake a procurement exercise and that, following its completion, the Committee's approval would be sought in respect of the award.

Chairperson

This page is intentionally left blank

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 10th September, 2026

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Lyons (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCoubrey and McCullough;
Councillors Anglin, Bell, T. Brooks, Collins,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Groogan,
Long, Magee, McCann,
Meenehan and Walsh.

In attendance: Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth
and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. S. Healy-Thow, Food Systems Coordinator;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks advised the Committee that a number of the funding updates involved her employer, Queen's University, however, as she was not involved in the projects and the item was for noting, she did not leave the meeting when the item was discussed.

Presentation - Community Garden Support

The Food Systems Coordinator introduced Ms. Miriam Turley, Co-Leader of Community Garden Support (CGS), to the Committee. She explained that CGS was a lead of the Community Growing Forum under the Belfast Food Partnership.

Ms. Turley outlined the development of community growing and food-growing initiatives across Belfast and Northern Ireland, and the increased role of public bodies in supporting access to land for community cultivation. She outlined that the 1932 Allotments Act was outdated.

She highlighted research which had been undertaken in 2021, with officers from all 11 Northern Ireland councils examining how publicly owned land could be managed

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 10th September, 2026**

by communities for food growing. This was followed in 2022 by a report proposing a benchmark standard for community growing and allotment provision by public bodies in Northern Ireland, establishing a broader policy basis for increasing access to growing space.

She highlighted that a key development was the Council's "Right to Grow" Motion, passed in 2023. The motion recognised the importance of ensuring citizens had access to sufficient fresh food and the Council had agreed, in principle, to adopt a right to grow on suitable Council-owned land. She explained that the proposed approach would involve community groups obtaining licences to cultivate appropriate Council land.

She added that the Belfast Agenda 2024–2028 committed to the development of a Community Growing Forum as part of the Sustainable Food Partnership. The forum was intended to bring together community growers, funders, support organisations, the Council, the NI Housing Executive, other major landowners and central government representatives. The Agenda also set out an ambitious longer-term objective of working towards 1,250 square metres of community growing space per 1,000 households by 2035.

The Belfast Community Growing Forum had been established in spring 2024. The forum provided a mechanism for bringing together the different stakeholders needed to expand community growing, particularly where access to land, funding and organisational support were required.

Finally, she highlighted how community growing fitted within the wider Belfast food-system strategy, "The Belfast Way", described as a strategy and roadmap towards a thriving, fair and resilient food system.

In response to a Member's question, she outlined that the biggest barriers to community growing were a lack of finance, time and resources. She also highlighted that having a single point of contact was key to a successful scheme.

She also outlined that while Northern Ireland had received funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the allocation was insufficient to meet local community growth needs.

In response to a Member's question about unadopted alleyways, she stated that a legislation change was required.

A Member stated that perhaps the Committee could send a letter of support to the Community Growing Forum, to encourage the work they were doing, and to write to other statutory bodies to ascertain if they had any vacant sites which could be suitable for growing.

A number of Members stated that land mapping was crucial and there was always the possibility of raised beds on non-greenfield sites.

A further Member stated that an audit of land was important and that there were other competing priorities, such as housing, and that sites did not have to be singular use.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 10th September, 2026**

A Member requested that the report would consider the Right to Grow motion which the Council had passed in 2023.

A further Member stated that they would like officers to consider allotments, akin to those beside the community gardens in Musgrave Park, within any report.

A further Member stated that she would like to receive an update on the Beechvale Farm site.

In response, the Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty advised the Committee that there were a number of Council audits ongoing and that officers could bring a report to a future meeting, linking in with the Estates Team and other service areas, to explore and highlight any potential sites which could be used for community growing.

After discussion the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting:

- asking officers to liaise with the Estates Team and other service areas to explore and highlight any potential areas which could be used for community growing;
- for an update on the Beechvale Farm site; and
- taking the previously agreed “Right to Grow” motion into consideration.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Turley for her presentation and she retired from the meeting.

Climate Behaviour Change and Training Plan 2026/27

The Committee considered the undernoted report in conjunction with the Training Plan:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on training and awareness opportunities for Elected Members and Council staff in relation to climate change.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- (i) note the Climate Change Training Opportunities and Plan (attached at Appendix 1) which seeks to address two of the actions committed to in the Climate Action Plan (actions 1.1 and 1.2).**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Members will be aware that the Belfast City Council Climate Action Plan (2025), highlights the need for and benefit of increasing the awareness levels and knowledge of climate related change within the organisation and among Elected Members and staff. Accordingly, within the Climate Action Plan (CAP), there is a commitment to:

- support skills development, education and training internally for climate action, tailored for the specific needs of the departments / teams. Run periodic surveys to assess the effectiveness of the training (1.1 CAP)**
- implement an internal climate communications campaign to engage staff on climate-related topics and news internally and externally (1.2 CAP)**

3.2 Elected Member climate and sustainability training

Members will recall previous discussions within the Climate and City Resilience (CCR) Committee in relation to the need for staff and member training on climate change and sustainability, noting the increased demands on Council to support the new Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations which have been introduced.

3.3 On the 11 September 2025, an interactive climate awareness and behaviour change workshop was held for Elected Members on the CCR Committee. The session was designed by Sustainable NI and co-delivered with support from members of Belfast City Council's Climate Team. The training had been delivered through council existing membership of Sustainable NI.

3.4 Feedback from the session was positive, with members suggesting that that Elected Members, not currently on the CCR Committee, could also benefit from similar training being made available. It was acknowledged that the council's membership of Sustainable NI provided access to comprehensive training. Subsequently, a very initial training needs assessment was undertaken in liaison with Elected Members and senior officers to inform any future training activity. Members should note that a further training needs assessment will be undertaken at the early stage of commencing the new council term.

Future training programme outline

3.5 Given the significance of climate change, there is a growing volume of training and awareness initiatives and programmes being made available at a local, regional, national and international level. Accordingly, it is proposed that a segmented approach be adopted to ensuring that Elected Members and staff are aware of and can access relevant training opportunities. The intention is to utilise a combination of in-house expertise, partnership knowledge sharing and optimising training available through existing Council memberships such as Business in the Community NI, Climate NI and Sustainable NI to provide access to climate and resilience related training opportunities. The initial programme will be rolled out over a twelve-month period (2026/27) and will be subject to review and refinement as lessons are learned and new training opportunities may become available. The proposed initial scope of the training opportunities which will be made available is set out below with further details included at Appendix 1.

3.6 **Elected Members**

- *Area working groups* – deliver interactive sessions with each group on climate tools to support their constituency and committee work, covering topics such as warmer healthy homes and flood risk. Intention would be to deliver at least one workshop for each AWG annually.
- *Specialist workshops* – consult with CCR Committee members to identify specific areas of interest and explore the potential to deliver tailored workshop(s) on climate related issues.

Senior staff

- *Interactive Sessions* – develop and rollout a series of short interactive sessions with the Corporate Management Team and Departmental Management Teams on climate change related matters including e.g. regional and national policy commitments and targets.

Wider staff

- *Informal lunchtime talks* – use in-house staff and external partner expertise to deliver a programme of monthly informal climate-related information lunch time

sessions. Events will be delivered through a combination of hybrid in person and online and will cover topical climate related issues such as new plug-in solar panels, electric vehicles and growing your own food.

- *Specialist climate related webinars* – encourage staff and Elected Members to attend events on the Sustainable NI training programme on specialist and professional topics, allowing unlimited free access available through the Council's membership of SNI. A distribution list, staff training channels and Council intranet will be used to highlight training opportunities run by partners.
- *Toolbox Talks* - develop and deliver a pilot series of 'toolbox talks' - short training sessions for operational staff.
- *Online webinar-based climate training* – work with other NI councils and DAERA to explore the potential and benefit of creating a package of online training modules which can be made available to all staff.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 The training programme is based on utilising in-house expertise and staff resource, optimising training available free of cost through existing membership packages and inviting partners to contribute to events on a pro bono basis. Potential costs and funding sources relevant to any NI-wide online training resources are being explored with any future resource implications being brought back to Committee for consideration."

In response to a Member's question, the Project Support Officer explained that officers were currently focusing on in-house training. However, she would circulate a list of the training providers to the Members if they wished to share them with community organisations.

The Committee noted the Climate Change Training Opportunities and Plan.

Climate Programme - External Funding Update

The Climate Commissioner presented the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update Committee on the status on securing external funding for climate related projects.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note that:

I. Current efforts to secure external funding for climate related projects focus on the following funding sources: Lottery Climate Action Fund, GB Energy Local Power Plan and the EU Horizon fund.

II. The pipeline of projects includes:

- **£168,820 secured from the EU Horizon programme for Pathways2Resilience (P2R),**
- **a QUB bid into National Institute for Health and care Research (NIHR) for a £2.5m Healthy Adaptation consortium project (over 4 years) with more than £1m going directly to Belfast including £41k to Council,**
- **two collaborative funding applications which are planned to support delivery of the Belfast Way (Belfast Food Strategy) and a public diner pilot in Belfast (£7m and £6m respectively),**
- **an EOI to GB Energy to help shape the development of its Local Power Plan which will provide £1bn to communities and local authorities, and**
- **an EOI with potential research projects which was submitted to QUB's Foresighters Doctoral Programme which aims to appoint 20 PHD students in the autumn.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Since 2021, a variety of external funding has been raised to support the planning and delivery of the Council's climate programme under the Our Planet Board and the Council's Corporate Plan. Funding sources have included: EU Horizon, the Emergency Tree Fund, Innovate UK and Sustainable Food Places. Funded projects include: UP2030 (£166,176), UPSURGE (£660,375), One Million Trees (£289,858), Sustainable Food Partnership (£10,000), Net Zero Belfast

(£81,083), Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder (£149,964), Enhancing the viability of low carbon heat networks (£150,000).

- 3.2 This funding has provided a significant boost to the allocated annual programme budget of £172,000. As such, officers continue to explore external funding opportunities to enable the delivery of further projects that build resilience to climate shocks and stresses and enable a fair transition to a more secure and affordable energy system. These are described below.

Pathways2Resilience (P2R)

- 3.3 Pathways2Resilience (P2R) is a £21million Horizon EU funded programme in its second phase across Europe, with Belfast selected as 1 of the 62 regions in cohort 2, with 100 regions in total supported within the 5-year programme. The P2R programme contributes to the objectives of the EU Missions Adaptation to Climate Change Strategy by helping regions to better understand their climate risks through the development of a Regional Analytical Profile and Baseline Assessment, with these initial outputs due for completion by November 2026.
- 3.4 Following the Baseline Assessment, programme participation and training aims to build capacity and develop pathways to be better prepared to cope with the changing climatic conditions, and to test and deploy innovative solutions needed to enable resilience, through the production of a Climate Resilience Strategy, Action Plan and Investment Plan by August 2027.
- 3.5 In Belfast, the project runs over an 18-month period ending in mid-2027 with £168,820 secured from the above EU programme. BCC are partnering with Northern Ireland Environment Link (Climate NI) to collaborate with key partners and wider stakeholders to build on the legacy of Belfast's previous resilience strategy and existing Climate Action Plan for the Belfast City region.
- 3.6 The funding has enabled the recruitment of two Resilience Officers to support delivery of the plans - one post has already been recruited to Climate NI and one is in the process of being recruited to the BCC Climate Team. P2R will focus on identifying opportunities for transformative, collective action to enable more complex, integrated and co-designed adaptation plans for the city, importantly, with a focus on how investment planning could support adaptation and build resilience to climate change and address resource related barriers that may impact plan delivery. The project, Pathways

to a Resilient Belfast, will be supported cross-departmentally and externally through a Steering Group and Working Groups, with both due to commence meeting in September 2026.

NIHR Healthy Adaptation consortium

- 3.7** The proposed National Institute for Health and care Research (NIHR) funded Healthy Adaptation UK Consortium is a collaborative initiative led by University of York and Queen's University Belfast. Its main goal is to develop and implement climate adaptation strategies that improve public health and reduce health inequalities across the UK. The project responds to the urgent need to address climate change, which is recognised as a major threat to population health, mental wellbeing, and health equity. The consortium aims to deliver meaningful health and societal benefits by ensuring that research outputs are relevant, actionable, and capable of informing effective climate adaptation policies and practices across the UK.
- 3.8** The key objectives are to:
- 1.** generate robust evidence on climate adaptation interventions that deliver health benefits and reduce inequalities;
 - 2.** support cross-sector collaboration among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, communities, and other stakeholders;
 - 3.** inform policy development at local, regional, and national levels with actionable evidence;
 - 4.** build capacity for designing, implementing, and evaluating adaptation measures across multiple sectors;
 - 5.** facilitate knowledge exchange and shared learning throughout the UK.
- 3.9** The project emphasises an interdisciplinary, partnership-based, and co-production approach, ensuring that solutions are developed with input from policymakers, practitioners, and communities.
- 3.10** The bid is currently in its second stage and if successful the £2.5m project will run for 4 years with more than £1m going directly to Belfast including a £41k allocation to Council to cover officer time from the Climate team to participate in governance, provide strategic input, support stakeholder engagement, and facilitate connections with relevant networks.

- 3.11 The consortium will seek to understand how local climate adaptation policies and interventions (practical steps to prepare for the impacts of climate change) affect health and health inequalities.
- 3.12 The goal is to ensure that climate adaptation in the UK protects health, reduces inequalities, and leaves no community behind. The project aims to:
1. To understand what local and regional adaptation actions exist across the UK and see how they may influence health, co-benefits and reduce inequalities;
 2. Identify which people and places are most vulnerable to climate-related health risks, using data on heat, flooding, health, and deprivation;
 3. Analyse data on health, environment and the places people live, to understand how adaptation policies influence health and inequality;
 4. Understand the impacts of adaptation, whether interventions offer good value for money, who gains or loses from investments and which adaptation actions are most acceptable to communities;
 5. Co-produce practical tools, guidance, and a Healthy Adaptation Toolkit to support equitable and effective local decision-making;
 6. Support cross-sector collaboration between researchers, policymakers, practitioners, communities, and other stakeholders;
 7. Inform local, regional, and national policy development through robust and actionable evidence;
 8. Build capacity for the design, implementation, and evaluation of adaptation measures across multiple sectors; and
 9. Facilitate knowledge exchange and shared learning across the UK.

National Lottery Climate Action Fund: Food Systems

- 3.13 The National Lottery Climate Action Fund (CAF): Food Systems supports large-scale partnerships across the UK to create more sustainable, resilient and equitable food systems. The fund aims to tackle both food insecurity and climate change by supporting projects that use agroecological approaches (working with nature to produce food sustainably) and deliver systems change, meaning they address the root causes of problems rather than short-term symptoms. Funding is available for projects that improve how food is grown, distributed and accessed, particularly for people experiencing poverty, disadvantage or discrimination, while

also delivering long-term benefits for communities, nature and the environment. Grants range from £2.5 million to £7 million, with most projects running for 5 to 7 years.

- 3.14 The Council's Food Systems Coordinator is engaging with partners to develop two Expressions of Interest under the above fund which may secure significant funding to support delivery of the Belfast Food Strategy – The Belfast Way.

1. Delivery of the Action Plans of The Belfast Way - £7million (over 5-years). The bid is currently being developed with Belfast Food Partnership a cross-sector partnership of over 23 organisations from business, community, government, and academia to address food system challenges collaboratively.
2. Pilot of public diners in Belfast in line with the current pilots being carried out in Scotland - £6million (over 5-years). This is a wider collaborative bid with partners and local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales.

- 3.15 These bids are currently in the Expression of Interest phase and will continue to be taken forward by the Food Systems Coordinator.

GB Energy Local Power Plan

- 3.16 In Feb 2026, GB Energy launched its Local Power Plan to invest up to £1bn in a combination of grants, loans, advice, expert help to accelerate the build out of clean power in communities in the UK. The vision is for every community in the UK to have the opportunity to own a local energy project by 2030. As part of the launch GBE invited Expression of Interests (EOIs) from communities and local government to share project ideas in order to understand their readiness and suitability for the Local Power Plan, and whether they might need future support or investment.

- 3.17 An EOI was subsequently submitted to GB Energy. The project idea is to help engage communities in delivering energy projects in a coordinated way to ensure that the benefits of clean energy reach the communities that need them most. Specifically, the EOI proposed:

1. Establishing a £4m Community Energy Fund
2. Deploying rooftop solar on community centres and Leisure Centres (£8m)
3. Developing a web-based solar information portal for the City (£150k)

4. Commercialising a portfolio the PPA business model (developed by ESC for BCC) to scale the uptake of renewables in Belfast (£150k)
- 3.18 The proposed project idea is intended to build on Belfast's strong community and voluntary sector with neighbourhood-based organisations playing a large role in everyday civic life and regeneration. Community groups in Belfast are well placed to develop energy co-operatives and shared benefit schemes and to link energy projects to wider social goals and community resilience. However, they often lack the resources and capacity to take these projects forward. The creation of a Community Energy Fund would put communities at the centre of Belfast's efforts to transition to a more resilient energy system. The fund would support projects that address fuel poverty, build local skills and develop community-led renewable energy projects including solar and BESS projects, retrofit and renewable-energy learning programmes for schools, etc.
- 3.19 The project would also support the delivery of the Belfast Local Area Energy Plan (2024) which used energy modelling and local insights to identify rooftop solar, district heating and the retrofit of the City's aging building stock as priority projects that are cost-effective way whilst also creating multiple benefits for local communities.

Building a Belfast Resilience Intelligence Platform

- 3.20 BCC officers are collaborating with the AI department at Ulster University to build a consortium that is developing a project concept. The ambition is to establish Belfast as an international demonstrator for AI-enabled Resilience Intelligence—showing how a city can combine existing capabilities with targeted new evidence generation, multidisciplinary expertise and responsible AI to support whole-system resilience planning, investment, implementation and adaptive management. In addition to Ulster University and BCC, the consortium currently includes QUB, the UK Digital Twin Centre, DFI and Arup. This is at an early stage with a collaborative discussion paper under circulation to gather feedback, challenge and refine the emerging concept, identify opportunities and shape the next stage of programme development.

Foresighters Doctoral Programme

- 3.21 Queen's University Belfast has recently launched its Foresighters Doctoral Programme supported by the EU's

COFUND programme with 20 PhD students set to research under an overarching theme of 'Anticipatory Governance'. A key element of the programme is to provide students with secondments (between 2 weeks and 6 months), while providing an opportunity for external organisations to also co-design the student PhD projects.

3.22 During the proposal stage, the Climate team was approached by QUB to submit an EOI outlining potential research projects. An EOI was submitted with a range of project ideas under two of the programmes themes: Energy and Future Cities. There was a huge level of interest in the programme with 744 submitted applications for 20 Early Stage Researcher vacancies. QUB has selected the most promising candidates for interviews in early October. The project ideas included in the EOI will be made available to the candidates as part of their selection process.

3.23 An update on all of the above EOIs and applications will be brought back to Committee in due course outlining any specific considerations and/or decisions required from Council in going forward.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications
None at present.

4.1 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment
None.”

A number of Members congratulated the Climate Team on the significant amount of funding which they had secured to date.

A further Member stated that it was important for Members to ensure good governance and he requested the overall figure which had been spent on net zero/climate activity by the Council, and how it measured against the targets.

In response, the Climate Commissioner provided an overview of the annual figure, highlighting the significant leverage of external funding which had been secured to support the delivery of the Council's climate programme. She stated that she would submit a report to a future meeting with a more detailed summary of the funding.

The Committee noted the external funding and the pipeline of projects.

One Million Trees - Councillor Lyons to raise

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed that officers would:

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 10th September, 2026**

- submit a six-monthly update on the One Million Trees project to the Climate and City Resilience Committee; and
- liaise with the Burren Pine Project (<https://burrenbeo.com/pine/>) with a view to exploring any opportunities to identify a location(s) within Belfast which would be appropriate for planting.

Chairperson

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 22nd September, 2026

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Members present: Alderman Lawlor (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Bower, Bradley, Carson, P. Donnelly,
D. Douglas, Ferguson, Flynn, Kelly, Long,
Magee, McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McKeown
and Murphy.

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

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th August, 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 1st September, 2026.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Long declared an interest in item 2c – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in that his wife was the Justice Minister within the Northern Ireland Executive. Since the item did not become subject to discussion he was not required to leave the meeting.

Notices of Motions

The Committee considered the following Notices of Motion and agreed to the course of action as set out:

Belfast Children's Champion

The Committee noted that the motion would, in the first instance, be referred for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Standards and Business Committee,
Tuesday, 22nd September, 2026**

Food Allergy Safety in Parks Play Areas and Leisure Centres

The Committee noted that the motion would, in the first instance, be referred for consideration by the People and Communities Committee.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Committee noted that the motion would, in the first instance, be referred for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Sailortown Bridge

The Committee noted that the motion would, in the first instance, be referred for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Commemoration of the Famine

The Committee noted that the motion would, in the first instance, be referred for consideration by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Chairperson

Evidence-Based Approach to Preventing Radicalisation and Supporting the De-Radicalisation of Young Men

“This Council unequivocally condemns the recent knife attack and expresses its solidarity with those affected;

- further condemns attempts to exploit this or any other serious crime to inflame racial tensions, spread hatred or justify violence against minority communities;
- notes with alarm the growing challenge of far-right, misogynistic and xenophobic radicalisation among young men, and recognises that children and young people, as they develop their identity and seek belonging and purpose, can be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation;
- recognises that many young men are drawn towards extremist ideas not through deep ideological commitment, but through a search for belonging, respect, identity and community, particularly where they experience isolation, disadvantage or poverty;
- acknowledges the role that far-right radicalisation has played in racist violence and disorder in our city and expresses alarm at the disturbing rise in recorded hate crimes and incidents;
- expresses concern that, without effective early intervention, more young men will be vulnerable to individuals and organisations which deliberately exploit grievance, alienation and insecurity to spread hatred and prejudice;
- calls on the Executive Office and Department of Justice to develop a new, evidence-based approach to preventing radicalisation and supporting the de-radicalisation of young men, drawing on international best practice and developed in partnership with experts and practitioners in education, youth work and community development;
- further calls for this approach to go beyond traditional forms of outreach and engage young people in the spaces where radicalisation increasingly takes place, including social media, online communities and gaming platforms.”

Proposer: Councillor Whyte

Seconder: Councillor de Faoite

This page is intentionally left blank