

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 12th May, 2026

MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

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

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Maghie.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 5th May, subject to the amendment of the decision under the heading 'Integrated Advice Partnership and Community Support Funding 2026/27' to reflect that the Committee had agreed to support 'Option 1', as opposed to 'Option 2', in respect of the dispersal of the 'uplift funding'.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Doran declared an interest in respect of the item 'Summer Scheme Programme' in that he was associated with groups in receipt of funding under the terms of the programme. He left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following three items 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, 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.

Market Development Association

The Committee considered correspondence which had been received from the Market Development Association (MDA) requesting that the Council consider entering into a process to enable the transfer of the management of the Market Community Centre to the MDA through a Community Asset Transfer arrangement.

The Committee agreed that officers, supported by staff from the Estates Management Unit, would engage further with the MDA to support the development of a business case. It was noted that a report outlining a range of options would be submitted for consideration in due course.

Dog Fouling Programme/Update re: Mechanical Sweepers

The Committee considered a report in respect of the above-mentioned matter, together with several appendices related to the report.

After discussion, it was

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations as set out within the report, with the exception of 2.1, insofar as it relates to the provision of litter bins. Such a deferral would enable a report to be submitted providing further information and data. In addition, the Committee notes the growth proposals outlined within the report and the process by which they will be considered as part of the rate-setting process; and requests that a report be submitted to detail any capital costs associated with adapting additional areas within the Council's estate for the purposes of emptying and cleaning compact sweepers and dog waste collection machines.

Benview Community Centre

The Committee acceded to a request which had been received from representatives of Benview Community Centre to provide £800 in rental costs to enable the holding of a two-week summer scheme to be delivered by the Council's Play Development Team.

Council Matters/Motions

Motion re: Public Acts of Remembrance

Further to the decision of the Standards and Business Committee of 28th April, the Committee considered a Motion in respect of the above-mentioned matter, which had been proposed by Councillor Bower and seconded by Councillor Maghie. The Motion is set out hereunder:

“This Council recognises the profound importance of public acts of remembrance for people grieving for friends and family members across

Belfast. This Council wishes to support those who have experienced loss and encourage safe and environmentally friendly acts of public remembrance within its spaces. Accordingly, the Council resolves to bring back a report that will:

- explore implementing designated memorial spaces in all parks;
- consider environmentally friendly ways for remembrance events, including 'ascent' style events, such as permanent or bookable bubble stations, kite festivals, and native butterfly releases; and
- map out how to enhance the support council gives to grieving families, for example, by developing a downloadable remembrance guide to include ideas of eco-friendly ways to mark their loss personally or publicly.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Bower,
Seconded by Councillor Abernethy and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the Motion and agrees further that options relating to the planting of wild flowers and the provision of pet memorials be explored also within a report to be considered at a future meeting.

Committee and Strategic Issues

2025/26 Committee Plan

The Committee noted the contents of the year-end progress report relating to the agreed actions contained within the 2025/26 Committee Plan.

2026/27 Committee Plan

The Committee approved the Committee Plan and its associated actions and priorities for 2026/27.

Operational Issues

Dual Language Street Signs – Monthly Report

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Caffrey Drive, River Close, Summerhill Walk, Lagmore View Manor, Ludlow Square, Serpentine Gardens, Glencolin Park and Blacks Court.

Dual Language Street Signs – Review of Data Survey Process

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

At the SP&R meeting on 20th March 2026 officers were asked to provide a report to review the data collection process for conducting surveys associated with dual language street

sign applications and to consider alternatives to increase inclusiveness.

2.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to consider the process for data collection for conducting surveys in relation to dual language street sign applications and to agree that the current process for domestic properties utilizing the electoral list is continued.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members are advised of the request by the SP&R Committee in March for a report to review how data relating to dual language street sign surveys is collected and to consider options to make the process more inclusive. Concerns were raised regarding occupants, not on the electoral roll, being unable to participate in street surveys, and individuals receiving two surveys for their household.

Purpose of Street Survey

- 3.2 Both the legislation and policy regarding dual language street signage requires Council to have regard to the views on the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street.
- 3.3 The legislation states: *'In deciding whether and, if so, how to exercise its powers [to erect a nameplate expressing the name of the street in a language other than English] in relation to any street, a council shall have regard to any views on the matter expressed by the occupiers of premises in that street.'*
- 3.4 Specifically in relation to the policy it states, *'Where fifteen percent or more of the Occupiers of that street have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign may be erected, subject to the residual discretion of the Council'*. The policy further provides the following areas that may be considered when making this decision.
- 3.5
- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street;
 - (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs;
 - (c) consideration of the local context of the application;
 - (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and
 - (e) all material considerations relating to the application

Current Survey Process

- 3.6 The dual language street signs policy requires officers to canvass ‘Occupiers’ of a street to seek their views on the request to erect a street sign in a second specified language.**
- 3.7 In line with the policy ‘Occupiers’ are any person whose name appears in the current Electoral Register (over the age of 18) plus the owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, but not employees in such premises.**
- 3.8 In addition, the policy requires that each survey should have a unique identifying number and that each survey response received by the Council for that application should be cross-referenced against that unique identifier. The policy indicates that Council may choose to audit certain responses to surveys.**
- 3.9 For each survey, officers will visit the electoral office to obtain information on the numbers of occupants residing in each domestic property for a specific street. Using this information surveys will be prepared, giving each survey a unique reference number. This process allows officers to record the surveys being issued to a property and then to correlate that data with those being returned. Residents must provide a name and address on the returned survey to be a valid response as this allows checking of the address and return against the unique identifier. Names are not currently collected from the electoral register for this process. The full register is published annually and the most up to date register is used to collect survey data.**
- 3.10 Surveys have been conducted using the electoral list since 1998 when the first Belfast City Council policy was developed and adopted. However, the use of a unique identifier was introduced in the 2022 policy to make the process more robust. At least 7 of the other councils in Northern Ireland with a Dual Language Street Signs Policy use electoral register data for surveying domestic residents and the one council issues one survey per property.**
- 3.11 Using the electoral register information as the basis for surveys is considered to be the most robust way of identifying the numbers of residents who reside on the street and linking those numbers to individual properties for survey purposes. It also allows all individuals (not just households) to be surveyed by providing robust information on how many adults live within each housing unit.**
- 3.12 Domestic properties without residents on the electoral list will not receive any survey under the current process.**
- 3.13 As there is no electoral register equivalent for non-domestic properties, they are provided with one survey per**

address/business. The Land and Property Services (LPS) 'Pointer' data set is currently used in to establish numbers and addresses for such surveys supplemented by on site checks if required.

Alternative Survey Options

One survey per dwelling

- 3.14 There are no alternative sources of data, officers have identified, that would allow occupant numbers within residential properties to be quantified and/or associated with a particular street.
- 3.15 The 'Pointer' address database contains the common standard address for every property in Northern Ireland. LPS maintains the database with help from local councils and Royal Mail and Belfast City Council have access to this data through the NIMA agreement.
- 3.16 A position could be taken whereby every domestic address on the 'Pointer' database is sent a single survey. This would be an alternative to using the electoral list but would mean that one survey is issued per property and residents as a collective within each property would get a single vote. This may cause discontent within such properties with differing views of occupants who would all be entitled to vote under the current process if registered on the electoral list.
- 3.17 As an example of how this change could impact survey numbers for a specific street, the following real case scenario is provided. A street recently surveyed which had 41 domestic property addresses on the 'Pointer' dataset would result in 41 surveys being issued under the proposal as opposed to the actual 83 surveys issued to 39 properties based on the electoral list. (Two properties had no residents on the electoral list).
- 3.18 Whilst this approach may prove to be more inclusive in relation to properties on a street receiving a survey, it risks excluding many more individuals in households where there is more than one adult. In the example provided 42 people would not be given a vote
- 3.19 Officers would also point out that whilst Pointer is the definitive address dataset for NI it will not be 100% accurate and some properties may still not get a survey if they are not on the list. This would require supplementation with onsite checks against Pointer.

The use of ratepayer or land registry information

- 3.20 Councils do not currently have access to either of these datasets and for the reasons set out below consider

information from both these sources would be of limited value in relation to conducting surveys.

- 3.21 Ratepayer information held by LPS relates solely to the individual who has responsibility or is nominated to pay property tax and would not be an indicator of residency or land ownership. It is understood that Council would require a data sharing agreement with LPS to access such information and a lawful basis under GDPR giving us authority to be a recipient of such data. As with the option for one survey per household above, this option limits a survey response to only one individual who may live within the property, with no guarantee that this is their primary residence.
- 3.22 In relation to land registry information LPS also hold the 'Land Registry' for Northern Ireland and this data would prove ownership but not residency or tenancy. Searches of the Land Registry have a cost associated with them and not all properties are registered requiring further searches on the Registry of Deeds. In addition, this work would be administratively burdensome with the data obtained being of limited use in the establishment of survey data relevant to street residency.

Supplementing Electoral Register information

- 3.23 Officers could supplement the current process using the electoral list by offering a further single survey to any domestic dwelling where there are no residents on the electoral list. This would be in addition to sending surveys to all residents on the electoral list. For the street example above this would result in 2 additional surveys being issued, 1 each, to 2 properties being properties on the Pointer address list which had no occupants on the electoral list. There would be an additional administrative burden in the survey process if this were adopted. In addition, this approach would not provide equity as residents not on the electoral list would be treated differently, depending on whether someone else in the same dwelling was on the list or not.

Conclusion

- 3.24 The electoral list is used by at least 7 of the other Councils in NI with a Dual Language Street Signs policy, to conduct surveys of residents in relation to dual language street sign applications. It is the only mechanism by which the number of individuals residing in a domestic property can be determined.
- 3.25 Moving to a process of providing one survey per property would mean a much lower number of surveys being issued. In the example provided 50% reduction from 83 to 41 and occupants within properties would have to agree a collective response.

- 3.26 Similarly, whilst moving to a process of supplementing the electoral register with an additional survey for houses with no one listed would ensure that all properties receive at least one survey, this would create further complexity in the process. It may lead to criticism from other residents not on the electoral list who would not get a survey due to the fact they reside in a property with others who are.
- 3.27 Other data sources i.e., ratepayer and land registry information are not currently readily available and are also not reliable indicator of residency. The electoral register is the only data source that can be used to verify the numbers of individuals who are resident of the street being surveyed.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.28 There are no direct financial or resource implications in relation to maintaining current survey process.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs

- 3.29 None.”

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Abernethy,
Seconded by Councillor Murray,

That the Committee agrees, in addition to issuing surveys to individuals listed within streets on the electoral register, that surveys be issued also to dwellings where no residents are listed on the electoral register; and that a report outlining any additional costs associated with such a decision be submitted for consideration.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Verner,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That the proposal be rejected and, accordingly, the Committee agrees to adhere to the current process, that is, that data from the electoral register be used solely for domestic properties in relation to surveys for dual language street sign applications.

On a vote, fourteen Members voted in favour of the amendment and five against and it was declared carried. Accordingly, the amendment was adopted as the substantive motion without recourse to a further vote.

Dual Language Street Signs – University Street and Streets Not Reaching 15 Per Cent Threshold

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 This report is provided in response to a request from a member at the P&C Committee meeting on 14th March 26 for more details to be provided for the dual language street sign application at University Street to review the decision taken to close the application.

In addition, following the meeting of council on 5th May, survey figures are provided for all applications that did not meet the 15% threshold in favour of a proposal to erect dual language street signs, the list of which was provided at April P&C Committee.

2.0 Recommendation

University Street

2.1

1. Members are asked to consider the information provided and the survey results for the dual language street sign application for University Street which failed to meet the 15% threshold at street survey and either: -
 - (a) Agree the application should remain closed; or
 - (b) Advise officers on any other course of action with regard to this application.

2.2

2. Members are also asked to note:
 - (a) the results of the surveys that have been closed for all other applications failing to meet the 15% threshold of those in favour of a dual language street sign.
 - (b) that applications failing to meet the 15% threshold will be included in future standard reports for information where applications are being considered by members.

3.0 Main Report

University Street

- 3.1 The dual language street sign application for University Street requesting a second language in Irish was received on 22nd September 2022. The request was made by Cllr McKeown who is member for the District Electoral Area of Botanic. A further application was received for the same street on 4th April 2025 from Cllr McKay.
- 3.2 The survey of occupiers on the street was conducted between 23rd January 2025 and 7th February 2025.v
- 3.3 The full results of the survey are detailed in the table below with additional breakdown between domestic and non-domestic surveys as this was an issue raised in the discussion at Committee: -

Property Type	Surveys	Surveys	For	Against	No
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	Delivered	returned			Preference
Domestic (Residents on the electoral list)	90	14	12	2	0
Non-Domestic	36	10	6	1	3
	Total	24	18	3	3
	Percentage		14.28%	2.38%	2.38

3.4 The policy on dual language street signs states as follows: -

'If the minimum threshold of fifteen percent is not met, the Applicant will be given two weeks to advise the Council of any special circumstances in relation to the application. If such special circumstances relate to the processing of a survey, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, in conjunction with the City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services will determine whether such exceptional circumstances exist to refer the matter to Committee. Where exceptional circumstances relate to matters other than the processing of a survey, the matter will be referred to Committee. If there are no special circumstances, the application will end.'

3.5 In accordance with the policy the applicant was advised by letter that the street failed to meet the 15% threshold and the applicant was given two weeks to provide details of any special circumstances pertaining to the application. This correspondence was issued on 27th February 2025 with a deadline of 14th March 2025. No correspondence detailing any special circumstances was received and the applications were closed.

3.6 Members are further advised that the current policy states

'The Council will retain a residual discretion to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case-by-case basis. It may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include considering:

- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street.*
- (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs;*
- (c) consideration of the local context of the application;*
- (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and*
- (e) all material considerations relating to the application'*

Other applications where support for the erection of dual language nameplates was less than 15%

3.7 In the report provided to People and Communities Committee in April a list of streets was presented where the support for the erection of dual language nameplates was less than 15%. For noting, these are listed below at 3.10 and the results of the surveys carried out are provided for information.

3.8 Officers followed the policy for each of these applications, including consideration of any exceptional circumstances presented by a small number of applicants following the procedure as described in paragraph 3.4 above.

3.9 None of these were deemed to be exceptional circumstances, and as such all applications were closed.

Street	Language	Surveys Issued	For	Against	No Preference
Belmont Avenue	Irish	121	10 (8.26%)	38 (31.40%)	2 (1.65%)
Belvedere Park	Irish	119	13 (10.92%)	33 (27.73%)	0
Burmah Street	Irish	70	10 (14.28%)	6 (8.57%)	0
Cherryvalley Gardens	Irish	83	6 (7.22%)	43 (51.80%)	1 (1.20%)
Clovelly Street	Irish	18	0	5 (27.77%)	0
Colinvale	Irish	246	35 (14.23%)	0	0
Cooke Mews	Irish	4	0	0	0
Eliza Street	Irish	1	0	0	0
Fortwilliam Grange	Irish	65	5 (7.69%)	10 (15.38%)	4 (6.15%)
Friendly Way	Irish	30	4 (13.33%)	0	0
Hawthornden Road	Irish	91	1 (1.09%)	46 (50.54)	7 (7.69%)
Isoline Street	Irish	78	3 (3.85%)	23 (29.49%)	0 (0%)
Kent Street	Irish	42	2 (4.76%)	1 (2.38%)	0
King Street	Irish	76	3 (3.9%)	0	0
Knightsbridge Park	Irish	95	8 (8.42%)	47 (49.47%)	3 (3.15%)
Leganoe Street	Irish	6	0	0	0
Lismain Street	Irish	53	7 (13.20%)	11 (20.75%)	0
Loopland Drive	Irish	148	17 (11.48%)	63 (42.56%)	1 (0.67%)
Magdala Street	Irish	24	1 (4.16%)	0	0
Marsden Terrace	Irish	12	1 (8.33%)	0	0
McAuley Street	Irish	101	10 (9.90%)	0	1 (0.99%)

Melrose Street	Irish	91	7 (7.69%)	3 (3.29%)	0
Mill Pond Glen	Irish	83	8 (9.63%)	0	0
Mount Merrion Avenue	Irish	362	33 (9.12%)	120 (33.15%)	4 (1.10%)
Queens Road	Irish	339	16 (4.71%)	11 (3.24%)	2 (0.58%)
Ravenhill Reach	Irish	35	2 (5.71%)	4 (11.42%)	0
Shaftesbury Avenue	Irish	90	13 (14.44%)	0	0
Skegoneill Avenue	Irish	242	29 (11.98%)	43 (17.76%)	1 (0.41%)
Stewart Street	Irish	77	6 (7.79%)	0	1 (1.29%)
Sunningdale Gardens	Irish	145	3 (2.07%)	64 (44.14%)	0
Victoria Road	Irish	173	7 (4.05%)	64 (36.99%)	1 (0.58%)
Wellesley Avenue	Irish	123	9 (7.32%)	3 (2.44%)	1 (0.81%)

3.10 It is proposed that any applications where the 15% threshold has not been met will now be included for information on an ongoing basis in future dual language street sign reports being brought to People and Communities Committee.

3.11 It should be noted that following deferral from the Committee in April 2026, a further report on how any duplicate applications for dual language street signs for the same streets that have been closed will be brought to the next committee in June.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.12 There are no financial or resource implications if the decision is taken to confirm the current closure of this application. There may be financial and resource implications on any other decision dependent on the decision taken.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

3.13 The application for University Street was subject to an initial assessment and an elected member notification process to identify any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs in relation to the carrying out of the survey.

3.14 The initial assessment and elected member notification carried out for the application did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the survey being carried out.”

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Verner,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That the Committee agrees that the application for a dual language street sign for University Street remain closed since the application has failed to meet the 15 per cent support threshold as set out within the policy; that no special circumstances relating to the results of the survey have been drawn to the attention of the Council; and, as such, there exists no reason for the Committee to deviate away from the agreed policy.

Amendment

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

That the proposal be rejected and, accordingly, the Committee agrees to exercise the residual discretion set out within the policy and approve the dual language application for University Street; and, in addition, exercise further the residual discretion and approve the applications for the following streets, viz., Colinvale, Friendly Way, McAuley Street, Mill Pond Glen, Shaftesbury Avenue and Stewart Street, given that none of the residents within the streets surveyed expressed opposition to the erection of dual language street signs within the responses received.

On a vote, ten Members voted in favour of the amendment and nine against and it was declared carried. Accordingly, the amendment was adopted as the substantive motion without recourse to a further vote.

**Proposals for the Naming of a New Street
and Continuation of an Existing Street**

The Committee agreed to the naming of Kavanagh Court as a new street and to the naming of Haddo Place as a continuation to an existing street.

**One Million Trees Initiative and
Community Orchards**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the progress achieved since the introduction of the 'One Million Trees' initiative in 2020. It was reported that the Council, in conjunction with its partners, had planted a total of 293,516 new trees and 4,232 linear metres of hedging had been created since the programme began and the initiative remained on target to achieve the key aim of providing 30% tree canopy coverage across Belfast by 2050.

In relation to the Motion regarding the provision of Community Orchards, which had been adopted in March, 2026, the Council had established several small community orchards within Ardoyne, one of which lay within the grounds of a local day nursery, and one at a neighbouring community centre. Furthermore, a small community orchard had been established in the east of the city in conjunction with the L'Arche organisation, a group which worked directly with a network of communities and people with and without learning difficulties.

The Committee noted the information and congratulated officers on the progress made to date relating to the One Million Trees Initiative and Community Orchards project.

Playground Improvement Programme

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Playground Improvement Programme for 2025/26, and an outline of the work proposed for 2026/27. It was noted that the improvement work on each playground, which had been prioritised through an independent Play Value and Accessibility Audit, would be funded through the capital programme, with an allocation of £580,000 earmarked for each of the four sites.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that refurbishment work be undertaken at the following playgrounds under the Playground Improvement Programme 2026/27, viz., Mount Eagles, Lemberg Street, Willowbank and Browns Square.

Playground Accessibility - Update

The Committee noted the information set out within the above-mentioned report.

In addition, it was agreed that officers would consider further proposals to improve 'play value' and accessibility across the city and to enhance the distribution of facilities. It was agreed further that officers would examine the costs associated with producing an online map showing accessibility to Council-maintained playgrounds and would link in with Playboard NI regarding the creation of a regional map.

Requests for the Use of Parks

The Committee agreed to grant permission for the hosting of the EID Festival in the Botanic Gardens, subject to the applicants adhering to all of the stipulations set out within the report. In addition, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the recommendations presented for the allocation of specific days for the delivery of tours at Friar's Bush Burial Ground to enable further discussions to be undertaken with the two groups concerned.

Summer Programmes

The Committee noted the information as set out within the above-mentioned report.

Arising from discussion, the Committee agreed that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd May, be requested to consider providing additional funding to ensure that the maximum Summer Scheme Small Grant be awarded to all organisations which had scored 50 or over within the original assessment, the costs in respect of which would be outlined within the subsequent report.

European City of Sport 2026 Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide members with an update on proposals to deliver two funding programmes in partnership with sports organisations that will support delivery of the City of Sport Strategy and increase participation in sport and physical activity. The Funding will also help meet the outcomes of the Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and;

- Note that £80,000 underspend from the Support for Sport Fund (Tranche 2) is reallocated to the City of Sport Funding pot;
- Agree that the total funding pot for the City of Sport Funding Programme £220,000 which includes £140,000 already approved by members and is allocated as follows
- Showcase Events - £100,000 is allocated to sporting organisations for showcase event, with whom they have submitted proposals.
- Members approve the funding for the showcase events already included in this report
- Members approve that officers work with other sporting organisations and allocate the remaining showcase event budget following any relevant due diligence process is followed.
- Grassroots Programme - £120,000 is allocated through a closed call expression of interest process with sporting bodies engaged directly to make applications up to a maximum of £10,000.

3.0 Main report

31 ACES Europe have confirmed that Belfast was successful in securing the designation of European City of Sport for 2026 (Jan -Dec). ACES is a non-profit association based in Brussels and award this accolade each year, recognising the best cities, towns and regions across Europe to take part in sport. The successful bid will give the city an opportunity to showcase the excellent sports and leisure facilities provided by Belfast City Council along with the rich sporting heritage of the city.

3.2 Following a successful community launch weekend in late January 2026, our focus has now moved from application to delivery and officers are continuing to work with relevant internal services and strategic partners to expand the outline programme of activities and branding opportunities into a robust detailed programme.

3.3 Obligations to ACES as a designated European City of Sport for 2026.

It is important to note that as a European City of Sport, Belfast must comply with the general regulations as set out by ACES for successful cities these in summary include:

- 3.4 Quarterly reporting submission of reports to ACES commencing from 1 Apr 2026 and focusing on the noted requirements. Each report should include:
- A summary of the activities carried out,
 - Photographic material,
 - Media coverage and press impact.
- 3.5 These reports allow ACES to monitor the correct use and promotion of the title, ensure compliance with the Regulations, and coordinate actions and events in the most effective manner. Therefore, it is important that we ensure the application is followed with clear, tangible actions that will meet the aims of the programme which, more importantly, will have a positive outcome for our residents.
- 3.6 One of the most important aspects of the City of Sport implementation plan is working in close collaboration with our sporting partners, these are the organisations who have expertise in working with grassroots clubs and associations to provide excellent programmes and activities across all ages and abilities.
- 3.7 A report was submitted to March's SP&R Committee, members agreed to allocate a non-recurrent budget of £140,000 for programmes that will be delivered by our partners.
- 3.8 As part of yearly Sports Development Programme, Member are advised that the Sports Development team have completed this first open call for our yearly small and medium grants through our Support for Sport programme which have now allocated funding to 72 organizations. Members are advised that not all the budget was allocated and are requesting that the remaining budget of £80,000 will be aligned to the European City of Sport, this will provide an overall funding budget of £220,000.
- 3.9 Officers are recommending that this overall budget is aligned to two streams of work as follows
- 1) Grassroots programmes to build participation - Total Budget £120,000.
 - 2) Events to showcase the sporting talents of Belfast – Total Budget £100,000.
- 3.10
- 1) Grassroots Programme (£100,000)
- Officers are seeking approval from members to undertake a closed call expression of interest application process for Sporting Bodies to receive funding of up to £10,000. The programme will be worked up in more detail by officers;

however, the criteria will require that any successful applicant will have to show how their programme aligns to the outcomes included in the physical activity and sports development strategy to increase participation and showcase events. Due to the challenging timelines, we are seeking approval to award funding on completion of the assessment process and report back to members to update on progress of successful projects.

3.11

2) Showcase Events (£120,000)

Current Requests for Funding - As part of our work to making a successful application to be awarded City of Sport status, officers have been working with partners on potential showcasing events that will form part of our implementation plan. A summary of four potential events are outlined below, members are asked to consider funding request from the named organisations who will showcase events align with the European City of Sport outcomes required from ACES.

3.12 Cricket Ireland will be hosting three international events within Belfast over the next 3 months; these key fixtures include:

Ireland vs New Zealand Test Match (27–30 May 2026)

- The second Test match ever held in Northern Ireland
- Featuring the top-ranked Test team in the world

Ireland vs India

- Expected to be the highest-profile cricket event ever hosted at Stormont
- Previous fixtures between Ireland and India attracted over 100 million viewers
- Presents a unique opportunity to engage Belfast's Indian and wider South Asian communities

Ireland vs Afghanistan (ODI Series)

- A five-match series, with three matches scheduled at Stormont

3.13 Boxing Ireland (seeking £50,000) will be hosting a Commonwealth games international camp in Belfast which will see over 100 competitors from across the world stay in our city to prepare for the Commonwealth games.

Boxing Ireland want to brand the camp as part of the European City of Sport and invite boxers from across the city to attend the elite sparring sessions and engage with the boxers to promote the support.

The cost of the camp will be around £300,000 and Boxing Ireland have requested £50,000 from Belfast City Council.

- 3.14 **Athletics Northern Ireland** (seeking £8,000) have organised a celebration programme for the 50th Anniversary of the Mary Peters Track and to be part of and support the City's status as European City of Sport. The events will involve:

An International Athletics Competition to be held at the Mary Peters Track on Saturday 23rd May, which incorporates the prestigious British Milers International events, and Lagan Valley Athletics Club's supplementary events programme which is a tribute to the 50th Anniversary of the Track. VIP's and athletes who competed in 1976, along with School children who were involved in the original Opening Ceremony have been invited to attend the celebrations.

In addition, organisers are hoping to hold a special Throws Events weekend as part of the 50th Celebrations, with a 'Masterclass' and seminar attracting international Throws coaches. This will give athletes the opportunity to compete at the International on Saturday 23rd May and then participate in the Specialised Coaching and Seminars on Sunday 24th May.

This year is exciting for Athletics with high profile media coverage at the weekend with the World Indoor Athletics Championships. World Class athlete Kate O'Connor who regularly trains at the Mary Peters Track won a World Indoor Bronze Medal breaking the Irish National Record in the Pentathlon.

The amount requested for these events is £8,000.

- 3.15 Members are advised that as work on the City of Sport implementation progresses other sports bodies may request financial support from Belfast City Council for showcase events. We are seeking approval that officers will assess relevant applications via an expression of interest form which will capture future events, costs and outcomes and the Director of Neighbourhood Services will have delegated authority to award funding.

3.16 **Financial Implications**

If members agree to the reallocation of £80,000 from our Support for Sport Programme the City of Sport has an overall budget of £220,000. This is included in current revenue budgets

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

This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of

any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations.”

The Committee agreed that an £80,000 underspend from the Support for Sport fund be reallocated to the City of Sport funding programme; and agreed that the total fund for that programme be set at £220,000, including the £140,000 previously approved, and that it be allocated as follows:

- That £100,000 be allocated to sporting organisations for showcase events, for which proposals had been submitted and assessed against the relevant criteria;
- That funding in the sum of £20,000 be approved for the Cricket Ireland showcase events, that is, a series of upcoming internationals;
- That officers be authorised to work with other sporting organisations in the allocation of the remaining showcase event budget, subject to the due diligence process; and
- That, in respect of the grassroots programme, £120,000 be allocated for a closed call expression of interest exercise with sporting bodies engaged directly with eligible to submit applications up to a maximum of £10,000.

**Consultations - Construction
Products Reform White Paper**

The Committee approved responses (1) and (2) to the above-mentioned consultations and to their onward submission to The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The responses can be accessed [here](#).

**Consultations - Responses to
Consumer Product Safety Public**

The Committee approved responses (1), (2) and (3) to the above-mentioned consultation exercised and to their onward submission to The Office for Product Safety and Standards. The responses can be accessed [here](#).

Belfast Healthy Cities - Annual Business Meeting

The Committee considered correspondence which had been received from Belfast Healthy Cities Network inviting the Chairperson, or his nominee, to attend the European Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting in Viana do Castelo, Portugal, from 16th to 18th June.

The Committee agreed that the invitation be drawn to the attention of the incoming Chairperson and authorised their attendance, or their nominee, at the meeting, the costs in respect of which were estimated to be in the region of £1,000.

Pitch Partner and Facilities Management Agreements

The Committee agreed to defer, to its meeting in June, consideration of the above-mentioned report to enable officers to consider the feasibility of the Council entering into three-year pitch partnership agreements and the impact, if any, such an amendment might have upon the Pitches Strategy.

Issues Raised in Advance

Re-use of Parks Plants

At the request of Councillor McKeown, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining how the Council currently disposes of excess plants which could be recycled and/or re-used. The report would explore also how local communities might access and reuse such plants and how they could be used to support initiatives such as 'Belfast in Bloom' and the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. Officers would consider also how local 'Men's Sheds' initiatives might avail of fallen wood or trees from to support their activities.

Playpark at Short Strand

At the request of Councillor R-M Donnelly, the Committee agreed that officers would examine the feasibility of entering into a key-holding agreement with the Short Strand Community Forum to manage the locking of gates at Mountford Play Park.

Chairperson