

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



**Belfast  
City Council**

27th November, 2020

## **MEETING OF COUNCIL**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The Council will meet via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 1st December, 2020 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

## **AGENDA:**

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 26)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes
  - (a) Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 27 - 94)
  - (b) People and Communities Committee (Pages 95 - 134)
  - (c) City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 135 - 170)
  - (d) Licensing Committee (Pages 171 - 178)
  - (e) Planning Committee (Pages 179 - 210)

- (f) Brexit Committee (Pages 211 - 218)

7. **Motions**

- (a) Invitation to President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris (Pages 219 - 220)
- (b) Pay for Student Nurses (Pages 221 - 222)
- (c) Re-Opening Doctors Surgeries (Pages 223 - 224)
- (d) Zero Covid Strategy (Pages 225 - 226)
- (e) Establishment of an External Independent Review of Educational Provision (Pages 227 - 228)
- (f) Privatisation of or within the Housing Executive (Pages 229 - 230)
- (g) Funding for Palliative and End of Life Care (Pages 231 - 232)
- (h) Disability Strategy (Pages 233 - 234)
- (i) World Environment Day (Pages 235 - 236)

## **Council**

### MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 2nd November, 2020  
at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor  
(Alderman McCoubrey) (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner);  
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston,  
Rodgers and Sandford; and  
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks,  
Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins,  
Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson,  
Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Groves, Hanvey,  
Heading, Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly,  
T. Kelly, Kyle, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis,  
Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCullough,  
McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin,  
McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy,  
Newton, Nicholl, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt,  
Walsh and Whyte.

### **Summons**

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the following motions: item 8.b) Implementation of Care Partner arrangements in Nursing and Care homes, 8.c) Access to maternity wards for birthing partners, 8.e) Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, 8.i) Mental Health - Awareness and Support Campaign in that he was employed by the Public Health Agency;

Councillor Newton declared an interest in relation to item 7.a) Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading Update on Area Working, in that he was a Board Member of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre, and in relation to the motion 8.d) Closure of the Ulster Bank, he declared an interest in that his wife is a shareholder in the NatWest Group.

Councillor T. Kelly declared an interest in relation to the item 7.a) Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading Update on Area Working, in that her husband was a board member of the Belfast South Community Resources.

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Councillor McCullough declared an interest in relation to the motion 8.d) Closure of the Ulster Bank, he declared an interest in that a family member worked for the Ulster Bank.

Councillor Long declared an interest in respect of the motion 8.e) Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, in that he was a Health worker.

Councillor Kyle declared an interest in relation to item 7.a) Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading Update on Area Working, in that he was a Board Member of the Lagan Village Youth and Community Centre.

**Minutes of the Council**

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey),  
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st October be taken as read and signed as correct.

**Official Announcements**

**Congratulations**

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended congratulations to the following individuals for their awards in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List:

- Mrs, S. Toland, Director of City Services, on having been appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.);
- The High Sheriff, Councillor Verner on having been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM),
- Former Councillor, Mrs. A. Graham, on having been on having been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM);
- Ms. A. Barr, Project Manager, Women in Sport and Physical Activity on having been on having been awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM); and
- Constable. A. Kerr on having been awarded a Queen's Police Medal.

At the request of Councillor Magennis, the Lord Mayor agreed to forward a letter of congratulations to Mr. T. McCarthy on defeating his opponent and having been crowned the European Boxing cruiserweight champion.

**Welcome**

Councillor Brooks referred to the recent acquisition of Bombardier's Belfast operation by Spirit Aero Systems and welcomed the recent announcement.

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Councillor O'Hara welcomed the new legislation which will allow couples in a civil partnership or marriage that was registered in Northern Ireland to change a same sex civil partnership to a marriage or an opposite sex marriage into a civil partnership from 7th December.

**Requests to Address the Council**

**Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Initiative**

The Chief Executive informed the Council that a request had been received from Ms. C. Laverty and Mr. S. Paul, Suicide Awareness and Mental Health Initiative, to address the Council in advance of Councillor Pankhurst's motion on a Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign.

The Council approved the request and Ms. Laverty, together with Mr. Paul, were welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Laverty explained the background to the Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign which had been set up to bring a message of hope and a positive outlook for those which needed help. She suggested that an accessible Mental Health Strategy at a Community Level would be beneficial for those in need, and collaboration across the appropriate sectors to discuss the formation of a response system to respond to those in need of urgent and direct help.

Mr. Paul advised that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the situation had deteriorated, in that it had become increasingly difficult for support groups to meet face to face. He explained that therapies were unable to be delivered due to the restrictions and they were unable to use the Council building in which they normally met as it also had restricted its opening hours. He advised that access to services were needed as soon as possible.

The representatives were thanked by the Lord Mayor.

The Council noted the information which had been provided.

**Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements**

The Council was informed that a request had been received from Ms. C. Austin and Mr. D. Fee, to address the Council in advance of Councillor McAteer's motion on Implementation of Care Partner Arrangements.

The Council approved the request and Ms. Austin and Mr. Fee were welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Austin described her families situation over the recent months of her Mother's suffering from Alzheimer's disease in a Nursing Home and the difficulties they have experienced in not being able to assist in the care of her Mother over lockdown. Ms. Austin praised the Care staff and highlighted the concerns of further decline in her Mother's health if she was not able to visit and help her.

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She explained how the Care Partner system could work and advised that it was already being operated in various countries. She welcomed the establishment of the designation of relatives or close friends as “Care Partners” by the Department of Health on 23rd September.

Mr. Fee described his situation in caring for his wife with dementia, who was also in a Nursing Home. He explained that he used to visit every day to assist with her care but since the Pandemic, he had been unable to.

He suggested that the Council endorse the idea and highlighted that implementing the arrangements as quickly as possible was very important.

Ms. Austin, together with Mr. Fee were thanked by the Lord Mayor.

The Council noted the information which had been provided and that it would have an opportunity to discuss the issue later in the meeting.

**Campaign for All-Ireland Health Service**

The Chief Executive informed the Council that a request had been received from Ms. M. Holborrow, to address the Council in advance of the motion on the Campaign for All-Ireland Health Service being proposed by Councillor Ferguson

The Council acceded to the request and Ms. Holborrow was welcomed to the meeting.

Ms. Holborrow explained the urgency in the campaign’s call for an All-Ireland National Health Service due to insufficient hospital bed capacity, too few nurses and healthcare workers, poor regulation in care homes and two separate health services on an island of just 6.6 million inhabitants. She highlighted that ICU beds have come under pressure both sides of the border.

She suggested that the pandemic had brought sharply into focus the need for radical change. She advised that there was a huge backlog of people waiting for non-Covid treatments and the impact of such delays.

She highlighted that profit should not drive healthcare and it should be a basic social right that everyone was entitled to and described the importance of cross-border collaboration in healthcare. She explained that Covid had changed everything for public health policy and healthcare provision and the campaign for an All-Ireland NHS was lobbying to develop existing cross-border cooperation into a unified public health service across this island.

The Lord Mayor thanked Ms. Holborrow for her presentation.

The Council noted the information which had been provided and that it would have an opportunity to discuss the issue later in the meeting.

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**Closure of Ulster Bank**

The Chief Executive advised that a late request had been received from Mr. J.O'Connell, and Mr. B. McDowell, Financial Services Union, to address the Council in advance of the motion on the Closure of Ulster Bank being proposed by Councillor Heading

The Council acceded to the request and Mr. O'Connell was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. O'Connell explained that, in early October, a newspaper report signalled that Nat West would be undertaking a Strategic Review of its Business, and the possibility of the closure of Ulster Bank in the Republic of Ireland. He advised that this news had shocked the Ulster Bank employees, as the knock on effect would impact the 600 jobs situated in Belfast as they provided back office services ranging across the corporate sector.

He highlighted that the staff had maintained services and systems throughout the pandemic. He confirmed that they sought commitment to Ulster Bank from Nat West and suggested that they had questions regarding the Strategic Review, such as its Terms of Reference, a timeline, who was carrying it out, and its impact on concerned parties.

The Lord Mayor thanked the representatives for the presentation.

The Council noted the information which had been provided and that it would have an opportunity to discuss the issue later in the meeting.

**Minutes**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Black,  
Seconded by Alderman Kingston,

That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee and subject to the omission of the minute under the heading "Bilingual Street Signage" which has been 'called-in', be approved and adopted.

**Amendment 1**

**Finance Update**

The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive provided an urgent update in relation to the staff who were reported to be impacted by the end of the Furlough Scheme in the Finance Report of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October. As the furlough scheme had now been extended by the Government until the end of

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November, the Chief Executive recommended that, in terms of casual workers, the minute be amended to take this extension into consideration:

“Option 2 - to make payments from **1st December, 2020** to 31st March, 2021 to those casual workers who would have been offered casual shifts which may now be reduced in number or cancelled due to Covid-19, with the payments to be calculated on the basis of their average earnings over the same period in the previous year”

The Council approved the amendment.

**Standing Order 13(l)**

The Chief Executive explained that correspondence had been received from ICC Belfast and Greenwich Leisure Limited requesting additional financial support for staff. The Deputy Chief Executive outlined the amount required and how this could be financed if the Council was minded to accede to the request.

The Lord Mayor, in consultation with the Chief Executive, ruled to enact Standing Order 13(l), insofar as that the Council could commit to expenditure not previously agreed through the Committee process in that the matter was one of emergency or of such urgency that it would be impractical to the Council's interests to require compliance.

**Amendment 2**

**Finance Update**

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Alderman Dorrian,

“That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, under the heading “Finance Update”, be amended to provide the following addition: The Council agrees to support Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall (BWUH) and Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) with £50,000 to support the pay of casual workers at BWUH and up to £150,000 to support voluntary redundancy packages being offered to GLL staff at council leisure centres.”

**Leisure Transformation Programme - Assets Update**

At the request of Councillor Magennis, the Council agreed to amend the minute of the meeting of 23rd October, under the above mentioned heading, to provide that a report be submitted to the Committee in November, to consider a review process for the facilities at the independently managed centres at Sally Gardens, Grosvenor, Shaftesbury and Ballymacarrett.

**Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd October, omitting matters in respect



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of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

**People and Communities Committee**

Moved by Councillor Baker,  
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th and 20th October, 2020 be approved and adopted.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

Moved by Councillor Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 7th October, 2020 be approved and adopted.

**Licensing Committee**

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Magennis and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 14th October, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Hussey,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 13th and 15th October, 2020, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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

Moved by Alderman Haire,  
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 19th October 2020 be approved and adopted.

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**Brexit Committee**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 8th October, 2020 be approved and adopted.

**Motions**

**Nobel Peace Prize - Henry Reeve Medical Brigade**

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

“This Council recommends Cuba’s Henry Reeve medical brigade for the Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of its efforts in the fight against the global COVID-19 Pandemic.

The international community is witnessing the solidarity of health professionals who leave their own country to provide emergency assistance to countries in crisis, they are serving on the frontline in the struggle against the outbreak, from Latin America, Africa, Asia and in the heart of Europe.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

The Council agreed to vote on the amendment, when twenty-five Members voted for and nineteen Members against and it was declared carried.

**Implementation of Care Partner arrangements in  
Nursing and Care homes**

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

“This Council recognises the distress, confusion, physical and cognitive deterioration experienced by residents with dementia living in nursing homes, due to the lockdown in Spring 2020 and the subsequent curtailment of visits with relatives to one visit per week.

The Council also recognises the pain experienced by relatives of nursing home residents with dementia, many of whom - pre- COVID-19 – cared daily for their loved ones in nursing homes, assisting them with washing, dressing, eating, drinking and exercise and provided them with love and cognitive stimulation.

Whilst Council acknowledges the spread of the COVID-19 virus and adheres to the Executive guidelines on Council on public health, it also supports the “Regional Principles for Nursing and Residential Care homes

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in N Ireland” (published by the Department of Health on 23rd September, 2020), which establishes the designation of relatives or close friends as “Care Partners” and stipulates that care and nursing homes should facilitate Care Partner arrangements to enable relatives to assist with the communication, physical and emotional needs of their loved ones in care and nursing homes.

This Council calls on the Minister for Health to provide the necessary human, financial and technical resources to nursing and care homes to ensure the immediate practical implementation of safe and secure Care Partner arrangements which will underpin the rights of dementia patients in nursing homes and deliver improved health and well-being outcomes for them and their families.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groves,

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

**Access to Maternity Wards for Birthing Partners**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor T. Kelly proposed the following amendment to her motion:

“Belfast City Council notes with concern the current restrictions placed around access to maternity wards for birthing partners due to COVID-19. Furthermore, it recognises the varying measures across the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area **and the additional availability of 15 minute COVID-19 testing**, agrees to write to the Health Minister asking that further consideration is given to a consistent approach thus allowing birthing partners to be afforded increased access to **antenatal**, maternity and neonatal services”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Bunting.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

**Closure of Ulster Bank**

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

“We, the members of Belfast City Council, demand an urgent meeting with the Chief Executive Officer of Ulster Bank and the NatWest Bank Chairperson to discuss the recent revelations that NatWest is considering the complete closure of Ulster Bank, which could result in the loss of over 600 jobs based in Belfast, which directly service Ulster Bank in the Republic of Ireland.

The Council will therefore write to the Secretary of State, Branden Lewis MP, Shadow Secretary of State, Louise Haigh MP. and the four Belfast

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MPs requesting all-party meetings about NatWest's proposals. The Council will also write to the Minister for the Economy, Diane Dodds and the Chair of the Assembly's Economic Committee requesting they meet with representatives of the Financial Services Union."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

**Campaign for All-Ireland Health Service**

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

"The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented threat to public health. The scale of the crisis clearly demonstrates the critical role of a fully funded and protected public health service.

Council agrees that two divergent public health strategies to deal with a pandemic on the island of Ireland, North and South, is irrational, impractical and dangerous. Council calls on the Executive to begin developing a fully integrated all-Ireland public health strategy.

Council supports the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, to deliver an island-wide NHS, free at the point of delivery from the cradle to the grave."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Nicholl,  
Seconded by Councillor McReynolds,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Heading be amended as **follows**:

"The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented threat to public health. The scale of the crisis clearly demonstrates the critical role of a fully funded and protected public health service.

**Council pays tribute to the heroic efforts made by healthcare staff in the face of unprecedented challenges during this pandemic; recognises the importance of broad alignment of the public health strategy to deal with the pandemic across these islands and particularly the need for strong North-South cooperation; welcomes the Memorandum of Understanding between the respective Departments of Health and the commitment to ongoing close cooperation and coordination on a cross-border basis.**

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**Council calls on the Executive, the other UK devolved administrations and the UK and Irish Governments to work closely together: to develop a coordinated approach to tackling Covid-19; to provide the necessary resources and support for those sectors and individuals adversely impacted; and, to hold a summit of all 5 nations to develop consistent and coherent travel regulations to assist with safe movement within these islands particularly as we approach the Christmas and New Year holidays.**

**Council notes the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, supports the call for health services across this island Council notes the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, supports the call for health services across this island to be free at the point of delivery from the cradle to the grave and agrees to write to the Shared Island Unit to ask if they will consider this within their work streams."**

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when fourteen Members voted for the motion and thirty-nine against and it was declared lost.

The original proposer agreed, at the request of Councillor Groogan, to amend her proposal to provide for the addition of the following wording to the end of the final paragraph: **"and agrees to write to the Shared Island Unit to ask if they will consider this within their work streams."**

The proposed amended motion as set out hereunder, was put to the meeting:

"The COVID-19 crisis presents an unprecedented threat to public health. The scale of the crisis clearly demonstrates the critical role of a fully funded and protected public health service.

Council agrees that two divergent public health strategies to deal with a pandemic on the island of Ireland, North and South, is irrational, impractical and dangerous. Council calls on the Executive to begin developing a fully integrated all-Ireland public health strategy.

Council supports the Campaign for an All-Ireland National Health Service, to deliver an island-wide NHS, free at the point of delivery from the cradle to the grave, and agrees to write to the Shared Island Unit to ask if they will consider this within their work streams."

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when twenty-seven Members voted for the motion and twenty-seven against. There being an equality of votes, the Chairman exercised his second and casting vote against the proposal and it was subsequently declared lost.

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**Standing Order 23**

During debate on the previous motion, the Council's attention was drawn to the fact that, in accordance with Standing Order 23, any meeting of the Council which has lasted continuously for five hours shall stand adjourned unless the Council shall by resolution decide to continue sitting.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin and

Resolved – That the Council agrees to continue to sit until 12 midnight to consider the remaining business.

**Sealing of the Records of Mother and Baby Homes**

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

“This Council notes with deep concern the recent move by the Irish government to seal the records of mother and baby homes for up to 30 years; also notes the anguish and outcry from victims and survivors of the homes in response to the Dáil vote; resolves to write to the Irish government to express the Council's condemnation at their actions and to call on them to unseal the records; also resolves to write to the Stormont Executive to express dismay at their refusal to conduct an inquiry into near-identical institutions in the North, and to urgently call on them to conduct such an inquiry.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor O'Hara,  
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Michael Collins and seconded by Councillor Ferguson be amended as follows:

**“This Council believes that all government actions around investigations into Mother and Baby Homes must put the interests of victims and survivors at the centre and notes with concern the anguish and outcry from victims and survivors of these homes in recent weeks caused by the Irish Government's handling of the issue of access to records.**

**This Council also notes the subsequent report by the Commission for Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes has been received by**

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**the Irish Government and welcomes that the Attorney General has clarified that GDPR will apply to the Archive for access to a person's own personal information, mindful that such a release should not adversely impact on the rights of another party, nor jeopardise the effective operation of commissions of investigation;**

**Notes that the Irish Government has committed to establishing on a formal, national basis an archive of records related to institutional trauma during the 20th century; this will include archiving relevant records and witness testimony by victims and survivors; to be designed in cooperation with professional archivists and historians, as well as with victims, survivors and their advocates;**

**and resolves to;**

- write to the Irish Government to welcome this clarity encourage the Irish Government that any process or policy relating to this issue must centre victims and survivors and to work with the Stormont Executive to conduct all island research on the actions of these institutions, particularly in relation to cross-border trafficking of children.**
- This Council will also write to the Stormont Executive to request they conduct an inquiry into similar institutions in the North and which places victims and survivors at the heart of this process."**

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when twenty-five Members voted for the motion and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

The original proposer agreed, at the request of Councillor Mulholland, to amend her motion to read as follows:

"This Council notes with deep concern the recent move by the Irish government to seal the records of mother and baby homes for up to 30 years; notes the anguish and outcry from victims and survivors of the homes in response to the Dáil vote; also notes the clarification offered by the Attorney General that GDPR legislation will apply to the Archive information for access to one's own personal data.

This council resolves to:

- Write to the Irish government to express the Council's concern of the re-traumatisation of victims and survivors through recent events and to call on them to unseal the Archive and ensure the fullest information is made available to the victims is pertains to in a time sensitive manner.
- This council also resolves to write to the NI Executive to express dismay at their refusal to conduct a human rights compliant public

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inquiry into near-identical institutions in this jurisdiction, and to urgently call on them to conduct such an inquiry with victims and survivors at the heart of the process.”

After discussion, the motion, as amended, was put to the Council and passed.

**Clean Air Strategy**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor O'Hara proposed:

“This Council recognises our failure to meet EU legal limits on air pollution values despite significant progress made over recent years. The World Health Organisation and the UK Government recognise that air pollution is the largest environmental health risk we face today. This Council recognises that air pollution leads to between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths each year in the UK. This Council also recognises that medical evidence is mounting around the dangerous link between Covid-19 and air pollution.

The Belfast Agenda aims for Belfast to be a city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable, where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing. In order to achieve that vision, we must address air pollution. This Council already supports adopting the more stringent World Health Organisation air pollution limits where appropriate and has moved ahead with the first detailed assessment of air pollution sources across this city since 2010 with the welcome support from the Department. Our ambition for Clean Air Zones in the city cannot be achieved without enabling legislation from the Assembly. This Council passed a motion supporting more stringent targets and ambition for Clean Air Zones in September 2019 and has included addressing air pollution in our corporate priorities. The Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has committed to bringing forward a ‘Clean Air Strategy discussion document’ which is a roll back from previous commitments in response to Assembly questions. Further delay will lead to continuing early deaths and ongoing breaches of the EU legal limits.

This Council agrees to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs requesting the immediate development of a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland rather than a discussion document which further delays progress on addressing harmful air pollution in the city.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

The proposer acceded to a request from Councillor Ferguson to include the following wording after the second paragraph of the motion: “**Council also recognises that deprived communities are more likely to suffer from the impact of air pollution, and accordingly also recognises this issue as a class issue, impacted by socioeconomic inequalities**”.



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After discussion, the following motion, as amended, was put to the Council:

“This Council recognises our failure to meet EU legal limits on air pollution values despite significant progress made over recent years. The World Health Organisation and the UK Government recognise that air pollution is the largest environmental health risk we face today. This Council recognises that air pollution leads to between 28,000 and 36,000 early deaths each year in the UK. This Council also recognises that medical evidence is mounting around the dangerous link between Covid-19 and air pollution.

The Belfast Agenda aims for Belfast to be a city that is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable, where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing. In order to achieve that vision, we must address air pollution. This Council already supports adopting the more stringent World Health Organisation air pollution limits where appropriate and has moved ahead with the first detailed assessment of air pollution sources across this city since 2010 with the welcome support from the Department. Our ambition for Clean Air Zones in the city cannot be achieved without enabling legislation from the Assembly. This Council passed a motion supporting more stringent targets and ambition for Clean Air Zones in September 2019 and has included addressing air pollution in our corporate priorities. The Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has committed to bringing forward a ‘Clean Air Strategy discussion document’ which is a roll back from previous commitments in response to Assembly questions. Further delay will lead to continuing early deaths and ongoing breaches of the EU legal limits.

This Council also recognises that deprived communities are more likely to suffer from the impact of air pollution, and accordingly also recognises this issue as a class issue, impacted by socioeconomic inequalities.

This Council agrees to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs requesting the immediate development of a Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland rather than a discussion document which further delays progress on addressing harmful air pollution in the city.”

The Council agreed to vote on the amended motion, when thirty-eight Members voted for the motion and fifteen against and it was declared carried.

**Standing Order 13(f)**

During debate on the previous motion, the Council’s attention was drawn to the fact that the time was approaching midnight.

The Council agreed that the remainder of the Motions, as set out in the agenda, would be referred, without presentation or discussion to the Committee’s noted below, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f).

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**Suspension of Standing Orders**

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson

That the Council agrees to suspend Standing Order 13(f) to permit the motion on Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies to be debated by the Council rather than being referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Council agreed to vote on the proposal, when thirty-six Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against. As the number of Members voting in favour of the proposal was less than 80% of those present and voting, as set out within Standing Order 25, the proposal was lost.

**Action on Avoidable Winter Deaths**

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

“With the winter approaching, Belfast citizens will be increasingly susceptible to Avoidable Winter Deaths – particularly our citizens aged over 65 with underlying health conditions and vulnerable elderly people aged 85+.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, elderly and vulnerable citizens are already at high risk, it is therefore imperative that we redouble our efforts to prevent avoidable winter deaths from happening during the winter 20/21.

The increase in winter deaths is widely understood to be caused by the flu and spells of very cold weather - yet these deaths are avoidable. A combination of high energy prices, fuel poverty, ill health, low income and poor housing can make winter a dangerous time for many older people.

This Council has worked with statutory, community and voluntary partners to deliver the Belfast Warm and Well Project to tackle Avoidable Winter Deaths earlier this year. We call on Council to act decisively to implement a multi-sectoral targeted Avoidable Winter Deaths programme for the winter of 20/21.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

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**Mental Health Awareness and Support Campaign**

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

“This Council agrees that Belfast is facing a mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This Council agrees to launch an awareness and support campaign in the city centre, at strategic points throughout the city and on social media that targets those with poor mental health. The campaign will focus on posters offering support service details and general questions that have a positive psychological effect for those who read them.

Furthermore, this Council agrees to convene an urgent meeting between the Council, the Executive Office, the Department for Health and statutory agencies to discuss the formation of a community emergency response system that will allow local support services to respond to those in need of urgent and direct help.

Finally, this Council acknowledges and pays tribute to all those charities and services who offer invaluable help to our citizens that undoubtedly save lives on a daily and weekly basis.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kyle.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

**Secured Serviced City Centre Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities**

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

“The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to rethink how we live our lives. However, as we seek to build back better, it is essential that we do this in a safe, sustainable way.

Supporting cycling infrastructure in Belfast is key to this, enabling people to get around our city in a way which is good for health and good for the environment.

However, given the regular theft of bicycles in the city centre, it is important that we take steps to provide facilities to enable people to feel secure when they travel there by bicycle.

Therefore, council agrees to the creation of secured, serviced city centre civic bicycle parking facilities, and will reallocate car parking space or other appropriate property in the city centre for this purpose, and work with partners to enable this to happen.”

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The motion was seconded by Councillor McKeown.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Installation of additional Parklets on arterial routes and in neighbourhood areas**

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

“This Council recognises the importance of reimagining and reallocating community spaces as part of our recovery from COVID-19 for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

In line with our commitment in our ‘Our Recovery’ strategy, this Council will seek to install additional parklets on arterial routes and neighbourhood areas through the Department for Communities Revitalisation Programme, by setting out a specific fund for applications from businesses, institutions, community associations and other eligible applicants to be defined.

On the basis of these applications, Belfast City Council will act as the coordinating partner to lead and set out the process that will develop these physical projects from concept design and community engagement to delivery and monitoring and evaluation, working with the applicants as well as the key stakeholders (including but not exhaustive of the Department for Infrastructure, Imtac and the Department for Communities) in consultation with local residents.

Additionally, the Council agrees to engage with local businesses to improve and enhance a café culture across Belfast.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McReynolds.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies**

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

“This Council notes with deep concern recent moves by GLL to cut jobs in Belfast leisure centres through proposed redundancies.

The Council greatly appreciates the role of all leisure workers who have made a positive contribution to our services and our community over many years, and the need for fully staffed and funded leisure centres as a vital resource for the physical and mental health of communities emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Therefore, the Council opposes the proposed job losses and calls on GLL to immediately cease any moves toward redundancies; tasks the Chief Executive and the Officer team to engage with relevant trade union representatives; seek an urgent meeting with GLL management to put firmly on the record the Council's opposition; and work toward a financial package that addresses the jobs under threat and ensures no leisure worker loses their job in the weeks and months ahead."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ferguson.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**Support for Young People and Students**

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

"This Council notes the adverse effect COVID-19 has had on our city's young people and students. Accordingly, we call upon the Council to facilitate an ad hoc meeting with key stakeholders to amplify the wide range issues and ensure a joined up approach is taken."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mulholland.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

**Belfast City Council Cycling Champion**

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

"This Council agrees to introduce a Belfast City Council - Cycling Champion within the Council to support active travel and bicycle use; and, agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure calling on the publication of the Belfast Bicycle Network."

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAllister.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

**Belfast Bikes - Pilot Scheme to use Rolloe**

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

"Belfast bikes helps encourage citizens and visitors to our city to get around Belfast, while helping reduce our carbon footprint."

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Promoting cycling and investing in safe cycle lanes will be paramount in our fight against climate change.

What if we can also help clean the air as we cycle?

A new award winning design called Rolloe transforms the humble bike wheel into an air purifier that sucks in polluted air, filters out the pollutants and releases the clean air back out into the city.

Similar to a motion last year to investigate the potential of city trees, I call on this Council to explore a pilot scheme to use Rolloe on Belfast bikes with the view to use throughout the fleet if successful and help promote all cyclists to explore the usage of Rolloe on their own bikes.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Chairperson

# **Council**

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

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 19th November, 2020  
at 4.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor  
(Alderman McCoubrey) (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker);  
The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner);  
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and  
Sandford; and  
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks,  
Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins,  
Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson,  
Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading,  
Howard, Hussey, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long,  
Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McCabe,  
McAllister, McAteer, McCullough, McDonough-  
Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McReynolds,  
Mulholland, Murphy, Newton, Nicholl, O'Hara,  
Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt, Walsh and Whyte.

### **Summons**

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillors Hutchinson and McMullan.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Official Announcements**

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, welcomed Councillor McCabe to her first meeting.

He also congratulated Councillor Beattie on the birth of his sixth child and Councillor Verner on the birth of her grandchild.

### **Suspension of Standing Orders**

The Chief Executive advised the Council that six requests for representation had been received in relation to the motion. She pointed out that Standing Order 8 states:

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***“Deputations shall not comprise of more than 3 persons and shall be restricted to making not more than two short speeches of not more than 10 minutes total duration.” Accordingly, if the Council was minded to accede to the additional requests, it would be required to suspend Standing Orders.***

The Council agreed to suspend Standing Order 8 to allow the additional speakers to be heard but agreed that each speaker be restricted to not more than 5 minutes in duration.

**Request to Address the Council**

The Chief Executive informed the Council that requests for representation had been received from Mr. J. Girvan (Upper Andersonstown Community Forum), Mr. P. Armstrong (Trussell Trust), Dr. C. Fitzpatrick (Ulster University), Mr. D. Power (Greater Falls Neighbourhood Partnership), Mr. M. Maguire (Crumlin Ardoyne Neighbourhood Partnership) and Ms. N. Brennan (Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group).

The Council approved the requests and the representations were welcomed to the meeting.

Each speaker then presented to the Council their respective views in respect of the Motion.

Mr. J. Girvan commenced by referring to the successful coordinated approach that the Upper Andersonstown Community Forum had adopted with the support of the Council during the first phase of the pandemic. He advised that during this phase food parcels had been distributed to over 1400 houses in need in West Belfast over a 12 week period and he welcomed the motion which would hopefully enable this work to continue over the Christmas period.

Mr. P. Armstrong advised that the Trussell Trust was concerned about the motion. He explained that setting up publicly funded food aid programmes of this scale represented a failure of government to provide direct support to families. The Trust felt that, instead of providing in-kind support in the form of food aid, financial support should be directed to organisations across the city that could ensure that those in need were given targeted support. It felt that this would provide more flexibility and dignity to people experiencing financial hardship rather than the proposed delivery of thousands of food packages which had the potential to see a duplication in services that already existed.

Dr. C. Fitzpatrick concurred with Mr. Armstrong. She outlined that the problem was not just food poverty but overall poverty and general financial hardship and the answer to financial hardship would not be found through food aid alone. She stated that it was essential to reduce the flow of people who needed to use food banks and she implored the Council to instead provide financial support to community partners who could direct financial support to those in need.



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The remaining speakers all spoke in support of the motion and outlined the valuable work that their respective organisations had undertaken in providing direct support to people in need throughout the city. Whilst they noted that levels of deprivation and poverty existed before the pandemic, they stated that it was important to provide support and to ensure it was rolled out quickly to those in need during the second phase of the pandemic so families were not left in a crisis situation over Christmas.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, thanked the deputations for attending and they left the meeting.

**Motion**

**Food Poverty**

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

“This Council takes note and commends the recent campaign of Marcus Rashford to eradicate child hunger over holiday periods and also the recent statement from Doctor Julie-Ann Maney, a paediatrician from the Royal Hospital for Sick Children who is urging government to tackle child poverty.

Food poverty is a massive issue in normal times and during this pandemic we have seen a huge increase in the demand for food from vulnerable people.

Our children, our vulnerable and our elderly should not be going hungry this Christmas.

We as elected members of this City will do all we can to help those in need.

Therefore this Council will create a fund of 300k and immediately distribute those funds to Neighbourhood Renewal areas across all 4 quarters of this city to provide food parcels for our citizens and communities who are in most need this Christmas.

The amount of funding per area will be scaled based on the population size of the particular Neighbourhood Renewal area.

Furthermore this council will work proactively with the Department of Communities to come up with additional funding beyond our council commitment to try and address food poverty across our city.

Additionally in order to get this money out in time this council agrees to give council officers delegated authority to engage and fund organisations who have previous experience in the distribution of food parcels.”

The motion was seconded by Alderman Dorrian.

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The proposer acceded to a request from Councillor Nicholl to amend the motion, agreeing to leave the first three paragraphs (ending at Christmas) and to replace the remainder of the motion with the following wording:

“Furthermore, this council recognises that there is a need to tackle poverty in its entirety, including access to cash payments for goods, utilities, foods and other basic necessities in order to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

This Council recognises the contributions played by key organisations throughout the city who work tirelessly towards addressing poverty and those organisations that have a vast amount of experience and established campaigns, hardship schemes and access to wider advice provision.

Therefore this Council agrees to create a fund of £300,000 to provide additional and holistic support to those who are in need this Christmas. The fund would be distributed on the following basis:

- £150,000 to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal; and
- £150,000 to be shared across BCC third sector partners for bespoke and targeted support programmes, with any un-utilised funding from this provision reverting to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal.

Furthermore this council calls upon the Department of Communities to release further funding to alleviate hardship in all parts of the city and commits to work with the department and community sector partners to alleviate imminent hardship while adopting a strategic approach and clear outcomes towards the elimination of poverty through the co-design and co-production of a comprehensive and resourced Anti-Poverty Strategy as a matter of urgency.”

At the request of Councillor Groogan, Councillor Nicholl agreed to add the following paragraph to the amendment:

“This Council also recognises the additional pressure that gift-giving at Christmas presents to some families and commits to bringing forward a pre-loved toys scheme as soon as practicable.”

The proposer, Councillor Beattie, acceded to the request from Councillor Nicholl to accept the aforementioned amendments to the motion.

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**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Matt Collins,  
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the motion, as amended, standing in the name of Councillor Beattie and Alderman Dorrian be amended further so that paragraphs six, seven and eight be replaced to read as follows:

“That this Council agrees to create a fund of £600,000 to provide additional and holistic support to those who are in need this Christmas. The fund would be distributed on the following basis:

- £300,000 to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal
- £300,000 to be shared across BCC third sector partners for bespoke and targeted support programmes, with any un-utilised funding from this provision reverting to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal.”

The Council agreed to vote on the amendment, when seven Members voted for, thirty-two Members against and 18 no votes, and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the motion, as amended, was put to the Council and passed as follows:

“This Council takes note and commends the recent campaign of Marcus Rashford to eradicate child hunger over holiday periods and also the recent statement from Doctor Julie-Ann Maney, a paediatrician from the Royal Hospital for Sick Children who is urging government to tackle child poverty.

Food poverty is a massive issue in normal times and during this pandemic we have seen a huge increase in the demand for food from vulnerable people.

Our children, our vulnerable and our elderly should not be going hungry this Christmas.

Furthermore, this council recognises that there is a need to tackle poverty in its entirety, including access to cash payments for goods, utilities, foods and other basic necessities in order to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

This Council recognises the contributions played by key organisations throughout the city who work tirelessly towards addressing poverty and those organisations that have a vast amount of experience and established campaigns, hardship schemes and access to wider advice provision.

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Therefore this Council agrees to create a fund of £300,000 to provide additional and holistic support to those who are in need this Christmas. The fund would be distributed on the following basis:

- £150,000 to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal; and
- £150,000 to be shared across BCC third sector partners for bespoke and targeted support programmes, with any un-utilised funding from this provision reverting to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal.

This Council also recognises the additional pressure that gift-giving at Christmas presents to some families and commits to bringing forward a pre-loved toys scheme as soon as practicable.

Furthermore this council calls upon the Department of Communities to release further funding to alleviate hardship in all parts of the city and commits to work with the department and community sector partners to alleviate imminent hardship while adopting a strategic approach and clear outcomes towards the elimination of poverty through the co-design and co-production of a comprehensive and resourced Anti-Poverty Strategy as a matter of urgency.”

In order to progress the matter, it was agreed that the allocation of the £150,000 community fund be considered, in the first instance, by the Party Group Leaders with authority delegated to the Council’s Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to take the decision in respect of the final allocation. It was noted that a special meeting would be convened for this purpose.

**Call-in**

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council’s or the public’s interest.

Chairperson

## Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 20th November, 2020

### MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford;  
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,  
Groogan, Heading, Long, Lyons, McAllister,  
McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, McReynolds,  
Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillors Matt Collins and Gormley.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;  
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;  
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational  
Strategy  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer

#### **Apologies**

No apologies were reported.

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd October, omitting those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November, subject to the omission of the decision under the heading "Bilingual Street Signage", which had been called in.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

#### **Restricted Items**

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the meeting during discussion of these items as, due to

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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.

**Restricted Items**

**Medium Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme**

The Director of Finance and Resources drew the Committee's attention to a report which provided a further update on the assessment of the key financial factors which would influence the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021/22 - 2023/24 and the rate setting process for 2021/22, together with an overview of the priorities and work in progress to establish the 2021/22 – 2023/24 Efficiency Programme.

The report set out the six key elements involved in the annual setting of the District Rate and provided details of the main business as usual cost pressures, licences/support costs, rates scenarios, growth proposals and the Efficiency Programme. It provided also details on the forecast non-recurrent impact of Covid-19 on 2020/21 income and expenditure levels.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Finance Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd October, it had received an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position and on a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures which had and would be taken as the situation evolved. Accordingly, the Director of Finance and Resources submitted a further report which provided the latest forecast update, as well as the outturn report and Treasury Management Report for Quarter 2 of 2020/21.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Unit Fees for St George's Market**

The Committee agreed to defer until the special meeting being arranged to allocate funding for food poverty, a report in response to a request from Councillor Gormley to waive, for a three-month period, rental fees for those businesses operating from the units in St. George's Market, in light of the trading difficulties which they were experiencing as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The report had included also a request from stallholders within the market to waive rental fees for a further three months for the same reason.

The Committee agreed also that the report should include details of the cost to the Council of waiving, for a two-week and a four-week period, the rental fees for those businesses within its estate which would be adversely affected by the imposition of the further restrictions which had been announced by the Northern Ireland Executive on 19th November and how that cost would be met.

### **Update on the Operational Recovery of Council Services**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the recovery of Council services and the response to and ongoing management of the second wave of Covid- 9.

The Chief Executive reported that, in terms of service recovery, the Council continued to adhere to its six guiding principles for sustaining its services and pointed out that, over the past month, officers had been collating information for use in the event of a second lockdown or further restrictions being imposed, with the aim of trying to maintain operational status for as many services as possible. The Council was continuing to work closely with the Public Health Agency and was engaging with key services and had processes in place to quickly access and implement any changes to services, following any amendment to regulations. It was also working closely with the Executive Office to foster a culture of compliance and adherence to the current restrictions, with enforcement teams playing a key role.

She provided an update on the current operational status of Belfast Castle and Malone House and referred to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners (in respect of its Police Force) and, which set out an agreed framework for the enforcement of Covid-19 related regulations.

She highlighted the Covid-related guidance for staff which was being provided through the Council's internal communication channels and, finally, reviewed the work which was being undertaken in response to the Chancellor's decision to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 31st March, 2021.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Destination Hub – Update on Outline Business Case**

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

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Belfast Destination Hub represented the key project under the tourism and regeneration pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal.

She reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 21st June, 2019, it had granted approval to proceed to the next stage in the development of the Hub, which would comprise a number of work strands and involve the production of a Treasury compliant Outline Business Case, which would require approval by the Department for the Economy before funding could be allocated.

She explained that the final draft of the Outline Business Case had been prepared and that it was currently under review, with advice and feedback having been requested from the Departments for Communities, the Economy and Finance, as well as Tourism NI, prior to it being submitted to the Belfast Region City Deal Executive Board for consideration.

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The Programme Director provided a brief overview of the Belfast Destination Hub, including its primary objectives, the draft programme and timescale and the direct and indirect benefits to the City and provided additional information on the strategic, economic, commercial financial and management elements reflected within the Outline Business Case.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and granted approval for the Destination Hub Outline Business Case to be submitted to the Belfast Region City Deal Executive Board by the deadline date of 8th December.

**Recruitment of Senior Posts**

The Committee noted the timeline for the recruitment of the post of Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, following the retirement in September of Mr. Nigel Grimshaw from the Council, and agreed that the selection panel should comprise the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee (or their nominees), together with Councillor Groogan.

The Committee noted also that a request to appoint a selection panel for the new post of Head of Climate, which had been created due to the forthcoming departure of Ms. Grainia Long from the Council, had been withdrawn to allow for additional work to be undertaken. The matter would now be considered at the special meeting which was being arranged to allocate funding for food poverty.

The Committee agreed also that the potential for appointing a Council officer to deal specifically with the increasing issues of poverty and deprivation should be examined.

**Inner City Kerbside Sort – Update on APSE Review**

(Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the findings to date of a review which had been undertaken by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) of a waste collection options appraisal for inner Belfast, which the Committee had requested at its meeting on 21st August.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the content of the report, including the need for APSE to undertake further in-depth research to build upon its findings;
- ii. noted that Council officers, with support from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), would run a detailed collections modelling on emerging proposals, details of which would be presented to the Committee within a composite report in the New Year; and
- iii. agreed to support an invitation being extended to the Collaborative Circular Economy Network, which represented businesses in Northern Ireland which utilise recycled products collected by councils, to make a future presentation, with the People and Communities Committee



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meeting on 8th December being suggested and all Members to be invited to attend.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Motion - Secured Serviced City Centre  
Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion on Secured Serviced City Centre Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor McKeown:

“The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to rethink how we live our lives. However, as we seek to build back better, it is essential that we do this in a safe, sustainable way.

Supporting cycling infrastructure in Belfast is key to this, enabling people to get around our city in a way which is good for health and good for the environment.

However, given the regular theft of bicycles in the city centre, it is important that we take steps to provide facilities to enable people to feel secure when they travel there by bicycle.

Therefore, the Council agrees to the creation of secured, serviced city centre civic bicycle parking facilities, and will reallocate car parking space or other appropriate property in the city centre for this purpose, and work with partners to enable this to happen.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion had been referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Smyth informed the Committee that the increasing number of bicycle thefts in the City centre, as had been confirmed recently by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, had highlighted the need for secure facilities to be provided for cyclists in that area and had given rise to his motion.

He pointed out that the significant growth in cycling, together with the likely increase in the number of e-bikes over the coming years, reinforced this need and he suggested that a vacant retail unit or units within the City centre be used for that purpose. He, therefore, urged the Committee to adopt his motion and, in so doing, agree that Council officers work with the Belfast Community Safety Partnership, the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Sustrans and other stakeholders to produce, within a three-month timescale, a report on the feasibility of putting in place, preferably by the spring of 2021, a secure facility for bicycle storage in the City centre.

In response to a request from a Member, Councillor Smyth agreed to amend his motion to provide for the inclusion of e-bikes and e-scooters.

During discussion, clarification was sought on current bicycle storage provision in the City centre and the need for improved cycling infrastructure in the west of the City and to

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extend the Belfast Bikes scheme into that area was highlighted. The point was made that storage facilities should be covered and that the use of Section 76 Developers' contributions and the acquisition of funding from other sources should be explored.

In response, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy pointed out that the Council had, as part of its response to Covid-19, secured funding from the Department for Infrastructure to increase bicycle storage facilities across the City and that a number of potential sites were being assessed. It was hoped that these would be capable of storing between ten and twenty bicycles. He pointed out that a review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, which had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, would seek to address the issues which had been raised in relation to the west of the City and would also consider other areas.

The Committee adopted the motion, as amended, and agreed to the submission of a report, in line with that which had been requested by Councillor Smyth, and incorporating those additional points which had been raised.

**Motion: Climate Change Act - Further Response from  
Minister of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, had passed the following motion on a Climate Change Act, which had been proposed by Councillor Flynn:

"This Council welcomes the environmental commitments in the New Decade New Approach Deal. This council is deeply concerned that the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs did not support an Assembly Motion to develop a Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland.

This Council notes that Northern Ireland has fallen behind other parts of the UK in progressing reduction of emissions. A Climate Change Act can help us realise the ambition of the Belfast Agenda to create an environmentally sustainable City. This Council calls on the Minister to immediately prioritise the development of a Climate Change Act with legally binding and ambitious sectoral emission-reduction targets and a just transition to protect jobs through upskilling in less carbon intensive sectors."

The City Solicitor reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 23rd October, it had considered a response from the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Minister had confirmed that he had written to the UK Climate Change Committee for advice on what Northern Ireland's equitable contribution to the UK's net zero emissions target would be, to ensure that its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets were credible and evidence-based. Unfortunately, the Committee had not been in a position to respond to his request until after it had provided advice on the UK's sixth carbon budget, which would be published in December, 2020.

In the interim, his officials had provided him with proposals on an options appraisal for a Climate Change Bill in Northern Ireland. The Minister would consider those options, along with the advice provided by the Climate Change Committee, and would present his findings to the Northern Ireland Executive to agree a way forward.

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The Committee, on 23rd October, had noted the Minister's response and had agreed that a further letter be forwarded to him seeking an update on the work which was being undertaken by his Department to address increasing carbon emission levels, including the mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and enforcement, the role of the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in that work, and any assessment of carbon emissions which had been undertaken at a local level.

The Minister, within his response to that letter, had pointed out that reducing carbon emissions required a collective approach from Government and society and that it was the responsibility of Northern Ireland Departments to take action to reduce emissions in those areas under their control. He had explained that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was responsible for emissions in the Agriculture, Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry and Waste sectors and that it was taking forward or supporting a number of programmes of work which would directly contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

He had gone on to review the latest greenhouse gas emission figures for Northern Ireland and for its proportion of total UK emissions, both overall and in relation to the agriculture sector and had pointed out that that sector was recognised by the Climate Change Committee as being one of the most difficult in which to achieve reductions.

The Minister had then confirmed that the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency was responsible for enforcing the various pieces of legislation designed to protect the environment and public health from harmful emissions and had concluded by referring to the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations and to the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, in the context of the monitoring and reporting of emissions.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Motion: Moratorium on Licences for Fracking and Exploration  
and Extraction of Fossil Fuels - Response from Ministers for the  
Economy and Infrastructure**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st October, had passed a motion on Licences for Fracking and Exploration and Extraction of Fossil Fuels, which had been proposed by Councillor Baker:

"This Council recognises that we are in a climate emergency and, being aware of the environmental and public health damage caused by fracking and the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons, agrees to write to the Minister for the Economy and to the Minister for Infrastructure to establish their respective intentions regarding (i) the issuing of exploratory licences and (ii) the removal of Permitted Development Rights for hydrocarbon exploration which are currently provided for under Part 16 of the Planning Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Council also calls upon the Northern Ireland Executive to place an immediate ban on all petroleum licensing and deny permitted development rights to any company seeking to prospect for oil and or/gas."

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The City Solicitor informed the Committee that responses have now been received from the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for Infrastructure.

The Minister for the Economy, within her response, had confirmed that the policy governing the issue of Permitted Development Rights for hydrocarbon exploration was the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure and that she had, therefore, no comment to make on that matter. However, that section of the motion dealing with the issuing of exploratory licences and calling upon the Northern Ireland Executive to place an immediate ban on all petroleum licensing did fall within her remit.

She had explained that, on 13th October, in response to a Private Member's motion on Onshore Petroleum Licensing and Drilling, she had outlined in the Northern Ireland Assembly her position on a moratorium or ban on petroleum development, as well as her intentions regarding the handling of two current petroleum licence applications. The full transcript of that debate can be accessed by clicking on the following link and scrolling down to page 28: <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-13-10-2020.pdf>

The Minister for Infrastructure, within her response, recognised, like the Council, that there was a climate emergency and had stressed that she was continually examining ways in which to address it. She referred to the fact that, on 5th October, she had announced her intention to bring forward a package of changes to permitted development rights, including the removal of permitted development rights for petroleum (oil and gas) exploration. Her proposals would be presented to the Infrastructure Committee in the coming weeks for scrutiny.

The Minister had then pointed out that her Department also had a responsibility for regional planning policy, including the Strategic Planning Policy Statement provisions that "there should be a presumption against the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts." She confirmed that her position on this issue, like those of her predecessors, remained unchanged, and that, in her view, that remained an appropriate precautionary approach.

The Minister had then highlighted the need to note that any proposals for development, involving unconventional hydrocarbon extraction, were likely to be determined by her Department as regionally significant development. Such proposals would be assessed on their individual merits and would take into account Strategic Planning Policy Statement provisions, the views of consultees and all other material planning considerations, including health and environmental impacts. Finally, she had pointed out that there were currently no such planning applications before the Department for Infrastructure for consideration.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Motion: Funding for the Arts and Creative Industries –  
Response from Ministers for Communities and Finance**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st October, had passed the following motion on Funding for the Arts and Creative Industries, which had been proposed by Councillor Mulholland:

"This Council acknowledges the contribution of those employed in the Arts, Events and Creative Industries. It understands the impact that lockdown has

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had on these sectors; on theatres, museums, live music venues, comedy clubs, freelancers and individual artists and all other creative outlets that have been in the dark since March, with most having no finite indication of when their activities can recommence safely.

The Council welcomes the allocation of £29million by the Northern Ireland Executive to the Arts, Culture and Heritage sectors, as part of a £1.57 billion investment from the UK Government, purposefully designed to protect these world class industries across the UK.

The Council agrees to write to the Communities Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín, in support of the direct allocation of funds to those within these industries who have been most impacted. The Council agrees also to write to the Finance Minister, Conor Murphy, to encourage any further measures that can be taken to support and protect the creative sectors going forward.”

Mr. J. Ball, Head of Arts Branch, who had responded on behalf of the Minister for Communities, had stressed that the Minister placed great value on the role of arts and culture and that she had been engaging with representatives from across the sector and was fully aware of the significant impact which the Covid-19 restrictions were having on them. The Minister had welcomed the £29m of funding which had, in September, been allocated by the Northern Ireland Executive across the arts, language, culture and heritage sectors and the wider creative economy. On 28th October, she had allocated the first £3m of that to the Individual Emergency Resilience Programme, which was administered on her Department’s behalf by the Arts Council for NI. This, Mr. Ball had pointed out, had built upon the Department’s earlier investment in the Fund and had allowed for further grants totalling £3.85m to be made to 1,089 people in the sector who contributed significantly to the economy and the lives of many people here. The Programme was open to all those working across the creative economy and in many other categories and he had provided examples of those who had benefitted from it.

Mr. Ball had concluded by providing details of a series of further allocations from the Executive’s funding package and by confirming that the Minister would announce shortly how the remaining £8m would be distributed.

The Minister of Finance, within his response, had referred to his lead role in liaising with the Treasury, and had addressed also another motion which had been passed by the Council on 1st October, calling upon the Minister for the Economy to undertake an investigation into how the Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme could be retained at pre-October 31st levels, including the earmarking of funds to minimise the impact of job losses.

He had stressed that he fully recognised the significant pressures which many workers and businesses, including those from the arts and creative industries sector, were facing and accepted that those had increased further following the introduction by the Executive on 16th October of new restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19.

He had pointed out that, like the Council, he too was concerned about the shortcomings and gaps in the aforementioned schemes and that he had raised his concerns directly and repeatedly with the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Michael Gove M.P.

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However, he had stressed those were Treasury schemes and, given the extent of the wage support involved and the fact that they were administered via the tax system, only the Treasury could put them in place. He had added that the Executive itself had implemented other steps to support those affected by Covid-19 through the rating system and a number of grant schemes which had been established.

The Minister had proceeded to point out that the new Job Support Scheme and an extension to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme had been announced on 24th September, as part of the Treasury's Winter Economy Plan. There had been further announcements on the Job Support Scheme since then and he referred to the fact that it had been enhanced for businesses which had been forced to close or which had been significantly restricted, known as the JSS Closed. Until November, businesses which had previously used the furlough scheme could continue to do so. However, there were significant concerns that, in the transition between the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme coming to an end and the Job Support Scheme opening at the start of November, many would not receive the wage support which they desperately need. Therefore, he had written to the Chancellor to urge him to bring forward the start of the JSS Closed scheme till 16th October but, disappointingly, he had not heeded that call. As a result, wage support for those new employees who were ineligible under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would not be available until the JSS Closed scheme began on 1st November.

In addition, the Chancellor had, on 22nd October, announced some further changes to the JSS Open scheme, where there would now be a reduction in the employer contribution to employee wages and in the time required for an employee to be in work since the scheme had been first announced. This, the Minister had stated, was welcome and would ensure that employees would continue to receive at least 73% of their normal wages, where they earned £3,125 per month or less and where employers would now have to contribute 5% of employees' wages for hours not worked. Further to that, the Chancellor had announced a doubling of payments under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme extension from 20% to 40% of average monthly profits, up to a total of £3,750, although the Minister had recognised that it remained lower than the levels provided previously.

The Minister, in conclusion, had stressed that the Executive would continue to examine ways in which to support businesses moving forward, including those from the arts and creative industries sector, which he pointed out had recently received an additional allocation of £29m for cultural recovery. He accepted that there were many businesses who had not benefitted from previous or current support schemes and confirmed that he had encouraged Executive colleagues to bring forward proposals for those sectors within their area of responsibility, with a view to supporting businesses and protecting livelihoods.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Proposed Approach for the Strategic Consideration of  
Motions and Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

The Committee deferred consideration of a report seeking approval to implement a proposed strategic approach for monitoring and tracking motions and issues raised in advance by Members to allow it to be considered in the wider context of a review of Standing Orders and the remit of the new Standards Committee.

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**Review of Active Motions**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 25th October, 2019, it had considered the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Nicholl and which had been referred to it by the Council on 1st October:

“This Council notes that other councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion and agrees that the Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly update which will be brought to each Council Meeting, detailing the following:

1. Date received
2. Notice of motion title
3. Submitted by which Councillor
4. Council meeting date
5. Committee motion is referred to
6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated
7. Month it will be reported back to committee
8. Other action to be taken.”

The Committee had agreed that a report on the future management of motions be presented to the Committee at a future date.

The City Solicitor reported that, since 2016, the Council had considered over 300 motions and issues raised in advance by Members, over 100 of which had yet to be considered in terms of their resource implications. Typically, fifteen motions were now being presented each month to the Council.

He explained that, up to February, 2020, 101 motions were still open. Those had been reviewed by officers and had been categorised and numbered as follows:

1. Motions which contained an action which has been completed and were being recommended for closure – 39;
2. Motions which had been incorporated into Council policy and were being recommended for closure – 30; and
3. Motions which were continuing to progress – 32.

He drew the Committee’s attention to a list of motions which had been placed under each category and, in terms of future management arrangements, confirmed that a live database had been developed, which would be managed jointly by the Democratic Services and Strategy and Policy Units. The database would, on a quarterly basis, be filtered according to Committee and a report would then be presented to that Committee summarising the main issues and making recommendations regarding closures.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved the recommendations relating to those motions listed within categories 1 – 3 above and agreed, at the request of a

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Member, to move the motion under the heading “Belfast Energy Transition Strategy” from category 2 to category 3, given that it remained an priority area for the Council; and

- ii. approved the arrangement for the future management of motions, as outlined.

**Motion: Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion on Belfast Leisure Centres – Proposed Redundancies had been proposed by Councillor Matt Collins and seconded by Councillor Ferguson:

“This Council notes with deep concern recent moves by GLL to cut jobs in Belfast leisure centres through proposed redundancies.

The Council greatly appreciates the role of all leisure workers who have made a positive contribution to our services and our community over many years, and the need for fully staffed and funded leisure centres as a vital resource for the physical and mental health of communities emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the Council opposes the proposed job losses and calls on GLL to immediately cease any moves toward redundancies; tasks the Chief Executive and the Officer team to engage with relevant trade union representatives; seek an urgent meeting with GLL management to put firmly on the record the Council's opposition; and work toward a financial package that addresses the jobs under threat and ensures no leisure worker loses their job in the weeks and months ahead.”

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Collins welcomed the extension of the furlough scheme until 31st March, 2021. He referred to the fact that GLL was in the process of implementing yet another voluntary redundancy scheme and highlighted at length the detrimental impact which that would have upon the terms and conditions of staff and service provision moving forward. He pointed out that the Committee had, during previous GLL voluntary redundancy schemes, sought the views of the Trades Unions and he stressed that it would be beneficial to do so again.

During discussion, several Members pointed to the fact that Elected Members on the Active Belfast Limited Board had been unaware of GLL's intention to implement a voluntary redundancy scheme and pointed to issues around communication and the operation of the Board generally. That led to a review of the Board being requested.

Other Members highlighted the need for information on, for example, the furloughing of staff, to be provided for specific categories, rather than on an overall basis, and deficiencies in GLL's marketing strategy, compared to other leisure providers, was raised.



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The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the relationship between the Council and GLL was set out in a number of agreements and that the formal contract needed to be respected. However, there was scope for a review of the Active Belfast Limited Board.

The Committee noted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the Active Belfast Limited Board, including its membership and governance arrangements.

**Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

**Update on City Region Growth Deal**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**1.1 This report is to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).**

**2.0 Recommendations**

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

- i. the programme overview, the update in respect of each of the pillars , the progress that has been made in Outline Business Case (OBC) development and the important stage that the programme is now approaching;**
- ii. the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel and the minutes of the BRCD Council Panel held on 30th September 2020; and**
- iii. the recent successful bid to the Apprenticeship Challenge Fund and approve the approach to work in partnership with BRCD partners to deliver this collaborative project as outlined in section 3.14.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**Programme Overview**

**3.1 In September, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was advised of work completed by the BRCD partners to review their projects in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and also received an update on the work of the Executive and Advisory Boards to ensure that the Programme is aligned with the Economic Recovery Strategy. In addition, the Committee received an update on the digital task and finish group which had been set up to identify short-term measures to boost digital skills and support digital**

transformation as an immediate response to the crisis; a further update on this work is included in this report.

- 3.2 OBCs are now progressing towards completion. In light of the difficult financial climate facing all public bodies, and the importance of ensuring that the scale of ambition aligns with affordability and available finances, the focus at this stage is on resolving key issues and challenges particularly in respect of budget profiling and scalability. Robust financial planning will be critical and will need to include consideration of plans for long-term revenue financing, so that the transformative investments included within the BRCD can proceed with confidence.
- 3.3 As previously reported, the timeline for developing OBCs for all the capital projects that were outlined in the Heads of Terms has understandably had to be reviewed. Work on Draft OBCs is continuing at pace and will be considered by respective Advisory Boards in advance of consideration of the Executive Board in December. Partners remain determined to have a deal in place so that funding can begin to flow from 1st April 2021 and discussions are ongoing between Partners and the NI and UK Governments in relation to agreeing a 'phased' deal to enable a 'Deal Document' to be signed off by the end of the financial year.
- 3.4 Communication and engagement continues to be a priority both at a project and programme level. The Committee was advised in February this year that specialist support was being commissioned to assist with strategic engagement activity - including both business and political engagement. Although this work was delayed somewhat due to the Covid crisis it is envisaged that, given recent advancements, strategic engagement with key stakeholders will begin over the coming months.

#### Investment Priorities

##### Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.5 Intensive engagement has taken place with partners to consider and address the impact of Covid-19 on this programme of investment. With the exception of one project within Antrim and Newtownabbey, all tourism and regeneration projects remain on schedule to submit final OBCs by the end of November. Members are reminded that the OBC for the Belfast Destination Hub will be the subject of a separate paper at today's meeting. The OBCs for regeneration projects also continue to reflect and respond to the new challenges facing town and city centres in light of the pandemic. It is intended that a collective recommendation for this Pillar will be submitted to the Executive Board in December for review.

- 3.6 A strategic narrative for the Tourism and Regeneration is currently being finalised. Once complete, this will provide a strong communications tool for both the Pillar and the Programme.

#### Innovation

- 3.7 Final engagement workshops with the UK and NI Governments for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) and Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) OBCs were held in October. The workshops were positive, demonstrating the significant progress made, with detailed feedback received from all parties. Feedback from NI Government departments on The Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) OBC has been received and further feedback from the UK Government is imminent. A first draft OBC for the Screen Media & Innovation Lab (SMIL) is progressing and is due to be submitted to the Innovation Pillar Board during November. The innovation projects have been significantly rescaled and are now broadly in line with the funding available to support this Pillar. Significant detailed work has been taking place in order to obtain agreed solutions to the initial revenue challenges of these projects and these solutions will be reported alongside the OBCs. Work has also taken place to ensure that any potential duplication is minimised and that projects both within the BRCD and across other NI City Deals is aligned as much as possible, recognising, for example, the very different stages of the deals.

#### Digital

- 3.8 Detailed development of the Digital Innovation Programme Business Case has been taking place during recent months. The business case will prioritise a flexible 'funds-based' approach with the increased use of Challenge Funds alongside an Infrastructure Enabling fund which will support connectivity infrastructure as well as physical enabling infrastructure towards the development of the Belfast Smart District. Detailed and complex work continues to look at a governance structure to manage and administer these funds. Significant industry and government engagement has also taken place in recent months, with engagement with DfE, Invest NI and a positive session with UK Government in October. In addition, engagement continues with the Industry Reference Group, created by the Digital Innovation Commissioner.

#### Infrastructure

- 3.9 Significant progress has been made in developing OBCs, for the Newry Southern Relief Road, Lagan Pedestrian & Cycle Bridge and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2. OBCs/IOBCs have now all been reviewed by the Department for Infrastructure Economists. Both

the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge and Newry Southern Relief Road have now been submitted to the Department of Finance for review. The Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 IOBC remains under review by economists and will be submitted to Department of Finance following review. Given the early stage of development of some of these projects there are very high levels of optimism bias included in the financial case, creating affordability challenges across the programme. The approach to Employability and Skills integration for all 3 projects has been incorporated in the OBCs/IOBCs and further information in relation to employment figures has been provided to the BRCD Team to inform the Employability and Skills programme.

#### Employability and Skills (E&S)

- 3.10 The Employability and Skills Programme continues to be refined with proposals developed under the 'employability', 'skills' and 'digital' thematic areas. An overall proposition document which outlines the full ambition of the E&S pillar is also in development in draft form and includes details of the Programme and the role of partners in preparing for emerging employment opportunities and in promoting inclusive growth through their organisations. The Proposition will be further refined following additional engagement with partners across councils, colleges, universities and government departments which is planned for later this month. This will be followed by further industry engagement in early December. It is anticipated that a final E&S Proposition will be submitted for approval to the Executive Board in February.
- 3.11 As previously reported to the Committee, in May the BRCD partners established a digital task and finish group to identify short-term measures that could boost digital skills and support digital transformation in light of the immediate impact of Covid-19. This group worked closely with industry and government to identify a small number of interventions that could help to improve digital literacy, skills and capability. Digital Futures was one of the resulting interventions emerging from this work. Funded by the Department for the Economy as part of the Skills Intervention Programme, and delivered by a number of FE Colleges across the region, more than 250 applicants applied for the 55 places available. Over the next 6 months the Programme will offer the successful graduates opportunities to explore career pathways in Cloud Computing, Data Analytics and Cyber Security. Each of the three programmes has now commenced and employer engagement is underway to match participants to internships which are expected early in 2021.
- 3.12 Work to advance further interventions developed through the task and finish group is also continuing. This includes:

- Enhancing existing digital transformation support for small businesses and exploring the potential to provide capital grant funding to enable them to invest in digital transformation through the NI Executive's Growth and City Deal Complementary Fund; and
- Improving access to digital literacy support for residents across the region and exploring innovative new approaches to employment pathways into the digital sector for non-graduates and those from under-represented client groups.

**3.13** With ambitions for up to 20,000 new and better jobs over a spectrum of skill levels and across a range of sectors, work of the E&S pillar has included development of a skills programme to align with, and add value to, existing interventions. An emerging priority of this programme is to increase the awareness and accessibility of apprenticeships for both employers and individuals. One of the city deal ambitions in this area is to create an Apprenticeship Hub to establish a centralised resource to:

- Improve the visibility of apprenticeship provision; creating compelling content to stimulate employers to explore apprenticeship pathways; to support co-ordination across apprenticeship providers and to provide a virtual support environment for employers and apprentices;
- Facilitate the future proofing of apprenticeship provision by developing new apprenticeship pathways within priority growth sectors aligned to BRCD investment; and
- Develop new innovative models of delivery, in partnership with government departments, to address barriers to participation aligned to under-represented client groups, key sector needs and/or the needs of smaller employers.

**3.14** A recent funding opportunity emerging through the Department for Economy's Apprenticeship Challenge Fund enabled a collaborative bid to be submitted on behalf of the BRCD partners to advance the development of this Hub. A successful funding application has now been secured with up to £100k of resources to undertake developmental work in the design of a virtual apprenticeship platform and enable exploratory work to be undertaken within high value sectors on the development of new apprenticeship pathways. The overall project will be managed by the BRCD Team, with delivery of the project undertaken directly through the Council as well as through Further Education and University Partners. On this basis, the Council will enter into legal agreements with our BRCD partners to deliver the component elements of the contract they are best placed to deliver.

**BRCD Council Panel**

- 3.15 Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest parties.
- 3.16 A virtual meeting of the Panel was held on the 30th September and hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (minutes attached at Appendix 1). At this meeting, the Panel received a detailed update on progress across the programme and Members considered how the programme might help support a sustainable, resilient recovery from the Covid crisis. Members also discussed key challenges facing the programme including the difficulty of communicating effectively in the current environment and how partners could help rebuild momentum and improve communications and engagement. The next meeting will be held on 25th November 2020 and will be hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

**Next Steps**

- 3.17 The completion of OBCs is now of critical importance in order to continue momentum for the Deal so that it can start to deliver, with a Deal Document being completed before the end of the financial year. To meet this deadline it will be essential to agree a phased deal, with those projects which are most developed being included in the first phase, allowing further time for other projects to undertake additional development work to enable them to demonstrate their value and impact. Work is also now ongoing in earnest with Department of Finance and partner Finance Directors to support profiling, affordability & deliverability across the Deal. This work will continue to intensify as OBCs are finalised and as the Financial Agreement and Plan elements of the Deal Document are drafted. Given the advanced stage of the programme and the finalisation of OBCs, strategic engagement with key stakeholders is crucial and core briefing material will be developed over the coming weeks.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.18 All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

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

- 3.19 The Approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that:

***‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’”***

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that it would, at its next meeting, receive a detailed report on all of the projects which were being progressed through the outline business case process, including the advanced manufacturing innovation centre and other innovation strands alluded to within the report. It noted also that it would, on a future date, be briefed on new projects being delivered across the City generally.

### **Inclusive Growth - Social Value Policy**

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 provide an update on the development of a Social Value policy for the Council, as part of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:**

- i. note the work in relation to social value that is currently being undertaken;**
- ii. note the date for the forthcoming Members’ Social Value Working Group engagement workshop (section 3.6); and**
- iii. ensure that a representative is nominated from each political party to the task and finish Social Value Working Group for Members.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Members agreed a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Beattie in January 2019 on the development of a social value strategy to further social, environmental and economic goals of Belfast City Council and subsequently in January 2020 to establish a task and finish Social Value Working Group.**
- 3.2 Since Members received the last update in January 2019, work has been progressing, led by a cross departmental officer working group to develop a social value policy and supporting framework.**

Whilst seeking to achieve a best value outcome for the ratepayer, from our procurement activities, the policy also aims to maximise the impact of council's expenditure to get the best possible social outcome thereby making a positive difference to the people and communities in Belfast.

- 3.3 There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to deliver and achieve social value. Research shows that even in cities and regions where social value considerations in procurement have been applied for some time, providers and commissioners continue to learn about how best to achieve and evidence it. The emerging approach that officers have been developing includes a Toolkit to determine appropriate and proportionate social value criteria within a contract. The toolkit also provides a consistent approach to enable the measurement, monitoring and reporting of social value commitments within Council contracts and to, in as far as possible, deliver social value at scale. It is being designed to align with the five long-term outcomes or 'conditions of wellbeing' and associated commitments within the Belfast Agenda that people identified that they wanted by 2035.
- 3.4 The scope of the policy also reflects council's wide ranging role and recognises that social value can be delivered not solely through its procurement power. Other aspects to the policy, which will also contribute towards social value objectives include:
- Transparency & pre-market engagement - We will publish and regularly update our procurement pipeline to help suppliers prepare for future tendering opportunities;
  - Supplier Guidance & Training – We will develop detailed guidance for potential bidders to Council contracts so that they are better able to accommodate social value commitments and to identify ways in which they can increase the economic, social and environmental value of their work;
  - Reserved contracts – We will use reserved contracts, where appropriate, to support social enterprises and co-operatives;
  - Economic development function – We provide support to local businesses, particularly social enterprises whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental benefit; and
  - Physical development and built environment – We will consider social value at the design stage for future capital projects, seeking for example to maximise opportunities for energy efficiency and use of natural resources.



- 3.5 A draft Social Value Framework is being developed, which sets out the social value initiatives, linked to the Belfast Agenda outcomes, which may be applied to each tender. This will include a number of 'social value points' assigned for each social value initiative or measure. It is now timely that the Social Value Procurement Member Working Group is established to consider this policy. We are now seeking representation from all 8 political parties, before the draft Social Value Policy is brought to Committee. A workshop for the Working Group will be scheduled this month. It is hoped that the draft policy will be subject to public consultation in the new year.
- 3.6 Following Council approval, it is proposed to undertake a public consultation, targeting key stakeholders. It is also proposed that as the policy establishes meaningful criteria sitting at the heart of contractual relations which will have measurable/ reportable outcomes, monitoring reports will be brought to Committee on an annual basis.
- 3.7 Members will also be aware that the development of the Social Value Policy and the accompanying Framework is one strand of work designed to make a contribution to our Inclusive Growth ambitions. Work is also being progressed in relation to the Belfast Inclusive Growth City Charter and while the project is still within the engagement phase, it is intended that 'social value procurement' will be one of the three pillars to the charter. As such, the timing enables the council to demonstrate its leadership as an exemplar of progressive procurement.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.8 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report.

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

- 3.9 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Final Resilience Strategy for Belfast**

(Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of conclusions arising from the public consultation and engagement on the draft Resilience Strategy, to outline the changes made to the document

as part of the finalisation process and seek its approval for the document.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to note the changes made to the document taking account of the public consultation, and consider for approval, to enable it to proceed to full Council, in advance of a virtual launch in December.

(Members should note that as a city-wide document containing commitments from external partners, the document has already been considered and endorsed by the Resilience and Sustainability Board.)

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1** The Belfast Agenda commits the city to the development of a Resilience Strategy to ‘take a targeted approach to addressing those issues which pose the greatest risk to the city and its economy’. The commitment aligned Belfast with a number of cities globally, who are invested in long-term risk management. A highly inclusive process, involving over 1000 individuals was commenced eighteen months ago, and a draft Resilience Strategy was published for formal consultation in January 2020. Importantly, the workstreams arising through the strategy process were co-designed by city partners as part of their work on the Resilience and Sustainability Board.

- 3.2** An extension to the consultation was agreed due to the effect of Covid-19 on partner organisations and their staff. Between January 2020 and July 2020, a period of formal consultation was entered into, incorporating a number of elements:

- an online survey on the Belfast City Council consultation portal;
- standalone submissions forwarded to the Resilience Unit; and
- and a citywide and thematic engagement undertaken on our behalf by Urban Scale Interventions. This included on street engagement at a kiosk in Castle Place, workshops in local neighbourhoods, an interactive ‘resilience tree’ located in public places, and online thematic workshops with young people and older people.

- 3.3** Over 1,300 people took part, 75 written submissions were received. The consultation was almost complete when the lockdown began,

at which point all engagement activity moved online, and the completion for the online consultation was extended.

- 3.4 Following the consultation, two workshops were held with members of the Resilience and Sustainability Board, with the aim of discussing feedback, shaping the strategy and aligning with member's programmes. Members of the R&S board met on 10th November and formally endorsed the strategy.

#### Main Themes arising from the Public Consultation

- 3.5 The draft Strategy was developed through an inclusive process, whereby we spoke with over one thousand people, and was based on huge amounts of publicly available data and evidence. Unsurprisingly therefore, the public consultation found a high level of agreement with the shocks and stresses identified;
- Consultees welcomed the principle of a resilience strategy; a document that sets out long term risks for the city, and agreed it should be kept 'up to date' and refreshed every two years;
  - Predictably, a large number of consultees felt the final document should reflect the impact of Covid-19 on the city, and should draw conclusions on what this could mean for our future;
  - It was also proposed that 'mental ill health' and 'use of prescription drugs' should be treated separately and that 'car dependency' should be included in the focus on 'carbon intensive systems';
  - There was substantial support for the principle of 'multiple problem solvers' and the suggestion that we need to find levers to solve several problems at once. Consultees agreed with the three areas of focus identified- there was particular support for the need to include children and young people more in the decisions that affect their lives;
  - Generally, there was a view that we need to separate out the 'assessment' of risks, from the 'solutions' and that the document should not try to do too much. Overall, consultees agreed that the biggest long-term challenge for the city was environmental/climate related. On this basis, they agreed that the three 'multiple problems solvers' should try to achieve a single 'resilience goal' and be narrowly focused on the transition to a zero-emissions economy. That means, in practical terms, that the focus on children and young people should be directed towards their

involved in climate action. This was dealt with in detail in the workshops and there was general agreement with the approach;

- A significant number of respondents asked for the section on inequality to be drawn out further, and addressed as a ‘stress’ in its own right, rather than as part of ‘Economic Recovery Capacity’.

#### **Changes to the Document**

- Taking into account the feedback above, the strategy now encompasses two distinct sections: (1) a Resilience Assessment, an analysis of the strategic risks to Belfast, taking account of the views of citywide stakeholders and (2) an Ambitions Document: Climate Plan for Belfast, setting out the resilience goal and priorities being delivered by the Resilience and Sustainability Board. It is the intention of the Resilience and Sustainability Board (R&SB) that the Resilience Assessment be reviewed and refreshed every two years to ensure a proactive approach to the management of strategic risks. The R&SB will be the governors of this document along with support from the Belfast Climate Commission.
- The ambitions document will also need to be refreshed as new opportunities for multiple problem solvers (leavers that can respond to several risks at once) arise. This will be the responsibility of the R&S Board to update and deliver.
- As per feedback received, we have included ‘Poverty and Inequality’ as a ‘stress’ and worked directly with Belfast Health and Social Care Board to develop a new section on ‘Public Health Shocks’. We have merged ‘car dependency’ into the section on ‘carbon intensive systems’ and separated ‘Mental Ill-Health’ from ‘Use of Prescription Drugs’.
- The document has been updated to reflect statistical returns published in this calendar year (2020) to ensure the strategy is as up to date as possible.
- The ‘Resilience Assessment’ includes a ‘next steps’ section, which outlines the structure for focusing on the ‘shocks’ and stresses’ across the Community Planning Partnership Boards.
- Reference has been made in the document to digital inequality as a core issue emerging following Covid-19 and the transition to online platforms at scale, for the delivery of services (including health and education services)

- 3.6 It is worth noting that a number of the ambitions, as stated in the draft version, are already under way. The One Million Trees project, the development of A Belfast City Council Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan, the establishment of the Resilience and Sustainability board are a few of the 'multiple problem solvers' that are already well on track.

**Further Engagement**

- 3.7 There will be a further short document created in response to all those who took the time to engage during the consultation. Due to the transfer away from Citizen Space to the new Engagement Hub - consideration will need to be given on how to do this in an impactful way.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.8 The strategy contains a number of significant programmes which have been included as 'ambitions' for the city. Some of these programmes are already fully funded, and others are predicated on securing long-term finance. Approval of the document does not commit Council, or members of the Resilience and Sustainability Board to funding specific projects. On this basis, there are no direct additional financial and resource implications.

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

- 3.9 Throughout this process, the Resilience Team, and the Resilience and Sustainability Board has taken account of obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability to promote good relations between the relevant groups as set out in the legislation. The team also ensured that needs and implications for residents living in rural areas were assessed throughout.

The purpose of the Resilience Assessment and the programmes in the Ambitions Document are to reduce inequalities in the city. Evidence from a number of cities globally has demonstrated the adverse impact which widening inequalities can have on a city's resilience.

The Resilience Assessment and the Ambitions Document were screened to assess their implications for equality categories under Section 75. More than 100 official (NISRA) datasets were reviewed throughout the process to understand the impacts of relevant policy interventions for each of the categories. The screening process did not identify adverse impacts for any specific equality

categories; however, we sought to test this further during comprehensive consultation with all equality categories during January – June 2020, and both the equality screening and rural needs impact were hosted on Citizen Space and comments sought during the formal consultation.

The consultation found one example where there was a *perception* that one group could be impacted differentially. Some responses suggested that a focus on children and young people could be at the expense of older people. We have addressed this issue in two ways in the document (1) by emphasising what the international evidence demonstrates, that positive urban planning for children impacts positively on the rest of the population (2) by emphasising that our focus on children and young people is to ensure their participation in decision on climate action in the city.

Importantly, we received a submission from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, which has strongly informed the final document.

In conclusion, no significant adverse implications for groups have been identified. Furthermore, each ‘Foundation Programme’ in the ‘Ambitions Document’ will themselves be screened for their equality implications and be subject, where required, to an Equality Impact Assessment.”

The Commissioner for Resilience informed the Committee that the Resilience Strategy sought to transition Belfast to an inclusive zero-emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation and pointed out that its delivery would be led by the Community Planning Partnership. The Resilience and Sustainability, Living Here, Working and Learning and Growing the Economy and City Development Boards would be responsible for progressing their respective elements. She went on to identify three key areas, namely, Climate Adaption and Mitigation, Participation of Children and Young People and a Connected Zero Emissions Economy, which would seek to build the City’s resilience over time and concluded by outlining the various steps leading up to the launch of the Strategy in December.

After discussion, the Committee approved the Resilience Strategy, commended the Commissioner for Resilience and her staff on the comprehensiveness of the document and noted that future reports on the outworking of the Strategy would make reference to upskilling and job creation.

### **Update on Consultation and Engagement**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress with deployment of the Council’s new digital civic engagement platform and the supporting framework for consultation and engagement.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- i. note the update on proposed civic engagement (with immediate emphasis on obtaining citizen input on city recovery from Covid-19) utilising the new online Engagement HQ platform;
- ii. agree that the biennial doorstep resident survey planned for this winter, be deferred for at least 6 months; and
- iii. agree the revised consultation and engagement framework.

**3.0 Key Issues**

**Background**

- 3.1 The Local Government (NI) Act 2014 reinforced the Council's duty to consult, and since then the Council has been working hard to improve its approach to consultation and engagement and has made considerable progress in terms of capacity building and ICT. This work has included procurement of a new digital engagement platform and further development of a revised Corporate Consultation and Engagement Framework to support our approach.**

**New Engagement Platform and Civic Engagement on City Recovery**

- 3.2 To enhance the Council's capabilities to utilise more innovative participatory tools using online/digital engagement with citizens, at earlier stages and on a more ongoing basis, we have invested in a new digital platform. The formal procurement stage has now been completed and the 'Engagement HQ' platform is currently being configured for Council use, (alongside development of necessary management and operational protocols) in advance of going live by early December 2020. This platform will provide a number of new tools to support early, transparent and ongoing dialogue, and will help address areas identified for improvement that have emerged from associated work on the corporate Consultation and Engagement Framework to underpin Council's approach.**

**Roles of Elected Members in supporting deployment of the new platform**

**3.3 Elected Members are asked to note that the following support will be required in deployment and future development/roll out of the new digital platform:**

- **Fronting engagement projects through short introductory video clips/soundbites**
- **Promoting and profile raising of the platform and current projects through Members own networks and communication channels in communities**
- **Inputting to the design of engagement activities at development stages (e.g. via Party Leaders forum, Area Working Groups, SP&R Committee as appropriate)**

**Proposals for Platform Launch and Next Steps**

**3.4 The new platform will be launched publicly in early December, with the focus on the first engagements on the city's recovery from Covid-19 creating new opportunities for dialogue with citizens, to input their comments, ideas and views on what they think is needed for the city and its communities to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.**

**3.5 The topics/areas of engagement, and tools for citizen participation, being worked up as part of the platform's early deployment include:**

- **A stronger future Belfast (city recovery)**
  - **A featured set of engagement activities will seek citizen participation and engagement on city recovery. This will form the main emphasis of communications activity promoting the initial launch of the new platform. The proposed tools/engagement activities being drafted will be framed to emphasise community/neighbourhood aspects of interest to residents. The tools that will be used for this initial engagement are:**
    - **Community stories (good news stories from within communities to highlight the positive experiences/learning from responses to Covid-19)**
    - **Ideas generation (ideas for current and future focus in city recovery)**



- A covid-19 survey (to seek views of residents on Covid impacts and inform recovery planning)
- Quick poll (snap virtual poll on immediate Covid concerns)

Building on initial engagement above, it is intended that future engagement phases on city recovery will utilise the platform to support focused engagement work at area level (N, S, E, W) as part of work to develop area based recovery plans. This engagement process, and subsequent activities/methods of engagement activity will be designed in collaboration with key stakeholders over the coming months.

- Climate/Resilience
  - A hub on the work climate adaptation and mitigation to seek citizen input on relevant aspects of the programme. An early activity could include engagement on 1 million trees programme, potentially utilising the place mapping tool for residents to suggest possible locations around the city for tree planting.
- VCSE Sectoral Panel and citywide network
  - A dedicated portion of the site for VCSE stakeholders engaging with the city's community planning process. This will host key information on the work of the VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel and will include engagement tools to allow feedback from stakeholders across the wider VCSE sector network.

- 3.6 The areas above provide an indication of the engagement themes at initial launch and example screen shots showing what the platform will look like have been circulated. Over time, new engagement themes/topics will be added to support the engagement needs of the Council, and the Community Planning Partnership where appropriate, to promote earlier and more ongoing forms of participation and engagement with citizens.

#### **VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel**

- 3.7 Members will be aware that the recently established VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel plans to host an online sectoral conference on 30th November 2020, titled 'Putting community wellbeing at the heart of community planning'. Aimed at participants from across the city's VCSE sectors, the conference agenda is being developed by the VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel, and will include:

- Introductory comments from the Minister for Communities
  - Presentations from keynote speakers including the Future Generations Wellbeing Commissioner of Wales, Scottish Improvement Service Chief Executive, and Suzanne Wylie, Belfast City Council Chief Executive and Chair of Community Planning Partnership.
  - Breakout workshop discussions for VCSE participants to shape the VCSE Panel's approach and engagement with the sector over the coming year.
- 3.8 The newly established VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel will also be engaged over the coming weeks to test and refine the engagement tools (while also providing opportunity to input their views) in advance of the wider public launch.

#### Resident Survey

- 3.9 The Council undertakes a resident survey every two years, the primary purpose of which is to provide reliable and representative perception data to monitor progress and inform priority setting. Unlike online consultations, which are self-selecting, our resident survey uses a representative sample of Belfast residents based on age, gender and DEA and is collected via doorstep interviews. This ensures that the data is both valid and reliable, which enables consistency and accuracy for trend and performance comparisons. This data is used to help track direction of travel with respect to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan; we also report a number of these indicators to the NI Audit office as part of our performance improvement duty. The survey was due to commence in November with results available by March 2021. However, due to Covid-19 we are proposing to delay the survey by approximately 6 months, in the first instance, and subject to further review thereafter. It is hoped that fieldwork will be undertaken around summer time so that these performance indicators can feed into the refresh of the Belfast Agenda. In the interim we will also examine the ongoing need for the survey. Ongoing engagement with residents around priorities will continue using the new engagement platform.

#### Revised Belfast City Council Consultation and Engagement Framework

- 3.10 Last year, Members agreed to move forward with a public commitment to consultation and engagement in the form of a corporate consultation and engagement (C&E) framework. The framework is not a programme of engagement events or consultations, but instead provides the policy context in which we

will do this i.e. how we will plan, deliver and utilise our C&E activity. It sets out our vision for engagement and the principles and standards that we will aspire to meet. It provides clarity and transparency, and will be supported by an ongoing action plan and officer toolkit designed to help improve the consistency, quality and value of our engagement.

**3.11** The draft framework was subject to a 12-week public consultation between December 2019 and March 2020. Key results from this consultation are presented below:

- All respondents (100%) agreed that it was 'important that Belfast City Council has a clear policy on consultation and engagement'
- 90% agree with our definitions of consultation and involvement; three quarters (75%) agreed with our definition of engagement and 58% agreed with our proposed vision for consultation engagement
- On average, more than 80% agreed with each of our proposed standards
- On average, around three quarters (range 67% -83%) agreed with each of our proposed aims and aspirations, with value for money and keeping people informed attracting the highest levels of support.

**3.12** We also sought feedback on the draft equality screening and rural needs assessment and invited any further comments. Suggested areas for improvement included:

- Creating a shorter and more concise vision
- Enabling ongoing conversations rather than just informing and consulting, with greater openness and transparency around decisions
- More emphasis on valuing engagement and in particular the input from the community
- One respondent highlighted the need for resources to support meaningful engagement, whilst another queried our use of the term 'people'. In relation to equality, one respondent suggested that if wanted to make our engagements more accessible, then we needed to look at the language we used and avoid '*jargon*'.

**Finalising the C&E Framework and Next Steps**

- 3.13 We have revised the draft framework and updated our action plan to reflect public feedback. The finalised framework has been circulated. Next steps are summarised as follows:

<b><i>Framework</i></b>	Present to the SP&R for formal adoption. Promote new framework internally and update on website.
<b><i>Civic engagement</i></b>	Develop and implement options to enhance our community engagement, focussing initially on an online engagement platform
<b><i>Capacity building</i></b>	Develop continuous programme of support and capacity building for officers, including an officer toolkit, C&E champions and internal networking and professional development.
<b><i>Consultation</i></b>	Implement feedback protocol /process for all public consultations. Align citizen space consultations to new engagement platform and review ongoing use.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.14 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report. Costs associated with the implementation of the action plan, including the enhanced civic engagement platform and wider capacity building, have been factored into council budgets. Future and ongoing budget implications will be monitored as part of the action plan implementation and learning. Financial and human resource issues relating to ongoing C&E will be brought to CMT as they arise.

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

- 3.15 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report. An equality screening and rural needs assessment was undertaken as part of the framework development. Whilst, it is clear that some sections of the community face greater barriers to involvement, the framework aims to help address these and ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. Equality and inclusion is

an underlying principle within the framework and our action plan, which includes steps to improve civic engagement and capacity building for officers, will seek to mitigate any barriers to participation. The enhanced participant management and analytical tools of the new platform will also help us understand better who is engaging with us and where we may need to target our efforts.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**EU Successor Funding Northern Ireland –  
Position Paper for SOLACE NI**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 To update Members on a position paper produced for the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in Northern Ireland (SOLACE NI), in relation to EU Successor Funding in Northern Ireland and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- a) note this update on the Ekosgen/SOLACE NI position paper on EU Successor Funding; and
- b) promote this work across Political networks supporting the need for a partnership approach, which involves local government, in co-designing and shaping the SPF, which will address local needs.

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Ekosgen was commissioned in early 2020 by SOLACE NI to undertake a research study to explore the future of EU Successor Funding in Northern Ireland. The purpose of this study was to develop a local government sectoral position, to use as a basis for discussion and influence with central government departments, regarding the local introduction of the SPF.
- 3.2 Alongside the full report, a stand-alone Executive Summary has been produced, a copy of which has been circulated. This document sets out the key principles and recommendations identified by local government, and will be used to engage the NI Executive Ministers, MLAs, MPs and relevant departments in terms of the future local design of the SPF.

- 3.3 As the UK has left the EU, the UK Government has begun the process of developing a replacement investment mechanism for the EU Structural Funds. The SPF will address regional disparity and structural economic challenges, and drive innovation, productivity, and sustainable economic development.
- 3.4 Northern Ireland has been a net beneficiary of the EU Structural funds and their impact on economic development has been significant – indeed in Northern Ireland we receive approx. 5% of the total UK allocation, while only representing 2.8% of the population. It is crucial that the spending power provided by EU funding is preserved through the SPF, and that the UK Government respects Northern Ireland's previous status as a transition area for the purposes of EU funding in this new funding regime. This will ensure that our proportionate allocation of funding will continue and can be concentrated in areas to increase productivity and lessen economic inactivity. Such a commitment would also acknowledge and support Northern Ireland in moving forward as a post-conflict society.
- 3.5 The future scope and operation of the SPF as EU successor funding, will be crucial in shaping the future economic and social prosperity of Northern Ireland – by providing funding to support the foundations of prosperity, and contributing to eliminating inequalities and promoting inclusive growth for our local communities.
- 3.6 Members should note that, during engagement with local EU funded delivery organisations who manage and deliver programmes across our council areas, extreme concern exists regarding the lack of information and engagement undertaken to date in relation to the SPF. However, they were appreciative of the fact that local government are undertaking this work, and engaged them on this critical issue of successor funding.
- 3.7 It is intended to use this paper as a basis for councils having a role with central government in designing the SPF, using a place-based approach, to address local area needs. It is crucial that this new funding regime maintains alignment between the priorities of the NI Executive and those set out in local community plans to ensure that inequalities are being targeted and that local intelligence is used to focus the funding to plans and programmes that are needed.
- 3.8 Members may also be aware that the Chief Executive recently attended an evidence session hosted by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on the SPF, on behalf of SOLACE NI and NILGA. It was notable during this session the lack of local consultation and work which has taken place in relation to the SPF in comparison with the other devolved administrations.

- 3.9 During this session, the Chief Executive emphasised that for local government and local organisations the regime which is going to succeed EU structural funding is of critical importance. The design of this new funding programme if undertaken in a collaborative way between central government, local government and local delivery organisations, can create a new effective funding regime which will be transformative for our local areas and the region, aligned to the current growth and city deals and other current funding packages.**

**Principles for a New Approach**

- 3.10 The principles identified within the Ekosgen work which are necessary for designing a new approach to funding through the SPF are set out in the table below. These principles should be viewed as an integrated package of measures that work as a whole, rather than a menu of options.**

<b>Principles and Recommendations for a New Approach in Northern Ireland</b>	
<b>Principle</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
National Framework	SPF should set a national framework defining <i>high level</i> strategic direction, objectives and priorities and alignment with UK strategies.
Regional and sub-regional priority setting	There must be a commitment and processes at regional level to set strategic priorities. These should be developed in partnership and based on an evidence-based assessment of need. At a sub-regional level, there must be scope to identify and invest in activities that will address local priorities and reflect the local context. This must be an underpinning principle that all stakeholders sign up to. Ownership of sub-regional funded activities should rest with local partners.
Outcomes based	Progress and achievements should be measured as outcomes and impacts, rather than activities and outputs. KPIs should be set that capture progress as well as final outcomes e.g. progress towards employment.
Flexible, single pot	There must be an assumption of trust so that monies can be disbursed with as few restrictions as possible, balanced with the right degree of scrutiny.  Monies should be provided in Northern Ireland with no restrictions on capital and revenue allocations or prescriptive allocations by theme. Spend should be based on identified need and a holistic approach covering, for example, investment in skills, business support, infrastructure, innovation and so forth.  There should be a strategic approach to spend, combining all available funding sources to maximise value for money.  Business support (including social enterprises) should be business-led and include support to invest in the workforce, in equipment, in processes, as well as advice, and specialist business development support.

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Maximum devolution of management and delivery	<p>Northern Ireland should work towards devolving management and delivery to sub-regions where there is sufficient capacity and capabilities.</p> <p>For some activities, there will be a rationale for clusters of areas and partnerships who could act as intermediate bodies, and a regional approach with flexibility for distinctive local need.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the approaches used successfully through the city and growth deals could be replicated.</p>
Attitude to risk	<p>Being overly risk averse can inhibit impacts and limits the opportunity to test and learn from new and innovative approaches.</p> <p>SPF at UK and regional levels should set an attitude to risk that allows for innovation and moves away from simply funding 'more of the same'.</p>
Fit for purpose systems and processes that are actively used	<p>Management, appraisal, monitoring and verification processes should be fit for purpose, not overly complex and proportionate to the level of funding and scale of activities. They should be used to review and drive performance.</p> <p>Additional layers and processes should not be added over time unless there is a clear rationale and demonstration of added value.</p> <p>Management and monitoring systems and processes should be, as far as possible, harmonised with those of other funds and their activities. This will make for a more efficient use of project management and administration time and generate consistent data.</p>

**Financial and Resource Implications**

**3.11 None associated with this report.**

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

**3.12 None associated with this report.”**

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on Community Planning Partnership**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on the recent meeting of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership held on 27th October.**



**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to note the key areas of work currently being progressed by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), as outlined in the attached note of the CPP meeting.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

- 3.1** The Belfast CPP (Strategic Board), chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, comprises the Council and its Community Planning Partners including a range of statutory and support partner organisations, including VCSE and business sectors. The Partnership's strategic level board provides joint oversight and leadership for the community planning process in the city, and for the delivery of the Belfast Agenda with partners.
- 3.2** Focused work on progressing action plans and their delivery is jointly managed with partners through 4 delivery sub Boards, namely:
- Growing the Economy and City Development Board
  - Living Here Board
  - Working & Learning Board
  - Resilience & Sustainability Board.
- 3.3** Belfast City Council is currently represented on the Partnership (at strategic board level) by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, along with Elected Members nominated from each party (who are also members of an internal Council Community Planning Working Group), and the Council's Chief Executive, who chairs CPP meetings.

**Belfast Community Planning Partnership meeting 27th October 2020**

- 3.4** Following the postponement of a scheduled CPP meeting in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, the Community Planning Partnership met in an online meeting format on Tuesday 27 October 2020. This was therefore an especially important meeting at a crucial time in the community planning process, particularly in light of the Covid-19 impacts on the city and the publication of Council's Recovery Framework. A summary note of the meeting, outlining the items discussed and the decisions taken, is attached. Important points for Members to note from the discussion include:

**i) Aligning focus on city recovery from Covid-19 alongside longer term Belfast Agenda Outcomes**

**3.5** Partners were briefed on the evolving context for City Recovery, including the Council's recent work to develop the Belfast: Our Recovery Framework. The Partnership agreed to progress key city priorities through the Delivery Boards and relevant task groups. Members will recognise that many of these areas of focus reflect the Belfast Agenda priorities that were previously identified for immediate focus in the Statement of Progress published by Council in November 2019. These key areas of work are now being adapted to take account of the impacts and new context due to the Covid-19 Pandemic i.e:

- Health inequalities – including drugs, alcohol and mental health, and work to address excess winter deaths (Warm and well programme)
- Educational inequalities
- Employability and skills
- Neighbourhood regeneration – including focus on local area planning and engagement to support community recovery
- Housing
- Sustainability and resilience, including addressing climate challenge
- Creating a shared, safe and inclusive city, including development of an inclusive growth city charter

**ii) Enhancing Partner involvement in the Community Planning Partnership**

**3.6** Partners agreed that the Partnership's Delivery Boards should adopt a Co-Chair model to build the sense of co-ownership and collaborative working at all levels of the Partnership. This model has to date been adopted by the Resilience and Sustainability Board, and will now be considered by the other Boards for adoption going forwards.

**iii) Establishment of new Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectoral Advisory Panel**

**3.7** The Partnership received an update from the Chair (Irene Sherry) and Vice Chair (Jim Girvan) of the newly established VCSe Sectoral Advisory Panel, noting the work, commitment and contribution of the Panel to date, and in particular the Panel's plans to build engagement across the city's VCSE sectors in the near future. Plans for the VCSe Panel's upcoming Community Conference on 30<sup>th</sup> November, titled 'Putting Community Wellbeing at the Heart of Community Planning' were outlined and Partners were encouraged

to support this online event. Both the VCSe Panel and Community Planning Partners present at the meeting stressed the importance of the VCSe Panel and wider sector engagement model as key to the success of the city's community planning process, and ensuring inclusive involvement of communities in the future.

**City recovery from Covid and refresh of Belfast Agenda**

- 3.8 Members will be aware of the Councils recently published Belfast: Our Recovery framework, setting out Council's proposed areas of focus for driving economic, social/community and environmental recovery over the next 1-2 years. While this framework does not replace other key city strategies (such as the Belfast Agenda) it is helping to frame engagement with partners and communities as we review our plans, to bring focus to what is needed to help the city recover and move forward.
- 3.9 Members should note that the Belfast Agenda will be updated and refreshed during 2021, to reflect the current city context, and to set an updated framework of priorities and shared goals for collective focus of city partners. This will build on the planned early engagement with communities due to take place over the next few months. Members will be engaged in this process as it develops in early 2021.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.10 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report. Costs associated with the implementation and facilitation of the Community Planning Partnership are currently being met within existing council budgets.

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

- 3.11 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Update on Area Working**

The Committee considered the following report:

- "1.0 **Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
- 1.1 To seek the Committee's approval of the minutes of the most recent round of AWGs and any additional recommendations to this Committee arising from those meetings.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **AWG Minutes** - Approve the most recent round of AWG minutes (South – 26th October, West – 29th October, East – 5th November);
- **Physical Programme** – Agree the recommendations on allocations under the BIF Programme from the South AWG to three projects as laid out below in 3.2; and
- **Locality Planning** - Agree the recommendation that the remaining budget in West Belfast is allocated to two projects as laid out below in 3.3.

3.0 **Main Report**

**KEY ISSUES**

**Area Working Group Minutes**

- 3.1 Members agreed in June 2016 that the Area Working Group minutes would be taken into the SP&R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups. Members are asked to approve the most recent round of AWG minutes (*South – 26 October, West – 29 October, East – 5 November*) as attached.

**Project Updates**

- 3.2 **South AWG** - Members are asked to approve the following allocations as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 26th October.

**BIF Programme**

Allocation of the ringfenced BIF allocation for projects within the Sandy Row area (£1.35m) that had been previously aligned to Gilpins to the following project proposals:

- *Café Culture* project in partnership with Urban Villages,
- *Sandy Row Open Space* project and;
- *BSCR IT Exam Centre* project.

The AWG recommended that these three projects are added to the BIF Programme as *Stage 1 – Emerging*.

- 3.3 **West AWG** - Members are asked to note the following project updates and agree the movements as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 29th October.

**BIF Programme**

Note the update provided on the Greater Shankill Community Council - Royal British Legion project proposal.

**Locality Planning Pilot Project**

Allocation of the remaining budgets within the Whiterock Locality Planning Pilot Project as follows:

Project	Group	Amount
Access to Hills Scoping Exercise	Upper Springfield Development Trust	£15,000
Housing Social Innovation Scoping	Falls Community Council	£15,000

- 3.4 **East AWG** - Members are asked to note the following project updates as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 5th November.

**BIF Programme**

- *Lisnasharragh and Cregagh Community Schools project* - Note the progress to date from the Education Authority and that the project can be progressed.
- *Castlereagh Presbyterian Church* – Note the progress to date and that a report will be brought to a future meeting in relation other funding streams, project outcomes and community benefits and congregation fundraising towards the project.
- *Strand Arts Centre and Bloomfield Community Association* – Note that an update report will be submitted to a future meeting to include details on when DfC can make a funding decision and other possible funding streams for both these projects.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.5 **Financial – BIF Programme** – all projects already have in-principle ring-fenced allocations agreed by Committee

**Resources** – Officer time in working with Groups

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

**No implications.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Assets Management**

The Committee approved the following:

**i. Ormeau Park – Contractor’s Compound**

the granting of a lease to GEDA Construction for a contractor’s compound in Ormeau Park in connection with the Flood Alleviation Project works being carried out on the Ravenhill Road and surrounding areas;

**ii. Local Full Fibre Network Programme – Transfer of Fibre Ducting Assets**

the transfer of additional fibre ducting assets/infrastructure from the Department for Communities to the Council to enhance the existing ducting network as part of the Public Sector Asset Reuse project under the overall Local Full Fibre Network Programme;

**iii. Grant of lease to Northern Ireland Electricity Networks**

the granting of a lease to NIE Networks for c.24 square metres of land at Templemore Baths, for a term of 99 years from the date of the agreement at a peppercorn rent of £1 pa. The lease will also grant NIE Networks a right of way to carry out installation, repairs and maintenance works at the substation site;

**iv. Port Health Unit, 5 Corry Place – Licence for Works**

a Licence for Work at the Port Health Unit to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The Licence is required to facilitate DAERA’s proposed construction works to the building to accommodate food checks required under NI protocol contingency plans.

The Committee noted that the Director of Physical Programmes would, at the next meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group, provide further information on the proposal to place a construction compound in the Ormeau Park.

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**Finance, Resources and Procurement**

**Update on Contracts**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, detailed in Appendix 1 - Table 1 of the report;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Appendix 1 – Table 2 of the report; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Appendix 1 – Table 3 of the report; and

**Table 1 – Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Short description of goods/ services</b>
Development of a virtual apprenticeship platform for the Belfast Region City Deal	Up to 16 months	£65,000	A Reid	Development of a new online platform for apprenticeship provision across the Belfast City Region
Receipt, stock control and delivery of waste containers (T2134)	Up to 4 years	£520,000	S Toland / R Black	Support waste management section with distribution of bins and waste containers to rate payers.
Removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hooklift containers (T2074)	Up to 5 years	£1.2M	S Toland / R Black	Support service required at Council amenity sites.
Appointment of food samples Public Analysts. (Multi council framework contract)	Up to 4 years	£1.3M (covers all 11 NI councils)	S Toland / R Black	Legislative requirement for the purpose of examining and

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				<p>analysing food samples to determine compliance with food safety, compositional and labelling requirements.</p> <p>Current estimated BCC spend £300,000 however this may significantly increase due to Brexit.</p> <p>Other council estimated spend is £1m.</p>
<p>Research to undertake business surveys to support and influence future policy interventions across arrange of stakeholders</p>	<p>Up to 3 years</p>	<p>£150,000</p>	<p>A Reid</p>	<p>This is a longitudinal survey of businesses in Belfast to take place every six months. This work is being brought forward in conjunction with the Business Improvement Districts and Belfast Chamber who are making a financial contribution to the research. The survey will provide empirical data to understand what challenges Belfast based businesses are facing. The survey will also ask Businesses to provide a measure of their confidence around future investment and recruitment to</p>



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				gauge Business Sentiment. The fact that it is longitudinal allows to test broadly establish the efficacy of policies and interventions that have been brought to bear in the relevant timeframe.
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**Table 2- Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Action)**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
Provision of home security/ hazard assessment and repair service for elderly & vulnerable (fully funded)	Bryson Energy	£120,000
Provision of a case management system for City and Neighbourhoods Department	Civica UK Ltd	£113,878

**Table 3 Retrospective Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Actions)**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
Consultancy support for Innovation and Inclusive Growth commission Growth report	MCE Public Relations	£5,000
Occupational Health Service Software upgrade	Digital Scanning Services Ltd	£5,430
Continued hire of temporary accommodation, toilets and associated electrical generators and cabling at Roselawn Cemetery	Norespace	£109,852

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Provision of animation as an alternative to the traditional Christmas market	Lumiere Ltd	£29,500
Provision of animation as an alternative to the traditional Christmas market	AM Lighting Ltd	£29,500
Provision of de-icing and snow clearance at various BCC sites/ locations (retrospective)	Patterson Outdoor Cleaning Solutions (McQuillan Outdoor)	£96,000

**Commercial and Procurement Service - Pricing Policy**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or summary of Main Issues**

The 3-year Transformational Strategy prepared by the Commercial and Procurement Service (CPS) is due to be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) Committee in November.

**1.2 This Strategy includes details of our first Commercial Plan, which formalises our future ambitions relating to commercialisation and income generation.**

**1.3 To support our specific ambition to generate additional income, the Commercial team within the CPS has developed:**

- **A corporate Pricing Policy; and**
- **A framework document, 'Setting Prices - Getting it Right', to guide Council officers when introducing pricing or increasing/decreasing prices.**

**1.4 The above policy and framework was presented to the SP&R Committee on 23rd October.**

**1.5 At that meeting, the Committee agreed to defer any decisions relating to the above in order to allow the policy and framework to be considered alongside the Commercial Plan.**

**1.6 The purpose of this report is to:**

- **provide members with an update on the pricing policy and framework;**

- provide further details on the rationale for selecting the four priority projects in order to support the decision-making process; and
- obtain approval on related actions (detailed below).

## **2.0 Recommendations**

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

1. approve the Commercial Plan and Pricing Policy, as detailed in Appendices I – III; and
2. agree that the following priority areas be researched in line with the above policy and framework (all findings and proposals to come back to the SP&R Committee).
  - a. Malone House - explore possible alternative commercial uses for the building to maximise asset and reduce annual operating costs;
  - b. Events - develop a Council-wide events policy & procedures to include establishing transparent, fair and consistent pricing options;
  - c. Bulky waste - explore potential pricing options for the bulky waste service to reduce annual operating costs; and
  - d. Pest control - explore potential pricing options for the pest control service to reduce annual operating costs.

## **3.0 Main Report**

### **Introduction**

- 3.1 The Commercial Plan detailed at Appendix I formalises our future ambitions relating to commercialisation and income generation.
- 3.2 Fundamentally, this is about integrating commercial activities and a commercial mind set into the core of how we operate as an organisation.
- 3.3 The overarching aim of our Commercial Plan is to generate a greater financial return that contributes to the Council's investment plans and its efficiency programme, and assists to safeguard services that are delivered in our local communities.
- 3.4 To support our specific ambition to generate additional income, the Commercial team, in partnership with relevant

individuals/departments, has commenced a strategic programme of work that includes (amongst other things):

- Preparing a Corporate Pricing Policy and associated procedures;
- Developing a Council-wide Advertising and Sponsorship Strategy;
- Supporting the development of an agreed Asset Management Strategy;
- Identifying commercial best practice across other local authorities and organisations; and
- Creating a framework to identify, develop and deliver existing and new (and innovative) income generating opportunities across the Council's commercial operations.

3.5 Alongside this, work has also commenced to enhance our commercial culture and competency, including the roll-out of a competency training programme and commercial awareness raising sessions.

**Corporate Pricing Policy**

3.6 The charges and fees levied for our services represent an important source of income each year, which is used to support the delivery of our corporate objectives. Whilst charging for services is, therefore, a recognised feature within the Council, some demand-led services are provided at little or no direct charge to the user. The provision of services at low, or no, charge (or fee) means that all ratepayers are subsidising the cost of delivery.

3.7 The recent financial uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic and 'Brexit' have now made it essential that the Council makes best use of pricing and charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using pricing as a means of recovering the costs of delivering our services.

3.8 To support this, the Commercial team has developed:

- A corporate Pricing Policy; and
- A framework document, 'Setting Prices - Getting it Right', to guide Council officers when introducing pricing or increasing/decreasing prices.

3.9 The key aims of the policy include:

- Promoting consistency and fairness in the treatment of service users; and
- Striking a balance addressing the financial needs of the Council through optimisation of income and the social needs of customers.

3.10 Any decision to vary or introduce charges must be aligned to strategic priorities and financial objectives. Council officers must adhere to the following principles set out in the policy:

- Efficiency – charges are simple and not cumbersome to administer.
- Transparency – the nature and use of the service are understood by users
- Effectiveness – the charges provide value for money.
- Clarity – users are clear about when and how charges apply.
- Equity – the charges are fairly applied across a range of users.
- Ethics – users with special needs are charged appropriate fees.

#### Priority Projects

3.11 We currently provide many discretionary services (i.e. those that are not required to be provided by law but are provided at our discretion) that all ratepayers are subsidising the cost of delivery. The table below provides some examples<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Based on budget figures for the 2019/20 financial year.

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<b>Service</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Net Expenditure i.e. cost to the Council</b>
Events <sup>2</sup>	£1,464,026	£89,700	£1,374,326
Bulky Waste	£993,851	£19,534	£974,317
Zoo (including Shop)	£2,842,409	£1,902,035	£940,374
Pest Control	£289,702	£5,137	£284,565
Bike Scheme	£478,594	£245,254	£233,340
Belfast Castle	£450,397	£256,000	£194,397
Malone House	£332,626	£186,000	£146,626
Mary Peters Track	£137,040	£0	£137,040
Consumer Advice	£106,725	£0	£106,725
Home Safety	£178,976	£82,610	£96,366
Catering Services	£463,917	£399,280	£64,637
City Hall Tours	£53,400	£18,850	£34,550

**3.12 If approved, it will not be possible, in the current circumstances, to review all of the Council's services and activities (such as those set out above) at this point in the context of the policy.**

**3.13 That being the case, it is recommended that the following four projects be examined in the first instance:**

- **Malone House - explore possible alternative commercial uses for the building to maximise asset and reduce annual operating costs;**
- **Bulky waste - explore potential pricing options for bulky waste service to reduce annual operating costs;**
- **Pest control - explore potential pricing options for pest control service to reduce annual operating costs; and**
- **Events - develop a Council-wide events policy and procedures to include establishing transparent, fair and consistent pricing options.**

**3.14 Further details on each are included in Appendix IV.**

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<sup>2</sup> Includes Events unit, Major Events, Sports Events and Grants.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.15 This programme of work will be managed as part of the CPS's annual revenue budget.

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

- 3.16 No implications at this stage.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Long,  
Seconded by Alderman Dorrian and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations set out within the report and agrees also that Party briefings be held, once more detailed proposals are worked up, to allow for them to be considered in advance of a future meeting.

**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership held on 9th November, including the recommendations:

**Peace IV**

To submit a request to SEUPB to:

- i. reduce the contact hours for all projects as outlined in the modifications in Appendix 2, with no impact on the allocated budget;
- ii. extend the Letters of Offer for all themes to 31st December 2022, with an extended delivery timeframe for project activity to September 2022;
- iii. reduce participant numbers as outlined and to delegate authority to Good Relations Manager and PEACE IV Manager to agree appropriate targets and proportionate budget amendments for projects; and
- iv. realign KPIs and budgets in line with modifications requested.

**Good Relations Action Plan 2020/2021**

- i. that a budget of up to £10k be set aside for a diversionary programme in North Belfast and a budget of £5k for citywide initiatives which seek to inspire people from across the city to transform it for the peace and prosperity of all and need to move online with authority on spend in

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regard to the programmes being delegated to the Director of Neighbourhood Services or his nominee; and

- ii. that the budget of £5,000 would be set aside in relation to the Clean Space and Green Initiative

**Refugee Transition Guide**

- to approve the update, reprint, translation and digital upload of the Refugee Guide along with the associated expenditure of £15,000.

**Notice of Motion – Racism Free Zone**

- that a report on the motion be submitted to a future meeting.

**Equality and Diversity - Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for the period from July till September, 2020.

**Diversity Action Plans**

The Committee was informed that the Council's Equality and Diversity framework, which ran from April, 2017 till March, 2021, set out the way in which the organisation would tackle inequalities and promote diversity in the City. The framework had been built around four key priorities, namely, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment, understanding our communities through data and consultation, delivering services accessible to all and developing a skilled and diverse workforce. In terms of the leadership, partnership and organisational commitment key priority, the Council had committed to developing and delivering a Gender Action Plan, an LGBT+ Action Plan and a Race Action Plan.

It was reported that, in May, 2018, the Women's Steering Group had agreed a three-year Gender Action Plan, to be delivered between April, 2018 and March, 2021. Refinement of the 2020/21 Action Plan had, however, been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing recovery. As a result, the Steering Group had drafted a scaled back version of the plan, which was being presented to the Committee for approval. Those elements of the 2019/20 plan which had yet to be delivered, such as the joint senior officer and Elected Member leadership programme and an event to bring together male and female staff to discuss gender issues in the workplace and how those might be addressed, had been carried forward into 2020/21. It was hoped that these would, where feasible, be delivered remotely.

It was reported further that the development of an LGBT+ Action Plan for 2020/21 had also been delayed as a result of Covid-19. A draft plan had now been developed by the staff network, "Proud" and was also being presented to the Committee for approval.

The cost of delivering the Gender Action Plan was approximately £30,000, whilst the LGBT+ Action Plan would cost £5,000 to deliver. Those costs would be met from the existing Organisational Development budget.



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The Committee approved the Gender Action Plan and the LGBT+ Action Plan for 2020/21, as set out hereunder, together with the associated costs.

**GENDER ACTION PLAN 2018 – 2021**

**Year 3 (Year 2020-2021)**

<b>WOMEN IN THE COUNCIL</b> -to ensure that BCC organisational culture, policies and practices empower talent development at all levels, for elected members and officers and remove any form of discrimination		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Hold annual IWD event / celebrations for staff	HR IWD working group WNG	£6000
Deliver Women Leaders Programme (members and officers)	WSG HR External facilitator	£12000
Participate in NI Gender Diversity Charter assessment against annual targets and activities to obtain Silver accreditation	CX HR	£2500
Develop/ agree transgender guidance document for staff	HR LGB&T Network	Staff resources
Ensure effective promotion of BCC as an employer that values and supports equality and diversity (external website, job info to potential applicants, press releases etc.)	HR MarComms Staff network	Staff Resources
Develop and agree Menopause guidance for staff	HR WNG	Staff resources
Hold event/ workshop for both male and female staff to jointly explore/ discuss gender issues and identify any issues to be addressed	HR Staff networks	£1000
Retain ' platinum level' status of the Onus Domestic Violence charter by continuing to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse issues, support staff experiencing domestic violence and abuse and ensure employees know what support is available	HR	£2000
Review, update and communicate maternity, paternity, and other parental-related guidance for staff as part of the review of the Work Life Balance Handbook	HR	Staff resources

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<b>WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY</b> -with the purpose of increasing the representation of women in leadership positions throughout communities across Belfast by ensuring that processes are in place to increase women's involvement in decision making in communities		
Fund annual external IWD event.	Equality Unit	£6500
Hold Transgender remembrance event	Head of HR LGB&T network	LBGT+ budget
Explore potential for mainstreaming Grow Lead Change programme with potential partners	HR Economic Initiatives	Staff resources
<b>WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY</b> -to ensure all council policies and strategies influence and facilitate the active and fair participation of both women and men in the economy		
Identify opportunities for pre-recruitment programmes targeted at females furthest removed from the labour market	HR	Staff resources
Identify employability partners to deliver employability/ outreach initiatives for women.  ( Link to City Deal proposals )	HR/OD Economic Initiatives	Staff resources
<p>The Northern Ireland Female Enterprise Challenge - A collaborative programme between the 11 Local Councils, Invest NI, and Women in Business NI (WIB) to promote and support female enterprise. . This programme also includes sponsorship for the WIB conference.</p> <p>Enterprise and Employability support for underrepresented groups – Belfast City Council programme of support to enable underrepresented groups (including females) to overcome the barriers to starting a business or accessing employment opportunities.</p>	<p>Economic Development</p> <p>Economic Development</p>	<p>£6,200</p> <p>£90,000</p>
<b>WOMEN IN THE CITY</b> -to ensure that the needs of women across the city are identified and used to influence and impact upon the regeneration of the city including social infrastructure design and community facilities provision		

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As part of the ongoing baseline audit of all Council assets determine if Council assets are 'fit for purpose' in terms of the needs of all genders and that gender needs are looked at as part of the development of any new council asset	Property and Projects Department C&NS Place & Economy Dept	Staff resources  Potential cost if additional works required
Support the Raise your Voice Project against sexual harassment	HR Elected Members	Staff resources
As part of the ongoing area working /place shaping work and the Physical Investment Programme look at opportunities of how the needs of women can be better met across the city	Property & Projects Department Place and Economy C&NS A Strategic Hub External stakeholders	Staff resources Potential associated costs for future GAP
Work with City Partners on achievement of Onus Safe City status	BCC ONUS External partners	Staff resources

**TOTAL APPROXIMATE COSTS - £ 30,000k for year 3 (excl. ED funded initiatives)**

**N.B. Where ongoing COVID 19 restrictions limit planned activity, online / remote delivery will be explored and used where possible.**

### **LGBT+ Action Plan 2020-21**

<b>Theme - Training and Development</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Increased awareness of LGBT+ bias	Source and deliver inclusion and awareness training	2020-21	HR/ Network Chair	£1000 total For 3 sessions
	Source and deliver awareness training on Trans and Bi issues	2020-21	HR/ Network Chair	£700 total For 2 sessions
	Deliver revised	2020-21	HR	

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LGBT employees feel comfortable to be their whole selves  Line managers understand key issues and their responsibilities	diversity induction training to ensure LGBT+ issues covered with all new staff and managers			Staff Resource
Better mental health	Deliver Mental Health First Aider course	2020-21	HR	LGTG funded programme

<b>Theme – Promoting positive attitudes</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
All relevant policies are inclusive and use gender neutral language where possible  Clear processes in place for staff to raise issues around discrimination/bullying/harassment based on gender and sexual orientation	Review staff policies.	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource
Guidance available for trans employees and their managers and for staff delivering services to the trans community	Agree Transgender policy / guidance	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource

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<b>Theme – Promotion and ensure visibility of Network including senior champions</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Increased awareness of and participation in network	Promote Proud via Interlink/ Email	2020-21	Network Chair	Staff Resource/ Comms
Increased awareness about staff network and senior support	Articles profiling senior champion and allies	2020-21	Chair / Network	Staff Resource/ Comms
	Continue to distribute promotional material	2020-21	Network	n/a
Potential applicants aware BCC is an employer that values and supports equality and diversity	Ensure up to date info on external website, job info to potential applicants, press releases etc.)  Send all external job opportunities to NI LGBT+ organisations for circulation	2020-21	HR Comms Staff network	n/a
Visibility/Collaboration with other Networks	Joint Webinar involving all 3 Networks and their aims	2020-21	HR/Network	Staff Resource

<b>Theme – Community Engagement</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Bigger and better participation in Pride and more visibility of BCC support for	Virtual participation in Pride - to be agreed how	2020-21	Network	n/a
		2020-21	Network	Staff Resource

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LGBT+ community	Build participation with network members and staff	2020-21	HR/Network	Staff Resource
Visible support for LGBT Community	<p>Fundraiser for Pride – possible collaboration with WNG and Disability Network</p> <p>What does Pride mean to me? – visual display via pictures and videos of what Pride means to Network members</p>	2020-21	Network/Chair	Comms/Staff Resource
Increased awareness of issues faced by Trans community and awareness of need for remembrance	Hold annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event if possible or mark on line if necessary.	2020-21	Network/HR	£600
Improved awareness of issues faced by Trans Community	Celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility Light City Hall on Transgender Day of Visibility in March 2021	2020-21	Network/HR	£300

Theme – Social Networking				
Outcomes	Actions required	Timing	Lead	Indicative costs
Improved visibility, learning and positive outcomes	Facilitate an event between NI Stonewall organisations	2020-21	Network	£800

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<b>Theme – Employee Lifecycle / Organisational Analysis</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Feedback from staff re LGBT issues	Carry out voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff ( when feasible )	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource/ Comms
Position in national benchmarking exercise	Annual Membership in Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme  Stonewall Equality Index - While Index not happening in 20/21 due to Covid 19 - take the opportunity to get familiar with new criteria and action plan for improvement	2020-21	HR and Staff network	£2500
Areas for improvement identified	Consider 19/20 Stonewall feedback and action plan for improvement	2020-21	HR / Network	Staff resource
Ensuring comprehensive info on staff is available and up to date.	Carry out voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff ( when feasible )	2020-21	HR	Staff resource
	Update application monitoring forms	2020-21	HR	Staff resource

<b>Theme – Inclusive Workplace</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Gender neutral facilities for staff	Consider feasibility of gender neutral toilet in city centre offices.	2020-21	HR/Facilities Mgt	Corporate Maintenance Budget approval if work necessary
			<b>Total</b>	<b>£5900</b>

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**Operational Issues**

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 12th November.

**Illuminate Process**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 31st July, it had agreed not to accommodate a request from Councillor Nicholl to illuminate the City Hall in red on Tuesday, 1st December to mark World Aids Day, on the basis that it would coincide with the Christmas lighting and that other requests covering December/early January had, in the past, been refused for that reason.

A Member highlighted the significance of World Aids Day and urged the Committee to reconsider Councillor Nicholl's request on a one-off basis.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request and agreed further that a review be undertaken of the current policy of declining requests to illuminate the City Hall in December/early January, with the potential for illuminating other Council facilities, such as Belfast Castle, to be considered.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Working Group on the Climate Crisis**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 9th November.

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Active Belfast Limited Board**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 9th November.

**Schedule of Meetings 2021**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2021, with all meetings to commence at 9.30 a.m:

- Friday, 15th January (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday, 22nd January
- Friday, 19th February
- Friday, 19th March
- Friday, 23rd April
- Friday, 21st May
- Friday, 18th June
- Friday, 20th August



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- Friday, 24th September
- Friday, 22nd October
- Friday, 19th November and
- Friday, 17th December

The Committee approved also the holding of any additional meetings which might be required as part of the rate setting process, with the dates and times to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson.

**Change of Date of Council Meeting**

The Committee approved the change of date of the Council meeting in January from Monday 4th to Thursday 7th, with the meeting to commence at the usual time of 6.00 p.m.

**Governance**

**Appointment of Members to the Council/  
Belfast Harbour Commissioners Joint Consultative Forum**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st June, 2019, it had granted approval for the Council to enter into a strategic partnership arrangement with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, through a Memorandum of Understanding, to realise their shared ambitions for the strong growth, regeneration and prosperity of the City.

The City Solicitor reported that a Project Board, chaired jointly by the Chief Executive of each organisation, had been established and that it had met for the first time in January. However, due to the ongoing difficulties arising from Covid-19, it was unable to meet again until December.

In addition, both parties had agreed to establish a Joint Consultative Forum in order to inform projects and test the collective willingness to explore projects at the concept stage. The Forum, which would consist of four Elected Members and four Harbour Commissioners, would not be a decision-making body, and decisions would only be taken through each parties' formal governance arrangements. It would be responsible for appointing its Chairperson and secretariat arrangements for both the Project Board and the Joint Consultative Forum would be shared. The place of any member on the Forum could be taken by a nominee of that member.

In terms of the Council's representation on the Forum, the Committee had, in approving the Memorandum of Understanding, agreed to use the d'Hondt process, which was based upon the overall strength of the Political Parties immediately following the 2019 Local Government Elections. The application of the d'Hondt or the Sainte-Laguë process on a one-off basis had resulted in the following order of choice:

<b>1</b>	<b>SF</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>DUP</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ALLIANCE</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>SF</b>

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The Committee agreed that Members be nominated to the Joint Consultative Forum on the basis of the order of choice set out above.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Illumination of Belfast Castle**

The Committee agreed, at the request of Councillor Murphy, to illuminate Belfast Castle in blue on Sunday, 29th November, as part of a series of events being held over that weekend to mark the 15th birthday of Noah Donohoe.

**Other Business**

**Casement Park – Notice of Opinion**

The Committee was reminded that the planning application for the redevelopment of Casement Park, which had been submitted to the Council initially, had in 2017 been called in by the Department for Infrastructure, on the basis that it was considered to be of regional significance.

The City Solicitor reported that the Minister for Infrastructure had, on 13th October, announced her intention to recommend that planning approval be granted for the project. As part of that process, her Department had served on the Council a Notice of Opinion, which allowed the Council to request that the application be determined by the Planning Appeals Commission or another person so appointed.

He explained that the Council had informed the Department for Infrastructure previously that it had no objections to the planning application being approved and he drew the Committee's attention to a proposed response to the aforementioned Notice of Opinion. That response had stated that the application had been subject to a full and considered assessment by the Department for Infrastructure and that there was, therefore, no reason for it to be referred elsewhere.

The Committee approved the response for submission to the Department for Infrastructure and agreed, given the limited timeframe for submissions, that, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), the decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

Chairperson

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Thursday, 26th November, 2020

## SPECIAL MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford;  
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,  
Groogan, Heading, Long, Lyons, McAllister,  
McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, Murphy,  
Nicholl, Pankhurst and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;  
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;  
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;  
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

No apologies were reported

### Declarations of Interest

Alderman Kingston declared an interest in relation to item 2a – Covid-19 Christmas Response Funding, in that he worked on a part-time basis for the Forward South Partnership, one of the nine strategic partners referred to within the report, and left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

### Restricted Items

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following four 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 Committee meeting during discussion of these items 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.

### **Covid-19 Christmas Response Funding**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the Council, at its meeting on 19th November, in passing a motion on Food Poverty, had agreed to create a fund of £300,000 to provide additional and holistic support to those who were in need this Christmas. It had agreed that the fund would be distributed on the following basis:

- £150,000 to the Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal; and
- £150,000 to be shared across the Council's third sector partners for bespoke and targeted support programmes, with any un-utilised funding from this provision reverting to the Salvation Army and St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Family Appeal.

He informed the Members that, since that decision, the Department for Communities had, in recognising the high level of demand for food, indicated its intention to allocate to the Council an additional £505,000, subject to the receipt of a final letter of offer.

He provided details of the significant financial investment and other activities which the Council and its various partners had provided at a community level in response to Covid-19 and provided an overview of four options for the allocation of the aforementioned amounts, which had been based upon discussions at the meeting of the Party Leaders on 20th November.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. to adopt option 4 within the report, that is, to allocate funding of £150,000 to the existing nine strategic area community partners across the City, as set out in option 1, based on the allocation method of 50% population and 50% need, using multiple deprivation as a proxy, and as outlined below:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Total £</b>
North	37,200
South	25,950
East	35,925
West	40,200
Shankill	10,725
<b>Total</b>	<b>150,000</b>

- ii. that £100,000 of the funding being provided by the Department for Communities be allocated at risk, subject to due diligence, on the same allocation basis used for the distribution of the £150,000, to the five areas listed in the table above and that thematic groups be considered as part of the distribution of the remaining DfC funding;

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- iii. that a special meeting be held to receive an update on the outworkings of the funding which had been distributed and to decide on how the remaining Department for Communities funding would be allocated;
- iv. based on the preferred option, to delegate authority to the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services to make operational decisions relating to the re-allocation of the preferred funding approach, to include making awards (in advance of final funding agreements being signed) and re-allocating money within the area context, if agreed by local groups; and
- v. in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), that the aforementioned decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

**Council Assets Rental Holiday and  
St. George's Market – Financial Implications**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th November, it had considered a report outlining requests which had been received on behalf of businesses operating within the units in St. George's Market and from stallholders therein to waive rental fees for a three-month period, in light of the trading difficulties which they were experiencing as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The Committee had agreed to defer the report to allow for an analysis of the cost to the Council of waiving, for a two-week and a four-week period, the rental fees for those businesses within its estate which would be adversely affected by the imposition of the further restrictions which had been announced by the Northern Ireland Executive on 19th November and how that cost would be met.

The Director of Finance and Resources provided a breakdown of the number of leases across the Council's estate, together with the cost of providing a two week and four week rental holiday for all of those businesses. He explained that many of them could remain open, as they were exempt from the current Covid-19 restrictions, and that those which had to close would be able to avail of government support schemes. All lease-holders had already availed of a three-month rental holiday in Quarter 1, which had not been universally granted by other public and private sector landlords. He added that the Council's Estates Team would work to ensure that any business in difficulty was made aware of the support available to enable them to adapt to the new business environment and concluded by stressing that the Council could be subject to a legal challenge, should it decide to waive fees for some businesses and not for others.

During discussion, a Member stated that it would be beneficial to receive financial information specifically for those businesses within the Council's asset base which would be required to close under the latest restrictions and suggested that the report be deferred until that was provided. There was general consensus around this proposal.

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In addition, the Director referred to the request to waive stallholders' fees for a further three months. There was a discussion around deferring this also, as the Market was about to close for two weeks due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown,

That the Committee agrees to waive the rental fees for stallholders in St. George's market and to defer the request relating to the units to allow for further information to be provided.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer both requests until its next available meeting to allow for the additional information to be provided.

**Recruitment of Climate Commissioner**

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that Mrs. Grainia Long, Commissioner for Resilience, would be leaving the Council early in 2021 to take up a position within the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

She reported that Mrs. Long had been appointed on a temporary basis and that her post had been funded externally. It was now proposed that a new post of Climate Commissioner be created by the Council, with the aim of providing a continued focus on the work of the Climate Change Working Group, the Belfast Climate Commission and the Resilience Board. The Commissioner would be appointed on a permanent basis and would be funded through existing Council budgets.

She provided an overview of the recruitment process and associated timeline and, accordingly, recommended that the Committee:

- i. approve the creation and recruitment of the post of Climate Commissioner, as outlined; and
- ii. agree that the selection panel comprise the Chairperson of the Committee (or her nominee), together with two Members of the Committee, not represented by the Chairperson, the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of City and Organisational Strategy.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the Democratic Unionist Party and the Green Party each nominate a Member to sit on the selection panel.

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**Minutes of Meeting of Party Group Leaders**

In advance of the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders of 20th November being presented to the Committee on 18th December for approval, the Chief Executive drew the Members' attention to the fact that, in light of the most recent Covid-19 restrictions announced by the Northern Ireland Executive, the Party leaders had agreed that:

- i. the Christmas Animation Programme in the grounds of the City Hall would now commence on Saturday, 12th December and would run until Sunday 10th January; and
- ii. the Council would carry out no enforcement action against large essential retail shops (in excess of 280 m<sup>2</sup>), across the City, should they choose to open or deliver on a Sunday from 10 a.m. till 6 p.m. The arrangement would be in place from Sunday, 22nd November to Sunday, 10th January. Smaller essential retail shops could continue to trade for up to twenty-four hours.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Operational Issues**

**Standing Order 14 – Submission of Minutes**

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

Chairperson

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## People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 10th November, 2020

### MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (In the Chair);  
Alderman Rodgers;  
The High Sheriff, Councillor Verner; and  
Councillors Black, Bunting, Cobain, Michael Collins, de  
Faoite, Flynn, Garrett, M. Kelly, Magee, McAteer,  
McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton, Pankhurst,  
Smyth and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;  
Ms. J. Wilson, Business Manager;  
Mrs. A. Allen, Neighbourhood Services Manager;  
Miss. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Also In attendance: Councillors Kyle and O'Hara.

#### **Apologies**

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

#### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 6th and 20th October were taken as read and signed as correct.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Verner declared an interest in relation to item 5(b) on the agenda, Council Response to Department of Health 'Consultation on cross-departmental Covid-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan' as a staff member of the Greater Shankill Partnership who worked with this sector of the Community. Councillor Smyth also declared an interest as he worked with vulnerable young people in his employment.

#### **Schedule of Meetings 2021**

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings for the People and Communities Committee as outlined below and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5.15 pm:

- Tuesday, 12th January
- Tuesday, 26th January – Youth Forum
- Tuesday, 9th February
- Tuesday, 2nd March – Housing

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- Tuesday, 9th March
- Tuesday, 13th April
- Tuesday, 11th May
- Tuesday, 8th June
- Tuesday, 22nd June – Youth Forum
- Tuesday, 3rd August – Housing (Annual HIP Update)
- Tuesday, 10th August
- Tuesday, 7th September
- Tuesday, 5th October – Youth Forum
- Tuesday, 12th October
- Tuesday, 2nd November – Housing
- Tuesday, 9th November
- Tuesday, 7th December

**Restricted**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following 3 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 Committee meeting during discussion on the following 3 items as, due to their nature, 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.

**Finance Update**

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources, at its meeting on 31st July, had received an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position and a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures, which had and would be taken as the situation evolved. It had agreed to continue to provide Members with a monthly update on the financial position and that the same report would be presented to the subsequent standing Committees for noting and to provide further information on ongoing work.

During discussion, Members raised queries in relation to the current arrangements with GLL and the BWUH in terms of finance and staffing and sought clarity on the replacement Job Support Scheme. They were advised that an update in respect of these matters would be given at the November meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee noted the October 2020 financial update.

**Hire Arrangements Boucher Road Playing Fields and Botanic Gardens**

The Committee was reminded that it had previously granted authority to Belsonic to hold a maximum of 10 concerts in Ormeau Park in June of each year for a three-year period from 2019 – 2021. In addition, at its meeting in August 2020, it had also agreed a request

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from UP Productions for the hire of the Boucher Playing Fields from 22nd May – 2nd June 2021 for the AVA Music Festival.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager advised that the ongoing pandemic continued to make it difficult for organisers to plan and prepare for these type of events, especially given that no one knew when the restrictions would end. On this basis, he detailed that both promoters had made contingency requests.

The Committee considered the two requests. During discussion, at the request of a Member, it was agreed that when emerging from the pandemic it would be useful if the Council would arrange a meeting with the promoters to get a better understanding of the arrangements that promoters put in place when staging large-scale events.

The Committee further agreed:

- the request from UP Productions for the hire of Boucher Playing Fields from the 15th September 2021 until the 30th September 2021 for the AVA Music Festival; and
- the request from Belsonic for the hire of Ormeau Park for the month of September 2021 for the Belsonic Music Festival; and
- that officers be granted permission to liaise with the promoters of the events to agree alternative appropriate dates for both events should public health restrictions require further postponement and/or contingency measures to be put in place.

**Grant funding from the Office of Product Safety and Standards**

The Director of City Services advised the Committee of a grant programme that was available from the Office of Product Safety and Standards (OPSS). She advised that this grant had been designed to support district councils in Northern Ireland to assist them in undertaking effective market surveillance and with the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The grants was up to £55k per Council and was available up to March 2021 and she explained that it had been provided to establish a flexible resource within each Council with the capacity and capability to:

- undertake risk-based market surveillance interventions on goods before they were released for free circulation and, subsequently, throughout the supply chain;
- manage and act on intelligence to drive a risk-based approach;
- provide advice and support to local businesses to meet their obligations under product safety legislation for importing and exporting goods;
- collaborate with district councils and other organisations to coordinate market surveillance activity across NI to ensure compliance with EU regulatory requirements; and
- monitor and report on interventions.

The Committee noted that Belfast City Council was already a Market Surveillance Authority with responsibility for regulating product safety.

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The Committee agreed that City and Neighbourhood Services would avail of the additional funding from the Office of Product Safety and Standards on a cost recovery basis until March 2021, to assist it with directing the appropriate resources within the department to ensure that the Council met its obligations as detailed above.

**Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

**Motion - Action on Avoidable Winter Deaths**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Groves and seconded by Councillor McAteer, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

*“With the winter approaching, Belfast citizens will be increasingly susceptible to Avoidable Winter Deaths – particularly our citizens aged over 65 with underlying health conditions and vulnerable elderly people aged 85+.*

*As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, elderly and vulnerable citizens are already at high risk, it is therefore imperative that we redouble our efforts to prevent avoidable winter deaths from happening during the winter 20/21.*

*The increase in winter deaths is widely understood to be caused by the flu and spells of very cold weather - yet these deaths are avoidable. A combination of high energy prices, fuel poverty, ill health, low income and poor housing can make winter a dangerous time for many older people.*

*This Council has worked with statutory, community and voluntary partners to deliver the Belfast Warm and Well Project to tackle Avoidable Winter Deaths earlier this year. We call on Council to act decisively to implement a multi-sectoral targeted Avoidable Winter Deaths programme for the winter of 20/21.”*

Councillor McAteer addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services referred to the ongoing work throughout 2019/20 in respect of the delivery of the Belfast Warm and Well Project. He detailed that this had been co-ordinated by Council officers with the assistance of the Belfast Health Development Unit and the Health and Social Care Board and provided an assurance that the Council would continue to work with the other statutory agencies to continue to deliver this work into 2020/21. They would also aim to continue to promote other key messages in regard to cold homes and the importance of the flu vaccination.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that officers would continue to work with the Council's statutory, community and voluntary partners to implement a multi-sectoral targeted Avoidable Winter Deaths Programme for the winter of 2020/21 with the aim of delivering the Belfast Warm and Well Project.

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**Motion - Mental Health - Awareness and Support Campaign**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Pankhurst and seconded by Councillor Kyle, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

*“This Council agrees that Belfast is facing a mental health crisis that has been exacerbated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*This Council agrees to launch an awareness and support campaign in the city centre, at strategic points throughout the city and on social media that targets those with poor mental health. The campaign will focus on posters offering support service details and general questions that have a positive psychological effect for those who read them.*

*Furthermore, this Council agrees to convene an urgent meeting between the Council, the Executive Office, the Department for Health and statutory agencies to discuss the formation of a community emergency response system that will allow local support services to respond to those in need of urgent and direct help.*

*Finally, this Council acknowledges and pays tribute to all those charities and services who offer invaluable help to our citizens that undoubtedly save lives on a daily and weekly basis.”*

Both the proposer of the motion Councillor Pankhurst and seconder of the motion Councillor Kyle addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion, highlighting the need for the Council to work strategically with other statutory and voluntary partners to publicise the help that existed and to ensure that adequate support services were in place to respond to those in need of help.

Several Members commended and paid tribute to those charities, organisations and individuals who volunteered their help and support, often on a daily basis, and recognised the valuable role that they played in society and in helping to save lives.

In response to the motion, the Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with an assurance that the Council was committed to the promotion of mental health awareness and support. He referred to mental health support which was available and publicised via the Council's social media channels and he also drew reference to the Directory of Services Document which was available via the Public Health Agency – a Mental Health Directory of Services aimed at signposting people in need of support to the support services in Belfast, available here: [http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-01/Belfast\\_area\\_card\\_2020.pdf](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2020-01/Belfast_area_card_2020.pdf)

The Director also highlighted the other support mechanisms that were available, including Lifeline (0808 808 8000) the regional 24/7 helpline. He advised that a pilot of the

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Multi Agency Triage Team trust, Ambulance Service and Police was ongoing in the Belfast and the South Eastern Trust areas.

A further Member suggested involving the Belfast Youth Forum (BYF). She advised that, at its recent joint meeting with the People and Communities Committee on 20th October, 2020, the Youth Forum had presented its “Elephant in the Room Campaign”, a report which explored young people’s awareness of mental health in Northern Ireland.

A number of Members commended the Youth Forum in regard to the progress made with the Elephant in the Room Group (EITR) campaign and noted that they were keen to continue to work with the BYF to learn from them.

The Director advised that the EITR Group had advised that it intended to invite the current Mental Health Champion to the Executive, Professor Siobhan O’Neill, to meet the group. Professor O’Neill had been present at the presentation to Executive Working Group on Mental Wellbeing, Resilience and Suicide Prevention in July and was keen to discuss the EITR report further with the Youth Forum.

The Director concluded by advising that the Belfast Protect Life Implementation Group (BPLG), a multi-agency partnership in Belfast that was responsible for suicide prevention, which was facilitated by the PHA, had recently updated its membership. He assured the Committee that the Council would, as requested in the motion, continue to engage with it to discuss the formation of a community emergency response system.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that the Council would continue to promote mental health awareness throughout the city and via social media. It further agreed that the Council would engage with the BPLG to discuss the formation of a community emergency response system that would enable local support services to respond to those in need of urgent and direct help.

**Motion - Support for Young People and Students**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Nicholl and seconded by Councillor Mulholland, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

*“This Council notes the adverse effect COVID-19 has had on our city’s young people and students. Accordingly, we call upon the Council to facilitate an ad hoc meeting with key stakeholders to amplify the wide range issues and ensure a joined up approach is taken.”*

Councillor Mulholland addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion. She commenced by highlighting the alarming trend of anxiety and depression amongst young adults during the Covid-19 pandemic and she paid tribute to the many support organisations, charities and services that were trying to support young people through the pandemic and she reiterated the need to try and ensure that a joined up approach was taken.

Several Members noted the lack of stability and routine for many young people who were suffering with a lack of connection and support from their friends and mentors due to online learning.

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A further Member referred to the financial difficulties that many students were facing through losing employment and not having been afforded any reduction in rental, despite the fact that most of their lectures had been moved online and often accommodation was no longer required. For those students who remained in student accommodation, there was the added worry in regard to the sharing of facilities such as bathrooms and kitchens during the pandemic.

The Members acknowledged that it was important to understand the wide range of issues that young people had been experiencing during the pandemic and to establish ways of supporting them.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed to facilitate an ad hoc meeting with key stakeholders to enable the Council to highlight and discuss the issues affecting young people and students resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure a joined up approach was taken.

**Motion - Belfast City Council - Cycling Champion**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McReynolds and seconded by Councillor McAllister, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

*"This Council agrees to introduce a Belfast City Council - Cycling Champion within the Council to support active travel and bicycle use; and, agrees to write to the Minister for Infrastructure calling on the publication of the Belfast Bicycle Network."*

Councillor McReynolds addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion.

The Committee:

- adopted the motion and agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting detailing how the Council planned to progress the introduction of a Cycling Champion who would support active travel and bicycle use; and
- agreed that the Council would write to the Infrastructure Minister calling for the publication of the Belfast Bicycle Network Plan.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**Update on Interaction with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council - Re: Cutts HRC**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 To provide an update report to the People and Communities in relation to the decision taken at the meeting held on 8th September 2020, namely:**

‘The Committee agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would detail potential options, including costs, for Belfast City Council (BCC) to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) in respect of the disposal of waste by residents of the Colin area of Belfast at the Cutts Recycling Centre within the LCCC District.’

**2.0     Recommendations**

**2.1     The Committee are asked to**

- Note the update report

**3.0     Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1     As a direct result of the initial outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020, all but essential services across Northern Ireland’s 11 Councils, including Belfast City Council (BCC) were suspended. This included the closure of Household Recycling Centres and Civic Amenity Sites. Once clarification and assurance was received from Central Government as to whether journeys to disposal sites were allowed under the ‘Essential Travel’ Guidelines, BCC reopened their sites with revised operating arrangements, designed with consultation with all internal stakeholders including Trade Unions to agree safe working practices and Covid-19 risk assessments.**
- 3.2     Similar to other Councils, BCCs arrangements included measures to control access to these sites to maintain control and adhere to social distancing measures which in turn gave protection to staff and members of the public alike. Again, like other councils, these measures included restricting access to Household Recycling Centres to individual council residents.**
- 3.3     Initially 100% identity checks were carried out by additional front of house staff, but as demand on the Belfast HRCs has settled, and control measures such as the booking system for Commercial type vans and trailers has been introduced, a more pragmatic approach has been adopted.**
- 3.4     Each of the 11 local councils have taken similar but individual approaches to the re-opening and operation of their respective Household Recycling Centres and Civic Amenity sites. Each Council will have undertaken their own specific risk assessments as to how they will safely operate their individual sites. Differing approaches, arrangements and site specific Safe**



Systems of Work are to be expected between councils. These have been discussed during Council Waste Forum and TAGNI meetings between officers to benchmark and learn best practice from others during the current unprecedented difficult operating environment under which the collection of waste is carried out.

- 3.5 In respect to the operating procedures within Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC), the requirement to prove residence within their boundary in order to gain access to their HRCs, including the site at the Cutts, Dunmurry, has been maintained. This has led to Belfast City Council area residents who have tried to gain access the site in LCCC area being turned away.

**Main Update**

- 3.6 Following the decision from the P&C Committee in September, the City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) was able to contact his equivalent officer in LCCC. He in turn noted the BCC request to explore options and advised that he would discuss the matter internally and revert as soon as possible.
- 3.7 Subsequent to this, the City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) received an email on 1st October outlining the LCCC position. The main points are outlined as follows:
- The matter was discussed by the LCCC Chief Officer Team on 1st October and it was agreed that they could not be supportive of the proposal at this time.
  - LCCC have made a council decision to dedicate the use of its sites to their own residents
  - In their view, to open these sites to residents from another council would create many complications and could not be considered in isolation i.e. that sites adjacent to other councils would have to be made available to them too, which in turn would mean those other councils having to consider access to their sites where restrictions to residents only are in place.
  - LCCC advised 'With the current societal and economic pressures being experienced by us all in these unprecedented times we need to manage our services and costs to best effect and to the benefit of our own residents, therefore to consider changing an adopted process which we are satisfied services our Council needs is unlikely to achieve LCCC political support which is necessary to advance your proposal.'

- 3.8 In conclusion, it was stated that on this basis LCCC could not progress the matter any further.
- 3.9 LCCC, in support of their position, included a copy of correspondence sent to BCC in July 2014 from NIEA and copied to the then Lisburn City Council, when discussions were being held specifically around the Cutts site and the possibility of shared use and shared responsibility for the waste post-RPA. NIEA was not supportive of the proposed arrangement at that time, and LCCC have stated that a number of their concerns expressed in the letter still remain valid.
- 3.10 This letter details the complications around entering into an arrangement around one site in respect for:
- Licensing and regulation of the site
  - Statutory recording, tracking and management of waste under a joint arrangement.
- 3.11 In conclusion, the letter stated:
- ‘To conclude, it is NIEA’s view that the current situation where the operator of a CA sites is solely responsible for the waste is straightforward and clear. CA sites already exist near council borders that will be receiving waste from residents from different council areas and this has been accepted by all parties. The proposed approach would introduce a great deal of complexity into the system and increase the potential for errors for no obvious environmental benefit.’

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 Any potential change in service provision would have financial implications which would require assessment for both councils.

#### Equality and Good Relations implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.13 An assessment is not required at this time given the update only nature of the report.”

The Committee noted the report.

#### Council Response to Department of Health 'Consultation on cross-departmental Covid-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan'

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised the Members that an invitation had been received from the Director of Family and Children’s Policy seeking the Council to participate in the Department of Health’s consultation on the ‘Cross-departmental Covid-

19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan.' He advised that the full consultation report was available for download [here](#) and drew the Members' attention to the Council's draft response to the consultation document:

**Appendix 3**

**Belfast City Council - Response To The Covid-19  
Vulnerable Children And Young People's Plan**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Department of Health has led on the development of a Covid-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan, which has been produced on a cross-departmental basis with DfC, DE, DOJ and DfE.
- 1.2 The plan has been developed in response to the challenges and risks facing children, young people and their families due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is intended to reflect a series of activities that will be, or have been, undertaken across the Executive to meet the needs of vulnerable children, young people and their families during this time and in the recovery period after.
- 1.3 The Executive agreed to the publication of the Covid-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's plan on 6 August 2020, subject to a targeted consultation to ensure the Plan:
  - reflects the activities that are being undertaken to support children and vulnerable families during Covid-19;
  - reflects how services have adapted and enhanced provision to continue to support children and families during Covid-19; and
  - Includes new actions, which have been undertaken specifically to address some of lockdown's risks and challenges.
- 1.4 The Plan will help support the next steps in rebuilding services to meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people.
- 1.5 Belfast City Council (BCC) welcomes the core principle of the document. We find however that the document will benefit from additional detail.
- 1.6 Alignment with current policies and frameworks (Eg. Outcomes groups) need to be detailed. Correspondence between established indicators aimed at measuring the improvement of children and young people and the newly proposed actions

needs to be explored to assess the real impact of the proposed interventions.

- 1.7 In order to prevent the reactive nature and volatility of some interventions due to current unprecedented circumstances and the constant changes in the limitations for service delivery, a more thorough plan is needed. The plan would benefit from an assessment of which intervention can be delivered according to the different levels of restrictions in place. This will ensure that different interventions are in place to mitigate the named risks regardless of the different levels/tiers of restrictions.
- 1.8 The response outlined below follows the structure set out in the consultation paper. We have provided answers where BCC has a stated position and where it is considered appropriate for us to respond.
2. Definition of Vulnerable children and young people.
  - 2.1 We welcome the definition of children and young people used in the consultation document. We welcome in particular the specific acknowledgment to “invisible” children, that is, those not known to services and invisible to local authorities. The number of these children have increased dramatically as a consequence to COVID pandemic encountering a wide range of difficulties from physical health , mental illness to going hungry or cold; at the verge of getting homeless or out of school; being at risk of neglect or living with parents with health problems.
  - 2.2 BCC welcomes the aims of the plan.
  - 2.3 Monitoring, reporting and engagement need to take a holistic approach. We found it challenging to discern between actions already in place, and plans of actions which will take place in the future. Clear and simple reporting mechanisms need to be put in place as a matter of urgency in order to respond efficiently to the needs of children and young people.
3. Promoting safety and wellbeing in the home environment
  - 3.1 We welcome the actions proposed. BCC welcomes in particular the recognition of the relevance of the usage of outdoor spaces. In addition to the opening of parks and other outdoor facilities, BCC is working on a programme of interventions aimed at encouraging service users, including children and young people, to exercise and use outdoor spaces. BCC recognises the impact that the usage of outdoor spaces has on mental health and wellbeing.

- 3.2 A clear reporting mechanism for the learning from the different COVID emergency support lines needs to be put in place to make best use of the learning incurred during the lifetime of the service. This mechanism should be informed by already agreed indicators. (Outcomes for children and young people).**
- 3.3 There are a number of initiatives across the region that, while not targeting children and young people directly, have proven to be a huge influencing factor in improving quality of life across the region during the pandemic. An example of this is the Belfast Community Response Hub.**
- 3.4 The Belfast Community Response Hub was established within 9 days (distribution hub, customer helpline and remote contact centre). This provided an opportunity to support vulnerable families and children. Some of our outputs are:**
- 9,770 calls handled by the Contact Centre**
  - 6,908 enquiries were in relation to food parcels**
  - 5,115 calls handled by local community run helplines**
  - 930 welfare referrals were managed by the Area Teams N/S/E/W (this included providing advice and signposting for prescription pick up, emotional support and emergency food). The majority of referrals were for charity or community support (43%), non-emergency support (20%), collection of prescriptions (11%) and emergency service support (10%).**
  - 30 staff provided with ‘Big Word’ training to improve communication with people who didn’t have English as their first language**
  - 107,407 food parcels and hot food delivered over 16 weeks - 50,533 food parcels from Community Response Hub and 56,874 food parcels and hot food from Community Organisations**
  - 9,320 deliveries or prescription pick-ups were made on behalf of residents**
  - Over £1.6 million in grants allocated to 134 Community Groups to fund their support of the project.**
  - 4,577 calls were made by the Contact Centre to residents to prepare them for the closure of the scheme and to signpost them on to community support where needed.**

- 3.5 With an increase of usage of internet by children and young people, there is a bigger potential for online harm to take place. Specific guidance on how to deliver online services safely for professionals would be welcome.
- 3.6 Multiagency support is key. Fluid communications between the different organisations involved needs to be formally established particularly in the co-design of activities.
- 3.7 While there are several interventions that would address the majority of children in a vulnerable position, there are a number of key issues that might need further consideration such as the lack of wrap around support mechanisms for families, isolation and specific issues such as poverty, food poverty and fuel poverty.
- 3.8 The consultation asked if we are aware of any other effective interventions to support the improvement of mental health in children and young people: we would recommend the attached 'Universal approaches to improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing: Short descriptions of interventions identified from the synthesis of systematic reviews' by Public Health England (2019)
- 3.9 A simple reporting mechanism needs to be put in place from the beginning of the intervention to assess progress and needed corrections. An accountability mechanism with specific outcomes and targets is required by each one of the partners.
- 4. **Promoting safety and wellbeing in the wider community**
- 4.1 Overall, we agree that the right actions have been put in place. There is no clarification as to which of these are currently being delivered and which ones are being planned, making it difficult to assess the demand and need for these services.
- 5. **Strengthen system capacity to respond to current risks**
- 5.1 In addition to the availability of adequate information in a timely manner to inform decision making, there are a series of services such as parent and toddler groups, activity based children groups , afterschool's and play groups that prove to be invaluable in promoting the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Timely advice, guidance and planning of these activities will provide an additional resource during this time. Up to date advice and coordination between different partners to agree minimum standards for the delivery of services are paramount.

**6. Rebuild Services**

- 6.1 In addition to the executive recovery plan, Council is in the process of finalising its own recovery plan that will guide us in how we move Belfast forward towards COVID recovery and beyond. The framework covers both economic and community recovery, the latter in the broadest sense – families, local businesses, and community sector – all those stakeholders that are connected to a local place.**
- 6.2 In BCC we will approach recovery collectively and in an integrated way that is very much in the spirit of the principles agreed by chief officers and elected members. These are:**
- Support local area problem solving**
  - Create opportunities for new ways of working**
  - Support cultural change in support of area working**
  - Create synergies to pool the great knowledge and experience that you all have**
  - Align to the vision of community provision**

Several Members of the Committee welcomed the draft Council response that had been prepared by Council officers and made a number of comments and addendums that they requested be incorporated into the draft document in advance of it being submitted. It was agreed that officers would liaise with the various Members to ensure that their comments were accurately reflected in the consultation.

The Committee agreed that the consultation response to the 'Cross-departmental Covid-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan', be submitted to the Department of Health by the 13th November deadline, with the proviso that the response would reflect the additional comments of the Members and be subject to Council approval at the 1st December Council meeting.

**Boxing Strategy - Quarter 2 Report**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the Council had previously agreed to provide £200,000 in funding to the Irish Athletic Boxing Association Ulster Branch (IABA) in the current financial year for delivery of an agreed action plan which supported the Belfast Boxing Strategy and he then provided an update on the progress in relation to the agreement up to the end of September 2020.

He explained that, in line with the Council's objectives, the Belfast Boxing Strategy Steering Group had met quarterly. The Steering Group was chaired by the Director of

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Neighbourhood Services and attended by Council officers, IABA officers and officials and Co. Antrim officials.

The Committee was reminded that the Council had previously agreed a total of 37 Indicators with the IABA to monitor delivery of the programmes. The Director reported that the IABA had been compliant with all the reporting matters.

The Committee noted the progress to date and that the achievement of targets had been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions. It further noted that IABA were hopeful that full implementation of the majority, if not all, of the agreed KPIs could be achieved by year end (subject to the current regulations being lifted/relaxed).

**Stadia Community Benefits Initiative Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 To advise Committee of progress with the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative (SCBI) and update on the action plan.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the content of the report.**

**3.0 Main report**

- 3.1 The Council has been progressing with the Leisure Transformation Programme to renew and further develop its leisure offering across the City. This programme has been influenced by the partnership opportunities presented by the NI Executive Stadia Programme.**
- 3.2 The Council, Department for Communities (DfC) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) had previously recognised the opportunities presented by the Stadia Programme and had committed to work together to maximise these benefits via the establishment of a Stadium Community Benefits Initiative as part of the Belfast Community Benefits Initiative (‘the Project’) to implement and deliver agreed objectives including promoting equality, tackling poverty, and tackling social exclusion within the Belfast area.**
- 3.3 In March 2016 the Council, DfC and IFA signed an agreement which sets out their respective commitments to the project. As other major stadia are developed in Belfast it is anticipated that other sports governing bodies shall become parties to the**



agreement. At its April 2018 meeting, People and Communities committee agreed that Council would work with the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) within the Stadia Community Benefits Initiative and recognised their significant planned investment in gaelic games in the city to support their Gaelfast strategy. GAA activities became fully incorporated into the action plan at the start of financial year 2019-2020, with Gaelfast staff imbedded into the governance structure at Communications Board, Delivery Board, Policy and Performance Board. There will be further opportunities for the extension of programme delivery over the next number of years, particularly following recent NI Executive approval for redevelopment of Casement Park.

- 3.4 The agreement is for a period of ten years with financial commitment from Council and IFA in place to the end of March 2026. Delivery is managed through monthly meetings of the Delivery Board, which reports quarterly to the Policy and Performance Board. Financial and performance reports can be presented to Council and other partners' Boards as necessary with formal reviews of the agreement planned for years 5 and 10.
- 3.5 The Policy & Performance Group is responsible for agreeing the Benefits Realisation Plan and associated annual targets. Work was undertaken to ensure the end benefits/outcomes are aligned to partners' strategies. To measure the progress of this the Council and the IFA have developed a range of indicators/intermediate benefits which are monitored through programme delivery:
- a. Number of coaching sessions provided
  - b. Number of coaches engaged in delivering coaching
  - c. Number of sessions improving club governance
  - d. Number of volunteering opportunities
  - e. Participation opportunities for under 16s
  - f. Female participation rates
  - g. Number of people completing skills development programme
  - h. Number of people members of at least one sports club
  - i. Number of sessions for under-represented groups
  - j. Number of sessions for school and youth groups
  - k. Community group usage of stadia
  - l. Number of clubs attaining club-mark
  - m. Educational opportunities
  - n. Number of programmes targeting ASB
  - o. Improved collaborative working
  - p. Number of disabled participants
  - q. Number of older people participating

- 3.6** Following the completion of a baseline assessment in early 2017, annual work-plans were then developed for years 1, 2 and 3.
- 3.7** It was agreed that year 3 (2019-2020) would be a transition year, with GAA actively joining the partnership and the first year that GAA was incorporated into programme delivery. The action plan for 2019-2020 included a mixture of sports specific programmes (e.g. National Governing Body specific coach education) and some joint collaborative initiatives delivered by both sporting codes. The IFA and GAA were able to access additional resources to enable them to deliver the joint partnership programmes, for example they collaborated to deliver club development workshops in the areas of social media, strength and conditioning and sports psychology. These club development workshops were attended by both gaelic games and football clubs. In addition, a series of tours of the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park took place, with youth football/soccer teams pairing up with youth GAA teams.
- 3.8** To improve collaborative working and to increase the community benefits in 2020-2021, a joint planning workshop was held in the National Football Stadium at Windsor Park in Nov 2019. This workshop helped to identify specific themes, which both IFA and GAA agreed to be the focus within the new action plan for the forth-coming year. The SCBI Policy and Performance group approved a joint action plan for 2020-2021, at the February 2020 meeting. This included plans for a joint SCBI conference, which was due to be held in June 2020. Other planned joint initiatives included youth summer camp, disability summer camp and community outreach with the BME communities.
- 3.9** These initiatives unfortunately had to be postponed due to NI executive Covid-19 restrictions. The majority of IFA staff involved in the delivery of the SCBI programmes were placed on furlough/part-time furlough until September 2020 and all of the Gaelfast staff currently remain on furlough. Both IFA and Gaelfast staff are likely to return to full time working in November 2020 and each organisation is fully committed to developing a revised action plan to maximise programme delivery in Q3 & Q4 and to develop new and creative ways of working/delivering whilst ensuring compliance with any Executive restrictions.
- 3.10** Programme delivery to date in Year 4 (financial year 2020/2021) has been limited. Given that some IFA staff returned from furlough on a part-time basis in August/September 2020, this

enabled some programmes to commence as summarised below:

- Five club coaches have been able to complete their IFA level 1 via support of Stadium Community Benefits funds.
- Two IFA Educational Programmes have commenced in September 2020, with two schools and 30 young people currently completing a series of qualifications including: grassroots introduction, futsal intro, referee certificate and show racism the red card.
- IFA officers are currently working with online developers to try and move some coach education online. It is hoped that grassroots, OCN and part of the NCC (level 1) will be accessible online from November 2020. These courses will then enable aspects of the SCBI educational programme to be delivered online, regardless of further Covid-19 restrictions.
- SCBI has supported Street Soccer over the summer months. SCBI funding facilitated Golf soccer sessions. This commenced as soon as Covid-19 restrictions lifted in June 2020. This provided much needed socially distanced activity for this group of adults who have experienced homelessness.
- IFA Walking Football and Shooting Stars programmes were due to commence in Belfast in November 2020. However this has now been put on hold due to the most recent Covid-19 restrictions coming into play.
- IFA clubmark accreditation system is now online. In 2020, four Belfast clubs have successfully completed the new IFA clubmark accreditation. A further 23 Belfast clubs have registered on the online clubmark platform. These registered clubs are currently being supported by IFA and Belfast City Council Sports Development staff.
- The IFA club development officer and volunteer development officer have developed a series of online workshops, which have been accessible to Belfast clubs; including online workshops/videos on: Mental Health, Covid-19 Protocols, Covid Officer training.
- The IFA volunteer development officer worked alongside Volunteer Now to assign IFA volunteer roles during lockdown to help in local foodbanks.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

- 3.10 In accordance with the Council's obligations under its DfC Funding Agreement for the Olympia Regeneration Project, the Council has committed a sum of £100,000 per annum for a minimum of ten years, so that a minimum of £1,000,000 is contributed in total to the Project. Reduced programme delivery leads to reduced expenditure and discussion will take place as to whether this budget can be carried forward into future work plans.

**Equality and Good Relations implications/Rural Needs Assessment**

- 3.11 There are no additional impacts related to this report."

The Committee noted the report.

**Sports Development Strategy**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 To seek approval to extend the terms of reference for development of a Belfast City Council Sports Development Strategy and revised timeline for development and completion.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to agree;
1. The proposed extended terms of reference
  2. The revised timeline for development of the strategy

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Key Issues**

- 3.1 It was agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 5th January 2018 that a Belfast City Council Sports Development Strategy and associated funding strategy would be developed. This strategy was to provide a framework for future decision making on providing funding to National Governing Bodies of Sport delivering programmes in Belfast in support of existing funding streams and work programmes which enhance sporting opportunities for Belfast's sporting organisations and individuals.

- 3.2** People and Communities Committee of 5th June 2018 agreed a proposed Terms of Reference and proposed timeline. Since that date the Departmental Change Programme has prompted consideration of wider opportunities to clarify and align the links between sports development and Council's strategic funding and programming decisions in the areas of asset development, health improvement and community development.
- 3.3** Department for Communities (DfC) are currently developing a Physical Activity and Sport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020 - 2030. Pre-consultation has been carried out by DfC on this strategy and Council has provided responses to the approach. It would appear that alignment to the DfC approach may support maximising the Belfast Agenda outcomes for Belfast which have a focus on delivery until 2035.
- 3.4** **Proposed Extended Terms of Reference**

Based on what was agreed at committee on 5th June 2018 it is proposed that the Terms of Reference are extended to include the following;

- In line with the Belfast Agenda the outcomes are extended to 2035
- Physical activity programming is considered as part of the pathway into organised sport
- Considered and aligned with our Leisure Transformation Programme, including the development of Phase 3.
- Identification of alternative sources of financing/partner opportunities.
- Facility/asset utilisation and management is maximised through collaborative partnership approaches
- Facility/asset planning and development is considered taking account of local, citywide and regional need.
- Sport's contribution to improvement of whole health is considered in the context of partnership working through the work of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership and associated Boards – particularly the Living Here Board
- Sport's contribution to community development is considered in the context of City & Neighbourhood's Departmental approach to area working and neighbourhood regeneration
- The strategy 'working title' to be 'Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy.'

### 3.5 Proposed Draft Timeline

Subject to committee's approval of the draft terms of reference the following is a proposed timeline for the development of the strategy.

<b>Establish Board and structures for developing strategy</b>	<b>December 2020</b>
<b>Clarify and allocate resources for developing strategy</b>	<b>January 2021</b>
<b>Research and benchmarking of best practice</b>	<b>February 2021</b>
<b>Draft strategic and policy context completed</b>	<b>February 2021</b>
<b>Audit of current programming, asset provision &amp; management arrangements.</b>	<b>February 2021</b>
<b>Draft aim and objectives completed</b>	<b>March 2021</b>
<b>Pre consultation and co-design with key stakeholders including sporting clubs, community partners, GLL, DfC, Sport NI and key governing bodies to determine what is already available and key needs of the sector</b>	<b>April and May 2021</b>
<b>Draft strategy document</b>	<b>June 2021</b>
<b>Draft equality screening and rural needs analysis</b>	<b>June 2021</b>
<b>Agreement of draft by DMT/CMT</b>	<b>July 2021</b>
<b>Consideration of draft strategy by SP&amp;R</b>	<b>August 2021</b>

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<b>Council ratification</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
<b>12 week public consultation</b>	<b>October to December 2021</b>
<b>Analyse consultation findings and amend strategy as required</b>	<b>January 2022</b>
<b>Finalise equality screening</b>	<b>January 2022</b>
<b>Present draft strategy and action plans to P&amp;C Committee</b>	<b>February 2022</b>
<b>Council ratification</b>	<b>March 2022</b>

**3.6 Financial Implications**

Cost associated with the development of the new strategy and engagement of external partner will be met within existing departmental resources. Members are advised that no capital finance is in place to support the sports development strategy at this stage, which will need to be considered as the strategy is developed and needs become clearer.

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

The draft strategy will be equality screened in line with the Council's agreed process."

The Committee agreed the proposed extended terms of reference and the revised timeline for development of the strategy.

**Operational Issues**

**Proposal for naming new streets**

The Committee agreed to make a recommendation in respect of the applications for the naming of new streets in the City, namely, Areema Grove, off Areema Grove, BT17 and Kilwee Lane, off Upper Dunmurry Lane, BT17.

**Proposed improvements to Parks and Open Spaces**

The Committee considered the following report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Members will recall that in December 2019 this committee received an update report on a number of requests from Elected**

representatives for a range of improvements to our Parks and Open Spaces. This included a notice of motion relating to the provision of artificial lighting in Parks and a request to review the hours our Parks are open to the public.

1.2 In March 2020 members will also recall that this committee agreed to pilot the opening of 3 parks in the city for 24 hours from the start of July to the start of September. It was agreed that this was a pilot scheme would be subject to ongoing review and evaluation. It was also agreed that information sessions would take place where users and residents would be informed of the pilot and these will be used to record and listen to any concerns raised. It was agreed that members would receive feedback on this prior to the commencement of the pilot and both the PSNI and the Council legal Services department would also be consulted.

1.3 The 3 sites chosen for the pilot were Ormeau Park, Falls Park and Woodvale Park.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and;

- Note the substantial financial implications of installing lighting in all parks and note that there is no capital financing associated with this. Given this it is recommended that a feasibility study is undertaken into the lighting requirements for different parks (e.g. City Park, Neighbourhood park). Members are also asked to note that lighting has been installed at a number of parks over the past few years as part of a number of recent capital projects and it is further recommended that the learning from these projects is factored into the above feasibility.
- Agree that officers recommence work on the Opening Hours Pilots previously agreed and bring a report detailing the outcome of the consultation and engagement to the March 2021 meeting of the People & Communities Committee.

## **3.0 Main report**

### **Key Issues**

3.1 Our green and blue infrastructure including our Parks affects the quality of life for everyone in our city. It helps to define a sense of place and the character of our communities; provides important spaces for recreation with associated health and



**wellbeing benefits and strengthens the resilience of our natural environment to change. Protecting these assets and enhancing the benefits that they provide is therefore integral to the future of Belfast.**

- 3.2 From the start of the Pandemic parks and greenspaces have played a major part in relation to meeting both physical and mental health needs, during times when access to the outdoors has been limited. Research has shown on numerous occasions that parks and green spaces provide multiple benefits to the health and wellbeing of residents and are a vital component of creating sustainable and healthy communities.**
- 3.3 This is a transformational time for our city, with the Belfast Agenda setting out shared commitments across public services to an ambitious vision to create a better quality of life for us all.**
- 3.4 In order for our Parks and Open Spaces to work effectively they will need to be well designed, regularly maintained and appropriately funded. This needs to be recognized and used to help attract sustainable funding to ensure the benefits from any future improvements are fully realized.**
- 3.5 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) sets the strategic spatial framework, vision and five strategic principles for the future delivery, management and enhancement of the whole green and blue infrastructure network; helping to meet the outcomes envisaged in the Belfast Agenda's vision. It is supported by a number of other strategies which focus on specific sub-sets of green and blue infrastructure, such as the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS).**
- 3.6 Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) provides a road map on how the public want to use our Parks and Open spaces over the next 10 -15 years. An update Report on BOSS was brought to SP&R in March and under delegated authority the following recommendation was agreed. 'The Committee is asked to note the update on the draft BOSS consultation process and agree the proposed changes and actions set out at Appendix 1 and the production of the final Strategy document.' Officers will shortly be making the required amendments to the strategy document and this will be published.**
- 3.7 Over the next 12 months, Officers from across City and Neighbourhood Services will work with colleagues across the Council to begin to develop action plans under each of the seven Strategic Principles and these will be brought to members for approval. Within the context of our transformational places approach future action planning will**

also seek to maximise public assets and funding by engaging and working with partners, such as DfI and DfC to identify other strategic opportunities like the Belfast Urban Greenway and the Bolder Vision for Belfast to identify funding opportunities and work up proposals.

**Provision of Artificial Lighting to our Parks**

- 3.8** In the December 2019 report members were informed that we currently have approximately 300 km of road and pathways in our Parks and Open Spaces and pilot work was required to identify potential sites and work up proposals. This pilot would also need to consider the outcomes benefits and risks/issues etc. including any impact on crime and ASB, any impact on landscape character and wildlife habitats and ultimately costings in relation to purchasing and installing the equipment and any associated revenue and maintenance trail. Due to Covid this work has not been undertaken to date.
- 3.9** Members are asked to note the substantial financial implications of installing lighting in all 300km of road/pathways in our parks. Members will also be aware of the current limitations of the capital financing budget and that there is no capital financing associated with this proposal. Given this it is recommended that a feasibility report is undertaken into the lighting requirements for the different types of parks within the Council's park portfolio as it will not be a 'one size fits all' model in terms of need (e.g. City Park, Neighbourhood park) . Officers from C&NS will work with the Physical Programmes Department on working this up. This will then allow officers to develop up fully costed proposals. This will then be reported back to Committee once undertaken Members are also asked to note that lighting has been installed at a number of parks over the past few years as part of a number of recent capital projects (see Appendix 1) and it is further recommended that the learning from these projects is factored into the above feasibility. Officers will also collate information on those parks and spaces that have lighting in order to promote their possible use in the winter months.
- 3.10** Members are further asked to note that any proposals for lighting will be required to be recommended to the SP&R Committee to be added to the Capital Programme as a Stage 1 – Emerging Project and will therefore need to be considered in the context of the organisational financial position.

**Amending the Opening and Closing Hours of Parks**

- 3.11 Due to Covid the 24 hour pilot for Ormeau, Woodvale and Falls Park did not take place. Officers were unable to carry out any consultation with local groups, seek the views of legal services and the PSNI and put together any animation programmes for the sites in question.
- 3.12 Members will also be aware that due to Covid 19 restrictions we were unable to close our Parks during the initial lock down period. At the start this presented few problems however as we began to emerge from lock down our Parks experienced increased Anti-Social Behaviour, vandalism and damage. A number of assaults also took place. Following complaints from the public and elected representatives we began locking our parks again. There is the added concern that should Parks remain open over the winter months the absence of lighting increases the possibility of accidents, additional crime and ASB.
- 3.13 Prior to amending the opening hours of our Parks further consideration of the risks is therefore required. The opening times for our Parks can be accessed via the following link <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/parks/a-z>. The council has currently no capacity within the existing Open Space & Street Scene service to staff Parks outside of these hours.
- 3.14 If members are content officers can re-start the pilot proposal and begin consultation with local groups, legal services and the PSNI. Officers could also start to look at animation proposals for these spaces. Officers will report on the outcome of this work to the March 2021 committee.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

**Artificial Lighting In parks**

- 3.15 Members will be aware of the current limitations of the capital financing budget and that there is no capital financing associated with this proposal, therefore any proposals for lighting will be required to be recommended to the SP&R Committee to be added to the Capital Programme as a Stage 1 – Emerging Project and will therefore need to be considered in the context of the organisational financial position.

**Amending the Opening & Closing Times of Parks**

- 3.16 The council has currently no capacity within the existing Open Space & Street Scene budgets to amend the opening and closing times of parks outside of the current working times.**

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

- 3.17 There are no known Equality, Good Relations or Rural needs implications.”**

Following a query from a Member, the Director of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that disabled access to parks would be considered under the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy.

The Committee also discussed the feasibility of lighting up parks that already had floodlighting installed but the Director advised that this would not be possible as when these facilities were in use separate staff were brought in to facilitate the booking of the pitch, this all came at an additional cost to the Council.

A further Member referred to the levels of anti-social behaviour in some of the parks and welcomed the exploration of animation programmes as he felt that early intervention and prevention was essential.

It was noted that the Council was working on a pilot programme to ascertain if animation helped with positive usage of facilities and that the Council would continue to link with other statutory partners, including the PCSP's to develop an agreed vision and supporting strategy.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and, at the request of a Member, agreed that quarterly reports be submitted to Committee detailing incidents of vandalism that had taken place in Council Parks over the period.

**Membership of the Northern Ireland Resources Network**

The Director of City Services advised the Committee that a pilot network was being formed, the Northern Ireland Resource Network (NIRN). She explained that its aim was to facilitate knowledge sharing and to promote joint working between stakeholders interested in increasing the levels of repair and reuse locally. Membership of the network would assist the Council in terms of learning, best practice and it would possibly assist with linking up potential project partners to develop the repair and reuse sector. This aligned with the Council's work under the Resourceful Belfast theme of growing the circular economy.

The Committee approved the Council's membership of the Northern Ireland Resource Network for the duration of the free membership period (until March 2022) and further agreed ongoing membership of the network (initially set at £250.00 per annum and

subject to reasonable increases over time), subject to review, and an assurance that the membership continued to remain worthwhile to the Service.

**Second wave planning - support for vulnerable citizens**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update Members on the planning, partner engagement and support mechanisms in place to support vulnerable people in a way that is complementary to existing community and voluntary sector delivery.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- note this approach is based on extensive partner engagement (including debrief with strategic community partners) and will be discussed with our community partners for any further feedback
- endorse the Frequently Asked Questions at Appendix 2

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 Members will be aware of the extensive work by community and voluntary sector partners, Council and other statutory partners as part of the initial COVID-19 wave.**

- 3.2 Members will also be aware though that during that initial wave, there was a strong sense:**

- There was potential duplication (particularly in relation to food)
- Council (on request from DfC) had stepped in to a space in relation to food delivery and running a helpline which it had not traditionally operated in
- That alignment between services a statutory and community/voluntary level could be improved upon
- That because of all of the above, we were collectively not always getting to those who most needed the support.

- 3.3 A debrief with the strategic community partners Council worked with during the initial wave of COVID-19, was held on 13 October 2020 and our strategic community partners supported this position. In particular, they felt that Council should add value by connecting, facilitating and advocating, rather than stepping**

in to a space we did not traditionally operate in and duplicate existing provision. The summary of their feedback is attached at Appendix 1.

### Second Wave Planning

- 3.4 Taking all of this in to account, Officers have worked with partners to work through the processes that would support a more holistic approach to supporting vulnerable people, with the Council enhancing and adding value if there were gaps and when it was needed, rather than duplicating existing services.
- 3.5 Partners involved in that planning were:
- Advice NI (Funded by DfC to run the Regional Helpline)
  - Volunteer Now (supporting the volunteer eco system across the city should it be needed)
  - Fareshare (Strategic food supply chain partners regionally and funded by DfC to enhance this, provides food supply to community/voluntary organisations working with vulnerable people, rather than individuals)
  - Red Cross (Welfare, Hardship and Food support regionally as well as logistics support in the form of volunteers/vehicles if needed. On contract to BCC)
  - Trussell Trust (Citywide Network supporting majority of existing foodbanks in Belfast, also with strategic food supply chain partners)
  - Belfast Trust (supporting clinically vulnerable individuals, also with a contract with Red Cross in similar areas as Council)
- 3.6 The outcome of that engagement has supported the feedback from strategic community partners. Additionally, individual planning by these organisations has identified the following (please note this is the position as things stand today and whilst surge planning has taken place, the position is not guaranteed and will need to be reviewed weekly).
- Food supply in to Belfast to support food banks and community/voluntary organisations providing food to vulnerable people is not an issue at present and not expected to be for the next 6 months. The supply chain is strong and food banks are reporting to us there are high levels of stock at present
  - There is an extensive bank of individuals who volunteered in the first wave who can be called upon to support community/voluntary partners if needed and systems are in place to enhance that if needed

- Financial hardship support is in place from within the existing system (including the DfC COVID-19 discretionary payment for anyone on a low income who has to self-isolate or is ill due to COVID-19 and other benefits). However, there is also fall back financial hardship support provided by Red Cross (on contract to both Belfast Trust and Belfast City Council which will include utilities/fuel) should existing systems not alleviate the immediate pressure for the individual/family.
- The expertise in accessing support to alleviate financial hardship (access to benefits and debt alleviation) lies with local advice providers who are already funded to deliver this work. They continue to provide support as needed and are not identifying unmanageable pressures at present, however, we keep in regular touch with them to ensure early identification of pressures on the system that may need further support.
- There are a number of key inter-dependencies which will determine how significant the expected surge in relation to financial hardship including any job support schemes brought forward by the UK Government/NI Executive and the Universal Credit application waiting times (currently 4-6 weeks). Contacts in DfC have been identified to keep us informed on the Universal Credit waiting times so we can adjust plans with all partners.
- Social and Emotional Support systems are already in place regionally should they be needed, with referral pathways to local service providers if needed and this is also in place for prescriptions.
- Advice NI has undertaken the necessary preparations to ensure their operations can be scaled appropriately in response to demand.
- A formal request has been made to DfC to ensure local authority level reporting can be provided through their contract with Advice NI (rather than regional as is the current position) to ensure early warning of issues/pressures in Belfast and to ensure individual/family queries to the helpline are being appropriately managed.

3.7 The frequently asked questions at Appendix 2 outlines how the regional services interact with citywide and local services to ensure individual/family need is met in the most effective and timely manner possible:

- Access to Food and Food Poverty (due to affordability)
- Prescriptions
- Financial hardship in areas other than food (e.g. utilities)

– **Social and Emotional Support**

- 3.8** Please note the frequently asked questions are based on the official Department for Communities position on supporting vulnerable people. They will also be continually reviewed and updated as appropriate both by the Department for Communities and Belfast City Council.

**Financial implications**

- 3.9** None identified at this stage. There remains significant value in the existing Council contract with Red Cross, which is expected will cover any emergency needs within Belfast that the existing system and services cannot alleviate.

**Equality or Good Relations Implications**

- 3.9** None identified at this stage.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and commended the many Council staff who continued to work hard maintaining vital council services and supporting our citizens and communities during the pandemic.

**Update on One Million Trees Programme**

(Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience, attended in connection with this item)

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1** To provide this Committee with an update on progress to date in relation to the Belfast One Million Trees Programme, include a launch date in late November.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to
- note the report and provide comment.

**3.0 Main report**

- 3.1** In March 2019, Belfast City Council referred to Committee a motion by Cllr Heading (appendix 1) with an ambition to plant one million trees in Belfast. In June, the People and Communities Committee received a proposal from the Belfast Metropolitan Residents Group seeking Council support in coordinating an initiative, which would see one million trees



planted over a 15-year period. The committee agreed to be lead partnership facilitator for the project, working with key stakeholders with a report to be brought back to a future Committee regarding next steps.

- 3.2 Separately, following citywide engagement on possible opportunities to build climate resilience across Belfast, the draft Resilience Strategy includes a recommendation to plant one million trees and for growth in afforestation and urban tree cover, over time.
- 3.3 Following the committee's decision that BCC acts as a convenor, a steering group for the programme was established, with meetings chaired by the Commissioner for Resilience. Coordination is undertaken by officers from the Resilience Team, and officers from City and Neighbourhood Services Department. The coordinating officers have also convened internal discussions with colleagues in the Planning Service, City Regeneration, the Strategic Hub and Physical Programmes to raise awareness of the proposal.
- 3.4 To date, officer involvement has focused on steering group coordination, acting as a broker between all stakeholders. We have made good progress, and have arrived at a point where sufficient partnerships and funding opportunities are available for a public launch.
- 3.5 There are multiple objectives associated with a tree-planting programme at scale. It will contribute to several Belfast Agenda priorities on sustainability, liveability and inclusive growth. The Mini Stern, undertaken to inform a roadmap to decarbonise the city, concluded that Belfast will use up its carbon budget in nine years. Tree planning at scale provides a cheap and safe approach to carbon capture and storage within a city, and to boost biodiversity. Furthermore, designed in the right way, using the right land, tree planting at scale can support sustainable urban drainage, reduce flooding through rainwater capture and protect the city from the impacts of climate change, as rainfall increases. Afforestation in cities is increasingly accepted as an economic driver – boosting property values and contributing to place-making and tourism. Several cities in Europe are citing tree planting as core to their economic recovery post-Covid 19, and we understand
- 3.6 DAERA is considering afforestation as a core pillar of a future approach to 'green growth' in the region. While more trees in Belfast will improve air quality overall, we are not proposing that this programme will be a major contributor to better air quality, due to the number of trees which would need to be planted in

particular locations, to have a material impact on air quality. The programme helps to deliver the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, the Open Spaces Strategy, the Resilience Strategy, and the Belfast Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Plan as it progresses.

- 3.7 Since establishing the steering group, Minister Poots has announced a significant tree-planting programme for Northern Ireland, with an intention to fund the planting of £18m trees in a decade. This would amount to a major increase in forest cover across Northern Ireland, and would meet the recommendations of the Committee on Climate Change, when it prioritised tree planting as a way to reduce Northern Ireland's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. BCC officers have met the Deputy Permanent Secretary at DAERA and the Chief Executive of the Forest Service to ensure alignment between both programmes and mutual support and has encouraged DAERA to adapt funding streams to support urban tree planting. Two BCC officers will sit on the recently established DAERA Forests for the Future Forum, which brings together delivery partners for the project.
- 3.8 It should be noted that the One Million Trees programme proposed for Belfast will overwhelmingly consist of tree-planting at scale on strategic sites (e.g. woodland), and is not a 'street tree' planting initiative. However, we are keen to work with DAERA to support greater city liveability by making communities, arterial routes and the city centre more attractive, and healthier places for people, encouraging mobility and the positive use of public space. The Steering Group is seeking creative ways to green the city such as green roofs, wildflower meadows, rewilding derelict areas and will approach this on a site-by-site basis.
- 3.9 Furthermore, a forthcoming review by City and Neighbourhood Services of our existing assets, and future maintenance obligations needs to be complete before BCC could commit additional resources to tree planting and maintenance in our own parks and other assets.

Progress to date:

Site Selection

- 3.10 BCC officers have convened a number of meetings with project partners to achieve agreement on a programme of tree planting at scale for the city.
- 3.11 The Steering Group has engaged in a series of positive discussions, agreeing a phased approach to the programme,

and that planting would be recorded and collated by partners as of January 2020 onwards.

3.12 The Steering Group agreed that site selection should be guided by a set of principles including the following:

- Air quality management areas
- Flood risk areas (pluvial and fluvial)
- Nature conservation sites/wildlife corridors/watercourses
- Areas lacking green assets (e.g.: city centre/inner urban) – consider pocket parks with trees (maybe in large planters) in prominent city centre and local/district areas
- Opportunities for more street trees
- Vacant/derelict sites, including ‘rewilding’ opportunities
- Repurposing of part of areas of extensive cut grass open space (e.g. BCC parks, NIHE amenity grassed areas, roadside verges, etc)
- the countryside/hills around the city (including upland water management measures)
- sites that buffer and connect to existing woodland

3.13 Planting one million trees in Belfast over 15 years requires approximately 30 hectares of land per year - equivalent to approximately 30 football pitches. The cost has been estimated by the Belfast Metropolitan Residents Group as £100,000 per year for planting (£3,000 per hectare, 2000 trees per hectare).

On this basis, the Steering Group agreed to work according to four phases:

Stage 1 – Site identification (May 2020 – June 2020);  
Stage 2 – Site assessment (July 2020 – September 2020);  
Stage 3 – Planting (November 2020 – March 2021);  
Stage 4 – ongoing site identification, assessment and planting

3.14 A site assessment team was established which is coordinated by the Resilience Unit with support from CNS, and includes the Woodland Trust, Belfast Hills Partnership, Conservation Volunteers and QUB.

3.15 The above process is a rolling programme, which delivers a pipeline of projects for consideration. Where a site is not suitable for woodland creation the team consider alternative options that will enhance green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity and liaise with landowners accordingly. Work is ongoing to develop design principles and a framework for sites that are not suitable for woodland creation but which could

support our targets in relation to carbon reduction, enhanced biodiversity, flood alleviation, urban cooling, and improved health among others. Sites could also be utilised as tree nurseries to support the objectives of the project and a request has been made to BCC regarding this from the Conservation Volunteers which is currently under consideration.

- 3.16 Discussions are ongoing with other landowners at present regarding potential sites and it is proposed that we undertake a scan of BCC land for suitable sites for inclusion. Initial discussions have taken place with Peace IV team, CNS Parks, City Centre Regen Team, and Planning, placing this initiative firmly in the context of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan and Belfast Open Spaces Strategy, whilst delivering on the aims of the Belfast Resilience Strategy and the Belfast Climate Plan, which sit within the Belfast Agenda.
- 3.17 A number of workstreams are in development through the Programme including communications and marketing, mapping and research, community, public and business engagement.

**Regional alignment**

- 3.18 Belfast City Council has nominated two representatives to the DAERA Forests for the Future Forum, who will represent both BCC and the Belfast One Million Trees Programme. The first meeting of the Forum will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020. DAERA are presenting the Belfast One Million Trees Programme as a good news story and example of good partnership working. DAERA have also created a GIS platform where DAERA funded woodland creation can be inputted.

**Public, business and community participation (volunteerism, corporate role, communities of place and interest)**

- 3.19 It is anticipated that Belfast One Million Trees will launch in December 2020 beginning a new phase of public engagement. To date community engagement has been undertaken through Belfast Community Planning Partnership's Voluntary, Community and Small Enterprise Panel, and through Belfast Climate Commission's Community Climate Action Working Group. In addition engagement has taken place on a site by site basis. We hope to provide an opportunity for members of the public to register interest in the project, potentially holding a tree giveaway event/s.
- 3.20 Business engagement has taken place through Business in the Community Environmental Leadership Team, with options for

business involvement including staff volunteering, planting on site, corporate sponsorship, and carbon offsetting.

**Education and skills**

- 3.21 The project presents an opportunity to coordinate capacity building and educational activity under the Belfast One Million Trees banner, for example volunteer tree planting, site inspections, an audit of education and skills programmes, further development of tree wardens and champions, and opportunities to support job creation through horticultural and arboreal training, with placements on partner estates.
- 3.22 ECO – Schools have been engaged with following discussions with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful about the potential to link Belfast One Million Trees Programme to the ECO schools in Belfast, adding to the four schools already submitted by EA for assessment.

**Communication**

- 3.23 Communications officers from Belfast City Council and the Woodland Trust have met on a number of occasions to discuss messaging, promotion and the launch of the Programme, with the launch potentially linked to National Tree Week at the end of November, start of December 2020.

**Research and learning**

- 3.24 We view research and learning as key to underpinning the development of the Belfast One Million Trees Programme as it will support our understanding of where tree planting should take place, and the impacts across a range of targets that can be achieved. We have identified carbon sequestration, improved air quality, flood alleviation, urban cooling, beautification, physical and mental health and wellbeing, and protection and enhancement of biodiversity as high level impacts. More work must be done to quantify and measure these.
- 3.25 Initial discussions were held with the city of Melbourne, then later with the Environment Bank, National Park City, Professor Frank Kelly of Imperial College, Professor Laurence Jones of UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology Environment Centre Wales, Neil Galway of QUB School of Natural and Built Environment who supported us by providing a Masters Student Perla Mansour, whose report will help inform next steps for the project.

- 3.26 Latterly we have linked to Ruth Hunter of the School of Public Health in QUB, and to Paul Caplat of the School of Biological Sciences. There are many other city tree planting schemes and there will be a rolling programme of engagement with them, particularly those in the UK and ROI who share our climate and socio-economic conditions. The I-Tree ECO project has brought us into contact with Forest Research and Treeconomics, two organisations who work together to undertake research on trees and woodland, supporting tree strategies and city/town tree planting at scale. The I-Tree ECO project will deliver a report to us which sets out the canopy cover, species mix, and will quantify a number of the targets that we have identified, also providing a cost benefit to existing and new tree cover in the city.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

- 3.27 At this stage, it is not anticipated that Council is required to commit additional financial resources. A small budget of 40k has been allocated within the Resilience Unit to support part funding of a woodland creation post, a data/research workstream, and design activity.
- 3.28 It is proposed that BCC undertake a site scan utilising Million Trees site identification and assessment process that partners are undertaking. Options for site use include additional tree planting, nursery provision (as mentioned above), enhanced maintenance and upkeep of existing woodland, as well as other potential site uses such as the development of green infrastructure, biodiversity and other uses as determined through the assessment process. One of the key principles we are promoting is integration of the initiative within existing and future programmes and projects.
- 3.29 In the first year of the Emergency Tree Fund, Belfast has been nominated as one of 11 eligible towns and cities. Our 'expression of interest' is for up to £300,000 over a 3 year period and if successful will support tree planting, coordination of education and volunteering programmes, community engagement programmes, tree nursery development, woodland protection, tree planting on small urban sites, and commissioning of tree plans and environmental impact assessments.
- 3.30 It is anticipated that landowners who submit sites for consideration will retain ownership of the site and responsibility for costs attributed to planting and maintenance. Resources are available to support woodland creation namely:

- DAERA provide grant aid for woodland expansion on sites 5 hectares and above (opens in June 2020) This grant does not provide a set amount for establishment costs and is a competitive scheme where projects bid for the funding required against eligible costs i.e ground preparation, plant supply, labour for planting, maintenance etc. Projects tend to be somewhere in the range of £3,500 to £5,000 per hectare depending on the amount of new fencing and how much ground preparation is needed. This will be open to Council.
- DAERA are working at present to create a new small woodland grant scheme for sites of 0.2 hectares to 3 hectares (opening in January 2021) The new small scale grant scheme will be a fixed payment of about £3,000 per hectare to plant trees at 2.5m spacing. 80% of the £3,000 payment will be made after planting and the remaining 20% in year 5. This will be open to Council.
- DFI are currently developing funding streams that support green and blue infrastructure – BCC submission on greenways includes reference to the One Million Trees Programme.
- The Woodland Trust provide tree packs for schools and community groups which provide up to 1000 trees.
- In addition The Woodland Trust provide an option for landowners to transfer sites 3 hectares and above, or groups of smaller sites to the Woodland Trust for a 20 year period during which WT would undertake grant aid applications and maintenance.
- There is the potential to lever private finance and sponsorship through businesses for tree planting initiatives, conversations that have been delayed due to the pandemic and impact on businesses.
- The Woodland Carbon Code is a verification scheme whereby carbon capture can be authenticated to support the sale of carbon to investors. DAERA are currently working with us to explore options to expand this in Northern Ireland.

3.31 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs issues.”

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Several Members spoke in support of the initiative and the Chairperson, on behalf on the Committee, thanked the Commissioner for Resilience for her efforts in co-ordinating the progression of the proposal.

Noted.

Chairperson



## City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 11th November, 2020

### REMOTE MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and  
Councillors Beattie, Donnelly, Ferguson,  
Gormley, Hanvey, Heading, Howard,  
T. Kelly, Lyons, Maskey, McLaughlin,  
McMullan, Murphy, O'Hara, Spratt  
and Whyte.

Also attended: Councillor Baker.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;  
Ms. K. Gilliland, Neighbourhood Services Manager (North); and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

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

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 7th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were received.

### **Schedule of Meetings 2021**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee during 2021 (All meetings to commence at 5.15 p.m.):

- Wednesday, 13th January;
- Wednesday, 10th February;
- Wednesday, 3rd March;
- Wednesday, 14th April;
- Wednesday, 12th May;

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- Wednesday, 9th June;
- No meeting in July;
- Wednesday, 11th August;
- Wednesday, 8th September;
- Wednesday, 13th October;
- Wednesday, 10th November; and
- Wednesday, 8th December.

The Committee noted that the following Special Committee dates had also been scheduled, in order to receive presentations from outside bodies and that these would be arranged if required:

- Wednesday, 27th January;
- Wednesday, 24th March;
- Wednesday, 28th April;
- Wednesday, 23rd June;
- Wednesday, 22nd September; and
- Wednesday, 27th October.

**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following 3 items were restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

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

**Finance Update**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an overview of the report.

During discussion, Members raised queries in relation to an update on current arrangements with GLL in terms of finance and staffing, an update on the Government's new furlough scheme and how it might be used by the Council, and confirmation of Civic Amenity Site finance.

The Committee noted the contents of the report which had been presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in October and noted that the questions which had been raised by Members would be submitted to the Director of Finance for comment.

**The Zoo - Performance Update Q2 2020/21**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager (North) delivered an update on the performance of the Zoo across the following areas:

- Visitor Services;
- Education Services;
- Animal Collection;
- Marketing and Events; and
- Financial performance.

She highlighted that BIAZA had held its annual awards for a range of zoo related categories. The Zoo's first Bronze award came with Animal Care, Husbandry and Breeding, with a focus on the François Langur monkey. This award focused on all the excellent work the Zoo had carried out over the years with the Francois, the aim for the award was primarily on breeding and introduction of individuals into an established group. A second Bronze was awarded to Education with the 'Science behind the Zoo' event.

During discussion, the Committee praised the staff for the increase in revenue and for obtaining the awards in such challenging times.

In response to Members' Questions, the Neighbourhood Services Manager (North) advised that the feasibility study on the Zoo was still in progress and engagement with Members would commence in due course. She stated that an update in relation to the disability access and changing station works would be provided.

The Committee noted the Zoo performance update report for the period July – September 2020 and agreed that the Chairperson send a letter of Congratulations to the staff at the Zoo, in relation to the 2 Bronze awards obtained at the annual BIAZA awards.

**Department for Communities (DfC) Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme;  
Community and Business Cluster Interventions**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an overview of the proposed process for the delivery of business cluster and the community led environmental improvement scheme element of the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, including the delivery of citywide parklets and other similar interventions, together with an indicative timeline and eligibility criteria.

During discussion, Councillor McMullan welcomed the report and its inclusion of his motion - *Installation of Additional Parklets on Arterial Routes and in Neighbourhood Areas*, which had been proposed at the Council meeting on 2nd November, and which had been subsequently referred to the Committee for consideration, as outlined under Item. 3a.

During further discussion, Members raised queries in relation to the timelines for delivery of the projects, given the funding deadline and also the need for a partnership approach across the Council, Department for Infrastructure and Department for

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Communities. It was highlighted that this was particularly important where any proposals involved Departmental lands, or required approvals via the respective Departments, and the availability of staff resources to assist in the delivery.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor McMullan,  
Seconded by Councillor Hanvey,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to write to the Ministers for the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure to welcome the project funding as outlined and also highlighting the need for a partnership approach across the respective organisations, including appropriate staff resources, to assist in the delivery of any projects requiring Departmental approvals and intervention.

After discussion, the Committee:-

1. Noted the previously agreed budget commitments to deliver community and business cluster led environment improvement schemes, including parklets or other similar interventions within the overall DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme;
2. Noted that the Tranche 2 Letter of Offer for the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme was received by Council on 28th October 2020;
3. Agreed the process for allocating Community and Business Cluster Grants as outlined within this paper and associated Appendix 1;
4. Agreed to delegate responsibility to the Strategic Director of Place and Economy to approve applications in line with the proposed process for allocation;
5. Agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (2) (b), that the decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that the decision was deemed to be a case of special urgency; and
6. Agreed to write to the Ministers for the Department for Communities and the Department for Infrastructure to welcome the project funding as outlined and also highlighting the need for a partnership approach across the respective organisations, including appropriate staff resources, to assist in the delivery of any projects requiring Departmental approvals and intervention.

**Matters Referred Back from Council**

**Motion - Installation of Additional Parklets on  
Arterial Routes and in Neighbourhood Areas**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McMullan and seconded by

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Councillor McReynolds, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

**“This Council recognises the importance of reimagining and reallocating community spaces as part of our recovery from COVID-19 for the benefit of local residents and businesses.**

**In line with our commitment in our ‘Our Recovery’ strategy, this Council will seek to install additional parklets on arterial routes and neighbourhood areas through the Department for Communities Revitalisation Programme, by setting out a specific fund for applications from businesses, institutions, community associations and other eligible applicants to be defined.**

**On the basis of these applications, Belfast City Council will act as the coordinating partner to lead and set out the process that will develop these physical projects from concept design and community engagement to delivery and monitoring and evaluation, working with the applicants as well as the key stakeholders (including but not exhaustive of the Department for Infrastructure, Imtac and the Department for Communities) in consultation with local residents.**

**Additionally, the Council agrees to engage with local businesses to improve and enhance a café culture across Belfast.”**

The Committee noted the motion and that its contents had been addressed as part of item 2.c).

**Motion -Belfast Bikes - Pilot Scheme to use Rolloe**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Baker and seconded by Councillor McLaughlin, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

**“Belfast bikes helps encourage citizens and visitors to our city to get around Belfast, while helping reduce our carbon footprint.**

**Promoting cycling and investing in safe cycle lanes will be paramount in our fight against climate change.**

**What if we can also help clean the air as we cycle.**

**A new award winning design called Rolloe transforms the humble bike wheel into an air purifier that sucks in polluted air, filters out the pollutants and releases the clean air back out into the city.**

**Similar to a motion last year to investigate the potential of city trees, I call on this Council to explore a pilot scheme to use Rolloe on**

**Belfast bikes with the view to use throughout the fleet if successful and help promote all cyclists to explore the usage of Rolloe on their own bikes.”**

Both the proposer of the motion Councillor Baker and seconder of the motion Councillor McLaughlin addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that consideration of a Pilot Scheme to use Rolloe on Belfast bikes be included as part of the Belfast Bikes Strategic Review and a report on the matter would be submitted to a future meeting.

### **Request to Present**

#### **Transport Hub Alternatives Group (THAG)**

The Committee agreed that Transport Hub Alternatives Group be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

#### **Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE)**

The Committee agreed that NIHE attend December's City Growth and Regeneration Committee to provide an update in respect of the development of the City Centre Housing Waiting List, as well as an update on their Housing Programme. The Committee also requested that the NIHE could provide an update on repairs backlog and retrofit programme, if possible, together with their presentation in advance of the meeting.

### **Growing Business and the Economy**

#### **NI High Street Taskforce and Future City Centre Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

##### **1.1 The purpose of the report is to:**

- Advise Members of proposals by the Northern Ireland Executive Office in relation to a High Street Task Force.
- Seek agreement to reinforce the need for Belfast City Council to be represented on this, to help address the challenges faced by the city centre and recognising Belfast's role as the regional economic driver.
- Advise Members on some of the issues impacting on the city centre and to note the ongoing work undertaken in developing the Future City Centre Programme to help respond to these challenges.

##### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 Members are requested to:**

- i. Note the proposals by the Northern Ireland Executive Office (TEO) in relation to an emerging High Street Task Force and a request from TEO for the Council to engage with a reference group that is being created in advance of the High Street Task Force.
- ii. Agree that the Council respond to TEO confirming agreement to engage with the reference group but to also highlight the importance of being part of the High Street Task Force on its formation. This will include reinforcing the importance and criticality of Belfast as the regional economic driver and the need for a focused and resourced approach in addressing the challenges faced by the city centre.
- iii. Note the emerging impacts on the city centre due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- iv. Note the update in relation to the Council's Future City Centre Programme and the intention to bring a further detailed report back to Committee on the priority areas of focus within this.

**3.0 Main report**

**Background**

- 3.1 The retail and business landscape of the city centre is undoubtedly challenged and already there are a number of well-known high street brands and department stores with presence in Belfast either entering into administration or calling in financial restructuring experts to negotiate leases with landlords. This obviously has a much wider economic impact across all sectors, supply chains and rates income for the city.
- 3.2 Retail will be one of the most challenging sectors, along with hospitality and tourism, for recovery as the fundamental challenges faced pre-COVID-19 still remain an issue and indeed have been exacerbated with the increase use of online shopping. A proactive response is required to support businesses, SME's and independents to ensure the resilience of the city centre as a whole. However it is recognised that retail will not be the only casualty as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic as the tourism and hospitality industry in particular is suffering significantly.
- 3.3 In June 2020, a collective of various public and private bodies jointly called for the Northern Ireland Executive to establish a High Street Taskforce to provide support to businesses through the revitalisation of towns and cities across Northern

Ireland. The call requested that businesses and central and local government work together collectively to deliver on much needed regeneration, provide business support, devising economic interventions and to tackle key issues faced by town and cities in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.4 In August 2020, the Executive agreed that a cross-departmental High Street Taskforce should be established to consider and address the key issues affecting businesses. This work is being undertaken by The Executive Office (TEO). Following an approach by Council officers to TEO highlighting the importance of Belfast Council being represented on this, TEO have recently responded outlining that Ministers are keen to move ahead on the Task Force proposals and plan to initially convene a reference group including a range of government departments and key stakeholder bodies. They have advised that it is intended the reference group will transition into the full High Streets Taskforce. At this stage the proposed membership of the reference group is as below although TEO have highlighted this is not the final membership of the taskforce, and does not preclude membership by the Council when the full Taskforce is formally established.

- Retail NI;
- Hospitality NI;
- Confederation of British Industry (NI);
- NI Chamber of Commerce;
- NI Institute of Directors;
- NI Local Government Alliance;
- Department for Communities;
- Department for the Economy;
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs;
- Department of Finance; and
- Department for Infrastructure.

- 3.5 TEO has asked the Council to confirm their willingness to engage with this reference group and to confirm if the Council wishes to be part of the full Taskforce when it is established. The reference group is to develop terms of reference for the Task Force and advise on additional membership and thereafter make recommendations to the First Minister, deputy First Minister and the Executive later this month.

#### Key Issues facing Belfast City Centre

- 3.6 Belfast is the economic driver for the region. The Regional Development Strategy 2035 specifically recognises the need to



enhance the distinctive role of Belfast City Centre as the primary retail location in Northern Ireland.

- 3.7** However, over recent years the retail sector in Belfast, like many other cities across the UK and Ireland, have suffered challenges from changes in consumer behaviours, the desire for enhanced experiences on the high street to convenience and online shopping are trends which are impacting the traditional bricks to mortar retail. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated these changes and could see retail and other sectors contracting even more.
- 3.8** As of week commencing 19<sup>th</sup> October, the change in footfall levels in Belfast city centre (BID One District) is 35% down on the previous year. And so far, for the year to date, footfall is 43.5% from last year as the public adhere to government guidance on social distancing and the extensions of new Covid-19 restrictions.
- 3.9** The Office for National Statistics indicate the UK online retail sales experienced strong growth over the pandemic and in August 2020, the proportion of online spending was at 28.1% with clothing and household goods performing strongest and across all sectors, with online sales at significantly higher levels than last year.
- 3.10** The Council is currently undertaking its annual health check of the city centre and district centres across the city. Health checks comprise a number of indicators such as vacancy and diversity of use which can be utilised to establish trends and evidence to progress particular policy direction.
- 3.11** Early data shows the current vacancy rate for the city centre Primary Retail Core sits at 22% which is up 4% from last year. Whilst this survey was taken at a point in time in early Summer 2020, it is a further indicator of the challenges faced by the city centre. Some well-known high street brands which have been a familiar presence in Belfast for years have either scaled back on operations and closed stores or have gone into administration and ceased trading.
- 3.12** As an indicator, vacancy figures provide a snapshot on occupancy levels in the city centre but can be ambiguous as it doesn't reveal the factors behind a unit being vacant. For example, the level of retail churn with the number of units commercially advertised (i.e. to let or for sale), the size of the unit, units that are wrapped up in major development schemes and units used for temporary means such as meanwhile use or pop ups. Further research and analysis is currently being

undertaken and a future paper will be presented to Committee in the coming months.

- 3.13 The impact of reduced office workers has also had a knock-on effect on footfall and businesses in the city centre. Office workers provide a large amount of footfall and trade to retail and hospitality businesses in the city. It is envisioned that continued or increased restrictions on movement will mean footfall will take longer to return to any 'normal' levels.
- 3.14 Belfast drives tourism across the region due to its attractive offer as a city break destination and business tourism destination. According to Northern Ireland Tourism Alliance (NITA), the tourism industry supports around 20,000 jobs in Belfast and enjoys 40% of regional tourism spend. The tourism sector is largely seasonal with around 60% of its revenues earned between April to November. NITA estimate the lockdown period (March to June) resulted in over £300m in direct visitor spend being lost to the NI Economy. The potential loss to 2020 visitor spend based on the Visit Britain estimates that the tourism industry in Northern Ireland could be facing losses of over £600M from overnight trips, a decrease of 70% on the estimated 2019 spend. In addition, 80% of staff are on part and full time furlough, 50,000 jobs are at risk with redundancies already made across the sector and there has been a significant knock on effect to supply chains.

#### Future City Centre Programme

- 3.15 Members will be aware that the Council have a Future City Centre Programme (FCC) that builds on the key findings and recommendations outlined in a previous retail analysis report undertaken by Pragma Consulting on behalf of the Council. The priorities of the Programme are being recast in the context of COVID-19 and taking on board recommendations from the High Street Task Force in England.
- 3.16 The objective is to ensure that it addresses not only challenges to the retail sector but the city centre as a whole. It is linked to the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda and Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and is charting a way forward for diversification of uses, enhanced connectivity, investment and inclusive economic and cultural growth. The FCC Programme is integral to the deliver to the Council's Recovery Programme and establishes six cross cutting and inter-dependent pillars aimed at creating a dynamic, vibrant shared city centre where people will want to live, work and invest.

- 3.17 The key areas of focus are illustrated in the diagram (copy available [here](#)), all of which require cross-cutting collaboration across Council and wider city centre stakeholders. A further report will be brought back to Committee on this with detail on the various priorities.
- 3.18 It is considered that this Future City Centre Programme forms a sound basis for priority areas of focus for the city centre, both in the shorter and longer term and could be an important tool for discussions in the context of the proposed High Street Task Force.
- 3.19 There is a pressing need, now more than ever to plan ahead with our city partners and central government to ensure a joined up and collective approach to help facilitate the recovery of the city centre.
- 3.20 Given the significant challenges impacting on the city centre it is imperative therefore that the proposed High Street Taskforce moves forward at pace but with appropriate authority and resources to make impactful decisions to roll out immediately. Members are being asked to agree to the Council's response to TEO confirming agreement to engage with the reference group but to also highlight the importance of being part of the High Street Task Force on its formation. This will include reinforcing the importance and criticality of Belfast city centre being the regional economic and tourism driver in Northern Ireland. Within the context of the emerging High Street Taskforce it is considered that there needs to be focused approach in addressing the challenges faced by the city centre as it drives a programme of recovery for Belfast and indeed the wider region.
- 3.21 Finance & Resource Implications
- There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.
- City centre businesses have a key role in the economic sustainability of Belfast and the wider economy and the rates base from the city centre represents a significant source of income for the Council.
- 3.22 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
- The Future City Centre Programme is a high level regeneration plan. The significant projects taken forward within the plan will be screened in their own right."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### **Employability NI - Update and Proposed Way Forward**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report**

##### **1.1 The purpose of this report is to:**

- Update the Committee on the Department for Communities (DfC) Employability NI initiative
- Detail the specific proposals around Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnerships (LILMPs) and update on engagement with DfC about how these might work in Belfast
- Secure approval to move forward along the lines agreed with DfC in order to bring forward the partnership in Belfast.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

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

- Note the update on Employability NI
- Agree to move forward with DfC as set out within the paper, taking an incremental approach to establishing the Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnership and prioritising key elements of activity.

#### **3.0 Main report**

##### **3.1 Employability NI is DfC’s new approach to providing support services for unemployed individuals seeking to get back into to work. Rather than a stand-alone programme, it is a series of interventions that will evolve over time, as legacy programmes (such as Steps to Success and Access to Work) come to an end. It is intended to be a cross governmental approach to co-designing and co-commissioning (including with local government potentially) a sustainable future strategic employment offer which provides a tailored level of support proportionate to need. It has been designed in order to:**

- Deliver a reduction in economic inactivity and long-term unemployment to bring NI closer in line with UK rates

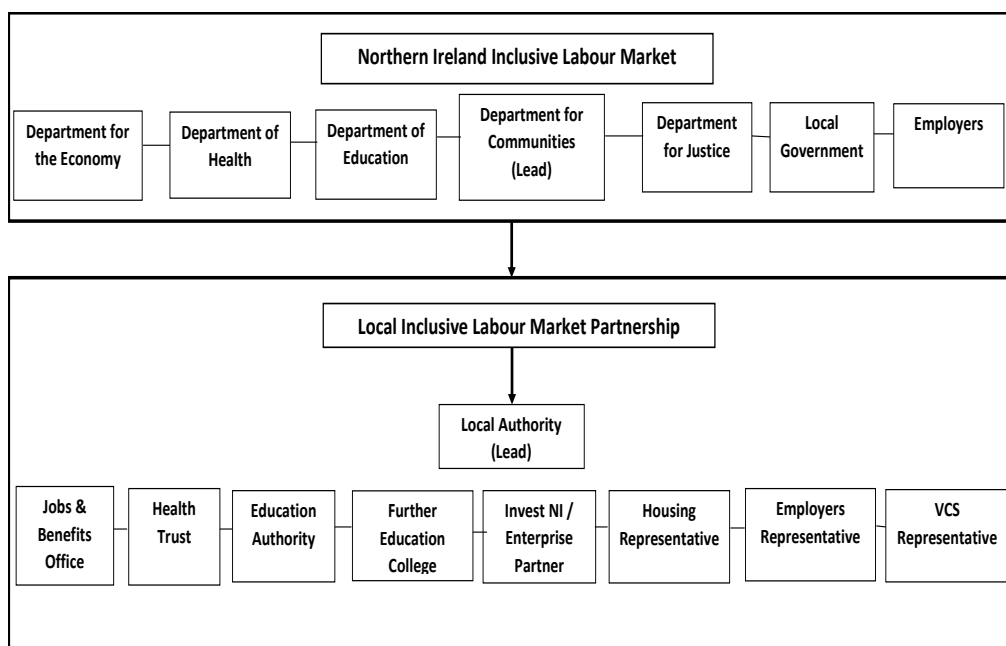
- Provide increased support for those with health conditions (esp. mental health) and disabilities
- Create a mechanism for government to collaborate with Councils and other Departments to offer local solutions.

3.2 Since 2018, council officers have been part of the Employability NI Programme Board. The Board's work has been on hold since early 2020 but, by that point, there had been broad agreement on the substantive programme elements.

3.3 One of the key elements of the programme design was the proposal to create 'Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnerships' in each council area. They were intended to:

- Provide leadership and lead on the integration of services
- Develop local area plans including setting targets for performance
- Manage devolved funding and its delivery through a dynamic purchasing framework
- Manage arrangements for the evaluation of local interventions.

3.4 The proposed composition of the partnership and its structure is set out below.



- 3.5** While DfC's original intention was to go live with the new approach from October 2020, COVID-19 has set their programme back to some extent. They are still finalising the work on the Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnerships, with a view to having these operational in each council area at some point in the coming financial year. However, following a series of engagements with officers in Belfast City Council's Economic Development team, DfC has agreed in principle to move forward with establishing a labour market partnership in Belfast as a precursor to the roll-out across the region. At present, officers are finalising details but it is likely to involve an incremental approach, progressing from oversight of existing and new interventions (including their new 'Work Ready Citizens' programme which has just been put out to tender with a closing date of mid-November and which has been divided into 11 sub-contracts, along district council lines) towards a more active role, with the council taking on the task of local convenor of a partnership approach to employability interventions in Belfast.
- 3.6** The advantages to working with DfC on Employability NI include:
- Ability to target employability interventions in line with need, ensuring a more inclusive approach to economic growth
  - Enhanced level of insights on the localised nature of employability and inactivity challenges – and ability to tailor resources in line with need
  - A more responsive series of employability interventions – with enhanced progression and employment outcomes for those engaging in the activity
  - The potential to move towards a more formal strategic leadership role for councils in this area of work – as is the case in most other EU countries.
- 3.7** There are a number of key differences between DfC's current way of working and the proposed approach under Employability NI. With specific regard to the Belfast Agenda and the Inclusive Growth commitments, the following are important to note:
- The programme will involve voluntary participation rather than mandatory engagement. This builds on the learning from many of the community-based providers and European Social Fund (ESF) projects. It will be reliant on building a trusted network of referral points

and creating a seamless approach to engaging with individuals who often present with very complex needs

- The Department has been very clear in its commitment to focus on the long-term unemployed and economically inactive. This is a huge challenge in Belfast and the scale of the problem here is more significant than in most other council areas. The Inclusive Growth strategy currently identifies four target groups – one of whom is the economically inactive. This challenge is going to be even more significant in a post-COVID economy – where jobs numbers are significantly reduced
- The preferred delivery model is based on local management of programme delivery, with local defined as each of the local authority boundaries. The rationale for this approach is to ensure that programme delivery is reflective of local area needs from a participant and employer perspective. This should provide us with a much more granular data set on who the LTU/economically inactive are, where they live, what the associated social issues are and what the implications for service delivery (for us and other partners) might be. There may also be an opportunity to re-focus this data and agree our indicators for economic inactivity as part of the work on our stretch goals for the next four year period of the Belfast Agenda
- Given the reasons behind our economic inactivity problem in Belfast, it is likely that there will be a significant focus on health-related economic inactivity. This will require a much better way of working with the Health Trust and other health partners
- There is currently a significant volume of local delivery through community and voluntary organisations, many of whom are delivering European Social Fund (ESF) activity. There is still some lack of clarity regarding the future focus of the Shared Prosperity Fund but it will be important to consider the implications of any reduction in local delivery
- The Department's proposal is that the delivery model will involve a mix of statutory and community/voluntary based provision. However the critical element will be to consider how it can be outcomes-based (i.e. progressing in training/towards or into employment) while focusing on what is right for the individual. Given the range of organisations that are likely to be involved in delivery of this service, there are likely to be some challenges in getting this right.

**Proposed approach**

- 3.8** Based on our recent engagement with DfC – and taking account of the pressing nature of the unemployment challenge – officers consider that the best way forward on this is to:
- Mobilise the partnership quickly with a focus on the new Work Ready Citizens contract (currently out to market)
  - Engage with DfC and QUB on the underpinning labour market intelligence (LMI) that will drive the work of the partners, particularly the linkages between employment/unemployment and deprivation as well as barriers to accessing a job (e.g. childcare, skills). Develop rich sources of intelligence that will drive delivery and focus resources
  - Engage the key anchor institutions to understand likely demand (particularly Belfast Trust and Belfast Harbour) and to develop targeted interventions, focusing particularly on LTU/economically inactive
  - Explore how council interventions can add value to the DfC offer – particularly the Employment Academies model which is extending into new areas (including transport and logistics) and exploring emerging areas of work (including sustainable construction and technology)
  - Co-design interventions that can help move people back into work as quickly as possible – this will be particularly important for the ‘new unemployed’
  - Review the progress of specific interventions regularly to understand what is working and to share insights with partners.
- 3.9** In addition to the Local Labour Market Partnerships, the Department for the Economy (DfE) is currently exploring the potential of establishing ‘local skills forums’, as part of their new skills strategy. This is set to go to consultation in early 2021, with implementation planned from Autumn 2021. There are clearly synergies between employability and skills. However we are aware that DfE is further behind DfC on progressing their local governance approaches and, for that reason, officers are proposing to move forward with the employability approaches for now and consider how these can be brought together down the line – once we have had a chance to demonstrate the value of local approaches.
- 3.10** In our engagement with DfC, we have underlined how this work is wholly consistent with the Community Planning



approach and is a good example of developing a partnership approach to address an entrenched challenge that requires input across a range of organisations. As part of the work to look at the existing Community Planning structures, we have been working closely with the Strategic Hub to consider how Employability NI can align to any proposed revision of the Community Planning Partnership and the respective Boards. The Deputy Secretary from DfC presented an update on Employability NI at the 27 October meeting of the Community Planning Partnership.

#### **Financial and resource implications**

- 3.11 No specific additional financial contribution required from council at this point. It is expected that we will make available our initiatives such as Employment Academies as part of the solution to create employment opportunities in key sectors.
- 3.12 DfC have indicated that they will be willing to consider resource support for the management and administration of the partnerships. Details of support available are currently being finalised. In the interim, we are working to refocus existing staff resources to support this important programme of delivery, pending a wider review of resources.

#### **Equality implications/rural needs assessment**

- 3.13 One of the key advantages of this approach is that it will enable us to target resources on specific groups, including those with particular access issues and barriers that currently prevent them from accessing training and employment opportunities.
- 3.14 DfC proposes to establish Local Inclusive Labour Market Partnerships in all council areas in the course of the coming financial year.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the design stages of the initiative and highlighted that the details of setting targets for performance were still being considered. He pointed out that further updates would be brought back to the Committee in due course.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

#### **Market Licence Requests**

The Committee was reminded that anyone wishing to operate a market or car boot sale within Belfast must apply to Belfast City Council for permission to do so

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and, depending on the scale and nature of the event, it might need authorisation from the Committee to take place.

The Director of Economic Development advised that applications of this scale had recently been received on behalf of three proposed markets, namely:

- Weekly (Saturday morning) car boot sale in Makro car park, Kingsway, Dunmurry;
- Monthly food and produce market in CS Lewis Square; and
- Trade Local market in the run-up to Christmas at 'We are Vertigo' building, Queen's Road, Titanic Quarter.

However, since the report had been published, the application for a licence from Trade Local market at the 'We are Vertigo' building had been withdrawn.

He explained that, in keeping with the current NI Executive regulations, external markets were currently permitted to operate, subject to appropriate risk assessments being in place. As part of the approval process for any market, as a condition of granting a licence, officers requested evidence of support from the land owner, considered the implications on adjacent properties and activities and ensured compliance with all relevant regulations and statutory requirements. For these markets, this would include consideration of guidelines and additional restrictions in place as a result of COVID-19.

He reported that the Weekly car boot sale, at Makro Car Park, Dunmurry was proposing to start at 8am each Saturday and be off site for 13.45pm. Officers had already received confirmation from the car park owners of their permission for the event to take place. At this stage, the event organisers were working on the basis of having around 50 spaces at the event, potentially attracting up to 100 cars as the market developed.

In relation to the monthly food and local produce market, CS Lewis Square, he advised that, as part of their proposals to animate Connswater Community Greenway and CS Lewis Square, Eastside Partnership was proposing to organise a monthly market featuring local food and produce. Indicative operating hours were 2pm-5pm (original request was 1pm to 5pm but officers considered that the earlier start could have a negative impact on St George's Market). Organisers had proposed the first market for Saturday, 21st November, with the next being a two day market proposed for Saturday, 12th and Sunday, 13th December. Organisers were currently working on the basis of attracting 30-40 traders at each monthly market.

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development answered Members' questions in relation to the application process and the impact of Covid-19 restrictions.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Agreed to grant the licence for the running of a weekly (Saturday) car boot sale within the grounds of the Makro car park in Dunmurry, subject to compliance with all relevant legal and statutory requirements;

- Agreed to grant a licence to EastSide Greenways for the running of a monthly market in C.S. Lewis Square, subject to compliance with all relevant legal and statutory requirements, and due to the time-frame of the proposed market, agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (2) (b), that the decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that the decision was deemed to be a case of special urgency; and
- Noted that, since the report had been published, the application for a licence from Trade Local market at the 'We are Vertigo' building had been withdrawn.

### **Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure**

#### **Car Clubs**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 Following discussion at the Planning Committee of the 13th October 2020 a request was raised to bring forward an update on the development and current active use of car clubs to be brought to the November City Growth and Regeneration Committee meeting.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:-**

- 1) Note the current position regarding the provision of Car Clubs in Belfast when compared with the rest of the UK and Ireland;**
- 2) Note the statistics from established Car Club areas across the UK and Ireland; and**
- 3) Note the role of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and Local Development Plan in effecting modal shift and demand management within the city**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **Background & Current position**

- 3.1 A Car Club is a membership based service that provides members with convenient and affordable access to vehicles 24/7/365. A member of a Car Club can:**

- **Book a car online or on the phone, weeks ahead or with just a few minutes' notice;**

- Unlock a car in their neighbourhood, parked in a designated parking bay; and
- Pay automatically from their account. Costs typically range from £4 to £8 per hour, (including fuel, insurance and maintenance) whilst mileage fees start at £0.15/mile.

The annual membership for Belfast's *Enterprise CarClub* is currently £20.

- 3.2 Car clubs in Northern Ireland are fewer and less well established than in other parts of the UK and Ireland. *Enterprise CarClub* is currently the only operator offering a Car Club service in Belfast. In contrast, cities like Bristol and Brighton, which have a well-established and vibrant city centre residential presence, also have embedded Car Club provision after successful campaigns to change parking attitudes & behaviours. Both the Belfast Agenda and Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) aim to accelerate city centre living through the reimagined and resurgent transformation of underutilised prime city centre land. The Bolder Vision for Belfast, a jointly commissioned DfI, DfC and BCC report outlines the key principles for connectivity within the city including prioritising integrated walking, cycling and public transport and end the dominance of the car.
- 3.3 A number of Build to Rent and mixed-use schemes have received planning approval with zero parking requirement, that being contingent upon a Green Travel Plan which include requirement for provision of Car Club spaces and subsidised membership for future occupiers, as set out in their respective S76 Planning Agreement. However, these schemes have not been constructed to date, and thus there is limited intelligence available to gauge the success of Car Clubs in Belfast. However there are a number of data sets available based on established Car Club initiatives across the UK and Ireland.
- 3.4 It is anticipated that once the permitted schemes are constructed, and occupied, the presence of and demand for Car Clubs within Belfast will expand considerably – matched by the City Centre living, which is clearly a key objective for the City Council through the Belfast Agenda, emerging Local Development Plan and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

#### Research & Intelligence

**3.5 CoMoUK (Collaborative Mobility UK) has 20 years' experience of research and development in the shared transport sector. The charity organisation provides information about Car Clubs around the UK and supports the development of Car Clubs. CoMoUK publishes annual data on car clubs operating in England, Scotland and Wales. Their datasets show that the car sharing sector has grown consistently since its inception and a number of other key findings in Scotland for 2019/20 include:**

- **Membership:**
  - Car club membership in Scotland in 2020 increased by 27% compared with 2019 membership figure.
  - The number of individual, private members has increased by 11%.
  - The number of corporate members has increased by 54%.
  - 50% of all car club members are aged between 25 - 44.
- **48% of car club cars are either electric or hybrid vehicles**
- **98% of car club cars are low emission zone compliant**
- **Since joining a car club:**
  - 16% of members walk more
  - 10% Cycle more
  - 26% have reduced their private car use
- **6,700 private cars have been disposed of**

**3.6 The CoMoUK 2017/18 annual survey for England and Wales produced these key findings:**

- **Reduced private car ownership and usage**
  - Members disposed of 4,747 vehicles since joining a car club, using the 783 available car club vehicles provided by the three operators.
  - Long term members decreased their annual household mileage by 793 miles.
  - 8.4 years old was the average age of vehicles disposed of in the last year by members.
  - 6.1 private cars are displaced by each car club car
- **Enhanced modal shift**

- 68% of members use another shared mobility service other than a car club.
- After joining a car club, members completed 3,832 more walking and cycling trips.
- Increased usage of environmentally friendly cars
  - 36% of the car club fleet is either hybrid or electric
  - 43% less carbon from tailpipe emissions compared to the average UK car
- Improved car safety
  - 86% of the car club fleet has achieved the NCAP 4 or 5 Star safety standard.

### **Key Considerations**

#### **3.7 Modal Shift & Demand Management**

The current Belfast roads infrastructure is at capacity, with a further 19% predicted increase in car journeys by 2030 based on current usage patterns. There is a recognition that modal shift and demand management will be essential to keep the city 'flowing' while addressing the issues of air pollution and the climate emergency. Effecting this change will require a suite of interventions, solutions and behavioural change. A number of policy and strategy documents have identified measures to bring this forward although further work and action is required including an updated Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and implementation of planning control through the Local Development Plan.

**3.8** The Belfast *Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan 2019* identifies the level of car parking provision as 'a key demand management tool'. The strategy states that the availability of car parking provision should be sufficiently restrained so as not to undermine sustainable and active travel options, while simultaneously limiting traffic levels and traffic congestion.

**3.9** The strategy also discusses the impact of car parking provision on city centre vitality and viability. It notes that the continued over-allocation of car parking in the city centre is likely to encourage less sustainable travel modes. The number of spaces provided overall in Belfast is considered to be high compared to other cities of similar size, however the provision is fragmented and imbalanced across the city centre.

3.10 The *Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (2015)* includes a suite of Management Measures to counter issues like over allocation of surface car parking. The measures are designed to rationalise and consolidate parking provision in the city centre to complement other traffic management measures and support economic vitality. The plan proposed imposing maximum parking standards to developments that restrict the number of Private Non-Residential (PNR) spaces that can be provided. It also proposed restricting the number of parking spaces provided at new residential developments by imposing maximum parking standards.

3.11 **Section 76 (S76) Planning Agreement**

The concept of Car Clubs as a prerequisite for planning permission is still in its infancy in Belfast. The practice is much more established in planning authorities in the UK and Ireland where Car Clubs have been secured through the planning process for several years. Car Clubs are one of a number of options that a prospective developer may use to mitigate a reduction in the usual parking standards for a site. In Belfast, the Council's Planning Service has been open to reduced parking levels, particularly in sustainable locations. It is one of a number of viable alternatives to the private car in the city centre that offer inherently more environmentally sustainable solutions. However, this is subject to mitigation through 'green travel measures' such as requiring developers to provide subsidised travel cards to residents or to make provision for a Car Club.

3.12 The S76 agreement is the vehicle that Planning uses to secure Car Clubs (as well as other planning obligations). It places a legal obligation on the developer (landowner) and successors in title to provide the Car Club or agreed form of sustainable mitigation measure. The S76 agreement provides a legally binding document which provides the specific mitigation measure to be incorporated by the developer. In relation to Car Clubs this can include the requirement for a 'Car Club Strategy' which would include the number of Car Club permanent parking spaces, incentives for use and the developers obligations to subsidise and promote the Car Club to residents. This strategy is approved by the BCC Planning Service in collaboration with the Department for Infrastructure.

3.13 **Finance and Resource Implications**

There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.

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

**Equality or Goods Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment were not considered for this report however will need to be addressed for future Car Club provision applications, or related policy or strategy documents.”**

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor O'Hara,  
Seconded by Councillor Dorrian,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that the Council explore buying into a car club scheme for staff in carrying out their duties, and engage with other public sector bodies to encourage the utilisation of car clubs or similar to minimise the requirement for public sector car parks that could be better utilised for other opportunities aligned with the Belfast Agenda and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the current position regarding the provision of Car Clubs in Belfast when compared with the rest of the UK and Ireland;
- Noted the statistics from established Car Club areas across the UK and Ireland;
- Noted the role of the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan and Local Development Plan in effecting modal shift and demand management within the city; and
- Agreed that the Council explore buying into a car club scheme for staff in carrying out their duties, and engage with other public sector bodies to encourage the utilisation of car clubs or similar to minimise the requirement for public sector car parks that could be better utilised for other opportunities aligned with the Belfast Agenda and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Strategy.

**Ministerial response to Public Realm at Shankill Gateway and Frederick Street**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in August, it had agreed to issue a letter to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Infrastructure outlining the Committee's concerns regarding the enhancement of junctions and improving walking and cycling connectivity as part of the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Scheme, which was being progressed by the Department for Communities (DfC).



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The Director of City Regeneration and Development explained that the original designs which had been submitted for planning approval, following extensive community and statutory engagement, had included alterations to the junction by removing unnecessary road infrastructure and removing additional pedestrian crossing locations while increasing pavement space and introducing additional green landscaping. However, the design were superseded immediately prior to the granting of planning approval and without wider consultation, with a design that maintained the layout of the current junction.

She advised that the letter to the Minister raised concerns that this change did not address the issues presented by the hard infrastructure layout of the inner ring. It further highlighted that the approved design did not take into account the collective Council, DfI and DfC 'Bolder Vision for Belfast' which provided for prioritisation of integrated walking, cycling and public transport and the need to address severance and barriers to movement between the centre of Belfast and the surrounding communities.

The letter to the Minister had advised that, whilst Council was supportive of the investment to enhance this location, it was felt there was an opportunity to bring greater benefit than the current scheme design proposes, particularly in terms of safe pedestrian and cycle movements, and reducing severance through this key junction.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an overview of the response from the Belfast Regeneration Directorate on behalf of the Minister for Communities (copy available at [Appendix 1](#)).

She highlighted that DfC had commenced to discharge some of the planning conditions associated with the planning condition for the scheme (under planning application LA04/2019/0200/F). She also explained that, following on from the launch of the Bolder Vision for Belfast, a jointly commissioned and endorsed report by the Council, DfC and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), Council officers were engaging with officials from both Departments through a Junctions Working Group to bring forward and accelerate the delivery of improved connections at the Inner Ring Junctions under the agreed principles of the Bolder Vision.

She advised that, through this group, and with regard to the current proposals for the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Environment Improvement scheme, there remained concerns that the opportunity to address this junction during a current capital works scheme would be missed, and that it was unclear as to when, or how the junction improvement works would be delivered.

She highlighted that, since the report had been published, a response from the Minister for Infrastructure had also been received which advised that whilst the scheme initially included a new layout to improve pedestrianisation, cycling and public transport facilities, this required more detailed consideration of the consequential impact on the road network. Therefore, in order not to delay the planning approval, the planning application only included the current junction layout. However, the Minister advised that her officials were continuing to consider alternative junction layouts in conjunction with DfC and the Council with a view to making future improvements to this junction.

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During discussion, the Senior Development Manager provided illustrations of the changes to the proposed Shankill Gateway Public Realm Environment Improvement scheme.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor O'Hara,  
Seconded by Councillor McAllister,

That the Committee agrees to respond in writing to both the Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities and reiterate concerns around this major junction scheme progressing without provision for pedestrian and cycling priority, as previously envisaged within the scheme designs that were subject to public consultation'.

Following a vote, thirteen Members voted for the amendment and five against and it was declared carried.

After discussion, the Committee:

- 1) Noted the response from the Minister for the Department for Communities at Appendix 1 and the additional response which had been received from the Minister for the Department for Infrastructure, since the report had been published;
- 2) In relation to the Shankill Gateway Public Realm Environment Improvement Scheme, agreed to respond in writing to both the Department for Infrastructure and Department for Communities and reiterate concerns around this major junction scheme progressing without provision for pedestrian and cycling priority, as previously envisaged within the scheme designs that were subject to public consultation. The Committee noted that the correspondence should highlight that the alternative scheme proposals provided the opportunity to promote active travel, help lessen the impact of the inner ring road on connections to communities, and aligned with the principles of the agreed Bolder Vision Connectivity Study. The Committee also expressed concerns that the opportunity to make impactful change would be missed if it was not realised now;
- 3) Noted that the Frederick St/Great Patrick St catalyst junction improvement scheme was currently on hold pending the outcome of the York Street Interchange Review but highlighted the need to progress with this scheme as soon as possible; and
- 4) Noted that the Department for Infrastructure would be attending the Special Meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 24th November.

**Ministerial Advisory Panel: NI Infrastructure Commission**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an update on the findings of the Department for Infrastructure's Ministerial call for evidence in relation to a potential Infrastructure Commission for Northern Ireland.

He reminded the Committee that, in September 2020, the Minister for Infrastructure undertook a Call for Evidence to establish the need and support for, and role of, a potential Infrastructure Commission for Northern Ireland. As reported to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in September, due to the timescales involved, Council officers had provided a draft response to the Call for Evidence, subject to Committee and Council approval. He stated that the Belfast Commissioner for Resilience, Grainia Long; the Belfast Digital Innovation Commissioner, Jayne Brady; and Solace, (represented by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Chief Executive) had also provided evidence to the panel on 7th September.

He advised that the Council response to the call for evidence was attached at [Appendix A](#), and, following stakeholder and consultee engagement, a report had now been published capturing the findings of the Ministerial Advisory panel ([Appendix B](#)).

The Committee noted:

- That the Ministerial Advisory panel had recommended that an Infrastructure Commission, with a clear remit and the support of the entire Northern Ireland Executive, should be established as soon as practical; and
- The further findings of the Ministerial Advisory panel regarding the role and remit of an Infrastructure Commission for Northern Ireland, as set out in the Ministerial Advisory Panel Report.

**Ministerial Response to East Belfast Depot**

The Committee was reminded that on 4th March it had considered the findings of the East Belfast Depot report which undertook a site search process to identify suitable locations for a potential relocation of the East Belfast Depot.

The site search process identified a number of potential sites, however, all of them had been discounted on the basis that they did not meet the operational requirements of the public transport network. Specifically a number of identified potential sites were located further from the primary transportation corridors that the depot served, and would perform worse than the existing depot, in terms of the key commercial consideration of minimising 'dead mileage'.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, at its meeting on 4th March, the Committee had granted approval for a letter to be issued to the Minister for Infrastructure requesting that the findings of the site search and the operational

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requirements of Translink be given further consideration in the context of the impact of the current depot location on neighbouring residential amenity.

She highlighted that, in response, the Minister had confirmed receipt of the site search report and had advised that she would respond to the findings set out in the report in due course.

During discussion, in response to a Member highlighting the time taken to issue correspondence to Ministers, it was acknowledged that there had been some delay due to other pressures but the Committee was assured that the correspondence would be followed up on.

After discussion, the Committee noted the response from the Minister for Infrastructure ([Appendix 1](#)) in relation to the East Belfast Depot Site report previously undertaken by the Council.

Chairperson

# City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Tuesday, 24th November, 2020

## REMOTE SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brooks (Chairperson);  
Alderman Kingston; and  
Councillors Donnelly, Ferguson, Gormley,  
Hanvey, Heading, T. Kelly, Lyons, Maskey,  
McLaughlin, McMullan, Murphy, O'Hara,  
and Spratt

Also attended: Councillors Baker, Black, Bunting, Canavan, De Faoite,  
Flynn, Kyle and McDonough-Brown.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;  
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration  
and Development;  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer and  
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for the inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Beattie, Howard and McAllister.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

### **Restricted Item**

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

**DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Fund - DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund  
and DfI Autumn Special Update**

***DfI Roads Report – Autumn 2020***

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided an overview of the infrastructure related items which had been previously raised by Council in advance of the DfI Autumn Report including:

- Partnership working;
- City Maintenance;
- Belfast Bike Network Update;
- Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan; and
- Residents Parking Zones.

***DfC Revitalisation Programme – Blue and Green Infrastructure Projects***

The Committee was reminded that the Tranche 2 Letter of Offer had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) for the Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme on 28th October.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development explained that the DfI contribution had been allocated from its Blue and Green infrastructure fund. Accordingly, the Department has identified that the funding should be directed to projects that would sustain and improve the availability of sustainable green and blue infrastructure in the city. She advised that the funding was for capital works only, and was predicated with a requirement to be delivered before the 31st March, 2021.

She informed the Committee that officers from Place and Economy and Physical Programmes have reviewed existing work-streams to ensure maximum benefit of the allocated funding aligned with the requirement to meet the in-year funding requirement and outlined the proposed project delivery aligned to the DfI Blue and Green Infrastructure fund, as set out in the report.

During discussion, the Committee welcomed the additional funding for the Blue and Green Infrastructure Projects

***DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Fund – DfC Capital Allocation***

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in October, it had approved the allocation of £140k to the Destination CQ BID for the delivery of interventions to support pedestrianisation and environmental improvements in Union St and Exchange Place / Warehouse Entry.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that, subsequently, an engineering assessment had introduced the requirement for additional structural support and a request for additional funding allocation in the amount of £20k to Destination CQ to support the additional works at Union Street had been received to be allocated to the Letter of Offer for Destination CQ Bid.

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In response to questions from Members, the Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that feasibility and future proofing of the projects would be taken into consideration and preparation for the potential of further funding would also be undertaken. She advised that further information would be provided to the Committee on the upgrade of the Belfast Bikes.

In response to a question from a Member, she also advised that DfI had indicated that the Experimental Road Order for the temporary pedestrianisation of Union Street should be progressed in early December..

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Approved the proposed budget lines for the Department for Infrastructure contribution of £749k to the Department for Communities Covid-19 City Revitalisation programme, as outlined in the report;
2. Approved additional funding allocation in the amount of £20k to Destination CQ to support additional works at Union Street;
3. Agreed the funding allocation of £99k to BIDONE to deliver the Green and Blue Infrastructure elements for Church Lane; and
4. Noted the updates on infrastructure related items in advance of the DfI Autumn Presentation.

**Presentations**

**Translink**

The Chairperson welcomed representatives of Translink to the meeting: Mr. D. Bannon, Belfast Area Manager, Mr. B. Gallagher, Communication and Stakeholder Manager. Mr. D. McAllister, Senior Programme Manager, and Mr. L. McComb, Director of Regeneration.

Mr. Bannon advised that Translink was the accessible, inclusive and green public transport provider that would help Northern Ireland reconnect people and places, helping get more people back to work and school, and ensure Northern Ireland's recovery from the Covid-19 crisis was sustainable.

He stated that the pandemic had resulted in a dramatic decline in passenger numbers and sustaining the public transport network, and rebuilding passenger confidence, required both increased and ongoing investment. He highlighted that Translink was obliged to provide a comprehensive public transport, including school buses and rural and socially necessary networks. He explained that these services were essential to sustaining vital jobs in dependent sectors across the entire economy and must be maintained even when passenger numbers were low.

He explained that the economic impact of the reduction in passenger numbers and revenue had left public transport globally in a very challenging funding situation.

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He highlighted that Translink welcomed the emergency Covid-19 funding response from the NI Executive and DfI. However it was important to recognise the impact that Covid-19 would have on revenues for some time to come, together with the considerable uncertainties over the increased use of public transport networks over the next 12- 18 months.

He advised that, in response to the crisis, Translink would continue to encourage active travel and where possible stagger start and finish times to help facilitate social distancing for their employees using public transport. He stated that, to assist with the operation of the 'new normal', Translink:

- Encouraged contactless payments and introduced a no change policy;
- Delivered new innovative **indimustey** leading cleaning and sanitisation techniques - with regular enhanced deep cleaning of vehicles and facilities using protective long-lasting anti-viral disinfectant using electro static sprayers, keeping surfaces virus free;
- Monitored and enhanced capacity as and when required to meet passenger needs;
- Introduced protective screens in stations and on buses and hand sanitiser is available in all main bus and train stations;
- Supported requirements to wear a face covering on public transport; and
- Conveyed clear and transparent communications with customers and staff.

He provided an overview of how public transport promoted active travel, healthier lifestyles and reduced inequality. He explained that, due to the current crisis, Belfast had the opportunity now to prioritise accessible, safe, breathable, and walkable streets.

In relation to building a cleaner, greener Public Transport system, he explained Translink's Fleet Procurement Strategy, which included hydrogen fuel cell buses and zero emission buses. He also advised that the move to a fully carbon neutral fleet by 2040, with this being achieved in Belfast by 2030, and the first hydrogen vehicles would enter service with Metro in the coming weeks.

Mr. McAllister and Mr. McComb introduced the presentation on the Belfast Transport Hub and provided an overview of the construction and delivery strategy. They explained that the Hub would future proof the growth of public transport and provide a range of key benefits, connecting people through infrastructure, such as:

- 8 additional bus stands increasing capacity to 26;
- 4 additional rail platforms increasing capacity to 8;
- Relocation of the Enterprise service;
- Provision for up to 300+ cycle storage units;
- Dedicated pick up and drop off points; and
- Enhanced connectivity, comfort and capacity, encouraging greener, active travel.



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Mr. McComb advised that the benefits of Weavers Cross included: Job creation over a 15 year construction cycle; Social clauses and a construction academy; Up to 8,000 FTE jobs; Up to 200 residential units for City living; Tourism appeal; and Environmental benefits. He highlighted the regeneration opportunities for the area and the importance of the Saltwater Square – Weavers Cross Public Realm Community Connections and how it would create flow between South and West Belfast.

Mr. Gallagher provided an overview of how the Transport Hub would leverage Social Value and Inclusive Growth such as the investment in public realm and shared space, targeted social clauses, and Skills Academies.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked all the staff of Translink, especially those working on the frontline, who had helped keep the transport services running throughout the pandemic.

During Members questions, Mr. Bannon explained further the plans to extend Park and Ride facilities and Glider services, the cleaning of vehicles, and the fluidity of changing timetables. He provided further details on Translink's sources and plans for sustainable transport, and their continued review of the dogs on buses policy. He pointed out that, in the New Year, they hoped to regularise the timetables. He also highlighted that a video was available online which illustrated the electrostatic cleaning that was being undertaken by Translink on its vehicles to keep public transport safe (copy available [here](#)).

He advised that a further update would be provided in relation to Members' questions regarding an update on the Pilot for attaching customer bikes to its Buses for onward travel and increasing space for bikes across its transport network.

During further discussion, the representative's answered a range of questions in relation to cycle storage units, future proofing the design of the rail line, development and lighting of the extended Grosvenor Road. They suggested that they would provide a further update in relation to a cycle lane in Durham St.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, Translink would provide further information on the issues raised.

**Department for Infrastructure Roads - Autumn Report**

The Chairperson introduced Mr. K. Monaghan, Eastern Divisional Manager, Mr. G. Miskimmin, Belfast North Section Engineer, Mr. P. McParland, Belfast South Section Engineer, and Ms. L. Loughran, Director of Transport Policy in the Department for Infrastructure, to the Committee and they were admitted to the meeting.

Mr. Monaghan advised that 2020 had been an unprecedented year, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, their contractors had been working hard

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again since May to complete the schemes that were stopped as a result of the restrictions and DfI was now implementing its 2020 /21 works programme.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city.

In relation to the York Street Interchange, he advised that, in July 2020, the Minister had announced that an external review into the scheme would be undertaken to provide assurance on how and to what extent the scheme reflected key Ministerial, Executive and Council objectives and priorities, and this was to take place in Autumn 2020. He highlighted that the construction of the York Street Interchange would depend on the outcome of these reviews, satisfactory completion of an economic assessment, completion of the statutory process and would be subject to funding being made available in future budget settlements.

He provided Members with an update on the extension of the bus lanes along the M1 motorway by adding 1.7 km of new bus lanes from the approach to Junction 8 at Blaris to Junction 7 at Sprucefield. He informed the Committee that this added to the bus lanes that were introduced on the M1 and M2 motorways in March 2019 and completed the provision of M1 hard shoulder bus lanes between Sprucefield Park and Ride and Belfast and the extended bus lanes had opened on 10th August.

He reminded the Committee that, in relation to Phase II of the Belfast Rapid Transit, the proposal to extend the current BRT Glider network to serve North and South Belfast, together with an extension of the G2 Glider route to serve Queen's University and the City Hospital, was one of the infrastructure projects included in the recently announced Belfast Region City Deal and preparatory work on this project was currently underway.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the DfI Roads Programme of Works for 2020/21 for those projects and schemes that had been completed and were in progress, which included updates on minor works, maintenance of structures and inspections. He also summarised the updates to network traffic and street lighting, collision remedial schemes, traffic schemes and pedestrian measures and resident's parking schemes.

Mr. Monaghan highlighted the introduction of the Safer Routes to School Scheme, which implemented 20mph part time speed limits, and advised that 17 had been programmed for the Eastern Area this year, and that he would welcome any suggestions Members had in this regard.

Ms. Loughran provided an update on sustainable walking and cycling measures, together with social distancing measures that had been implemented. She advised of the infrastructure developments; and policy development and partnership working that had taken place. She highlighted that her team had developed a good working relationship with Council officers to take forward sustainable transport projects, greenways, and the Bolder Vision for Belfast. She pointed out that resources of her Department were being reviewed for the coming year, with the expectation to be able to deliver more.

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During discussion, Mr. Monaghan answered a range of questions in relation to the progress and feasibility of a junction at Cregagh Road and Knock Road, concerns over the Shankill Gateway redesign, safety and traffic calming measures, E-scooter legislation, Belfast Rapid Transit phase 2 locations, and parking restrictions update at Adelaide Park and Malone Road. Members identified the priority need to address the infrastructure imbalance within the city centre, and in particular the need to address the connectivity issues and severance to local communities that are created by the Inner Ring and the connections into the city centre. A number of Members stressed the need to reprioritise these junctions to promote sustainable and active travel, and to minimise the severance to local communities, although some concerns were raised about the potential impact of road reprioritisation on local side streets. The Shankill Gateway scheme, within the current delivery timeframe, was highlighted as a key opportunity to identifying how the city infrastructure can bring forward modal shift, demand management and better place-making design.

In relation to the DfI Roads assessment of car parking requirements in regards to planning applications, the representatives explained the process further and stated that car club legislation and best practice would also be considered in their future work programme.

In response to a Member's question about flooding in Clonduff Drive, since the completion of the Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Mr. McParland advised that they were working with the Council Project Team to investigate the problem.

During further discussion, regarding the Cycling Strategy for the City and its targets, Members expressed their concern at the lack of progress on the Bicycle Network and other active travel measures. The representative's explained the resource allocation and consultation requirements, and advised they would report back to the Committee on the extent of primary cycling network that was currently in place, and future proposals and timelines for delivery.

Regarding Resident's Car Parking Scheme's, Mr. Monaghan explained the current process and advised they would respond further in regard to the timeline for the review and the assessment and consultation process issues which had been raised. A number of members raised the issue of excessive parking within local communities that will be further amplified by developments such as the University of Ulster opening in 2021. Members identified Resident Parking Schemes as a critical element of delivering modal shift while minimising the impact on local communities and asked the representatives from the DfI to bring forward a city wide approach to managing this as a matter of priority.

The Members drew the attention of the officers from DfI Roads to a number of other matters, a number of suggestions which are set out hereunder:

- Street Lighting requirement on Grosvenor Road;
- The addition of Edenbrooke Primary School and Springfield Primary School to the Safer Routes to School Scheme;
- Consider dropped kerbs at Hemsworth Court, Lower Shankill Road.
- Resurfacing at Ambleside Street and Tennents Street;

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- Further safety measures required at junctions at Bilston Road/Crumlin Road and the bottom of Ballysillan Park; and
- An update on the request for a controlled crossing requirement at Springfield Road.

Mr. Monaghan advised that, where relevant, action would be taken on these issues if it was deemed necessary after inspection.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that, where relevant, DfI Roads would provide further information on the issues raised.

Chairperson

## Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 18th November, 2020

### MEETING OF LICENSING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Aldermen Copeland and Sandford; and  
Councillors Bradley, Bunting, Michael Collins, Howard,  
Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Magee, McAteer,  
McCabe, McCullough, McKeown, Nicholl and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning  
and Building Control;  
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;  
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. J. Cunningham, Regulatory Services Manager;  
Mr. V. Donnelly, City Protection Manager;  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor Magennis.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 14th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 2nd November, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Schedule of Meeting 2021**

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings for the Licensing Committee as outlined below and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5.00 pm:

- Wednesday, 20th January
- Wednesday, 17th February
- Wednesday, 10th March
- Wednesday, 21st April
- Wednesday, 19th May
- Wednesday, 16th June
- Wednesday, 18th August

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- Wednesday, 15th September
- Wednesday, 20th October
- Wednesday, 17th November
- Wednesday, 15th December

**Verbal Update - Requests to Address the Licensing Committee**

The Divisional Solicitor reported to the Committee that, following recent changes to how the Council administrated the licensing of Houses of Multiple Occupation, several landlords and representatives from the Landlord Association of Northern Ireland (LANI) had requested to address the Committee. She advised that a report outlining the concerns of the Landlords would be presented to Members at the December meeting of the Licensing Committee.

The Committee agreed to accede to requests from landlords and LANI to address the Licensing Committee at its meeting in December, in relation to technical issues regarding HMO applications.

The Committee further agreed to write to the Minister for the Department for Communities to request a meeting at the earliest possible date to discuss its ongoing frustrations at the ineffectiveness of the current HMO Act 2016 and around the proposed upcoming review of the legislation.

**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 applications that had been issued under the Scheme of Delegation.

**Designation of New Street Trading Sites**

The Committee agreed that the statutory consultation process in relation to the consideration of the designation of a number of proposed new street trading sites should commence.

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

**Applications for the renewal of a Licence to operate a  
House of Multiple Occupation for 22 Sandymount Street**

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The City Protection Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

She advised that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the property.

The Committee approved the application for the Grant of the renewal of a Licence to Operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 22 Sandymount Street.

**Applications for the renewal of a Licence to operate a  
House of Multiple Occupation for 24 Sandymount Street**

The City Protection Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

She advised that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the property.

The Committee approved the application for the Grant of the renewal of a Licence to Operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 24 Sandymount Street.

**Applications for the renewal of a Licence to operate a  
House of Multiple Occupation for 25 Sandhurst Gardens**

The City Protection Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

She advised that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the property.

The Committee approved the application for the Grant of the renewal of a Licence to Operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 25 Sandhurst Gardens.

**Applications for the renewal of a Licence to operate a  
House of Multiple Occupation for 70 Sandhurst Drive**

The City Protection Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

She advised that in relation to night-time noise, there was a warning notice issued on 20th October 2019 and that, in relation to daytime noise there has been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of the HMO in the last 5 years,

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The Committee approved the application for the Grant of the renewal of a Licence to Operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 70 Sandhurst Drive, with the additional condition that the owner shall provide an out of hours contact number to Council officers to contact the owner, or their managing agent (if any), in the event that there are incidents of anti-social behaviour emanating from within the curtilage of the HMO in respect of which it is considered necessary to contact the owner.

**Applications for the renewal of a Licence to operate a  
House of Multiple Occupation for 38 St Albans Gardens**

The City Protection Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as a valid objection had been received, the application must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

She advised that no noise complaints had been received in relation to the property.

The Committee approved the application for the Grant of the renewal of a Licence to Operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 38 St. Albans Gardens.

**Application for the grant of a New Licence to operate a  
House of Multiple Occupation at 23 Pakenham Street**

The City Protection Manager provided an overview of the application and explained that, as it was a new application, it must be considered by the Committee, pursuant to the 2016 Act and legal advice.

She advised that For the purpose of determining whether or not the granting of a licence would result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality of the accommodation, the locality was defined as being Pakenham Street in accordance with HMO Policy 5 (the number of HMOs did not exceed 10% of dwelling units on that road or street) as defined in the document "Houses in Multiple Occupation Subject Plan for Belfast City Council Area 2015. On the date of assessment 15 October 2020 there were no licensed HMO in Pakenham Street out of 21 domestic units.

The Committee approved the application for the Grant of a new Licence to Operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 23 Pakenham Street, with the additional condition that the owner shall provide an out of hours contact number to Council officers to contact the owner, or their managing agent (if any), in the event that there are incidents of anti-social behaviour emanating from within the curtilage of the HMO in respect of which it is considered necessary to contact the owner.



**Non-Delegated Matters**

**Amendment of the Scheme of Delegation to delegate authority  
to determine some renewal applications with objections**

The Divisional Solicitor presented the Committee with an update in respect of the following report:

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

To consider amendment of the Scheme of Delegation in respect of applications for renewal of a licence for the use of premises as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

**Recommendations**

Taking into account the information presented Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to amend the Scheme of Delegation to:

- (i) Allow officers to grant a renewal application for a HMO licence where a valid objection has been received but where the objection relates to overprovision, either directly or indirectly; and
- (ii) Allow officers to grant a renewal application for a HMO licence where a valid objection has been received but where the issues raised are general in nature and not specific to the relevant property, applicant or managing agent.

Amending the Scheme of Delegation does not fall within the delegated authority of Committee and must therefore be ratified by Council.

**Main report**

**Key Issues**

Members will be aware that Section 20 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (NI) 2016 states that the power to refuse an application on the grounds of overprovision or breach of planning control do not apply to renewal applications.

Paragraph 3.6.27 of the Scheme of Delegation permits officers to exercising all powers in relation to the grant (but not refusal) of HMO licences, except in certain circumstances. One of those exceptions is where material objections are received. This means that where a material objection has been received the application must be referred to Committee.

Council continues to receive objections in relation to renewal applications which raise general issues about overprovision or raise concerns about other issues in the general area which are not specific to either the property, owner or managing agent of the property. In accordance with the 2016 Act these objections are valid and whilst not dismissing the alleged issues, legal advice has consistently been that refusal of an application on the basis of such an objection would not be sustainable.

It is considered that this process is unfair to the applicants and indeed to objectors. It also brings applications to Committee unnecessarily which increases work load for both Committee and officers.

Officers therefore believe it may be appropriate to amend the Scheme of Delegation to allow officers to grant renewal applications licences in circumstances where the nature of the objection relates to overprovision, either directly or indirectly.

Members may also wish to consider whether to grant delegated authority to officers to grant a renewal application where valid objections have been received but where the issues raised in the objection are not specific to the property in question.

It is acknowledged that this is less straightforward as issues may arise which should be considered by Committee. In this context however members are reminded that paragraph 1.13 of the Scheme of Delegation states that Chief Officers may refer any delegated matter to Committee in any case. Furthermore, any decision which would otherwise be delegated under the Scheme should be reported to Committee if it is politically contentious, sensitive, significant or if it is otherwise in the public interest to do so.

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

None.

#### **Equality and Good Relations Implications**

**Licensing Committee,  
Wednesday, 18th November, 2020**

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

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report until its meeting in December.

Chairperson

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## Planning Committee

Wednesday, 4th November, 2020

### SPECIAL MEETING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);  
Councillors Brooks, Carson, Matt Collins,  
Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,  
Maskey, McCullough, McKeown, Murphy,  
Nicholl and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning and  
Building Control;  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager  
(Development Management);  
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Also attended: Councillors Gormley, McDonough-Brown and Whyte.

#### **Apologies**

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

#### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor McKeown advised that he had attended a meeting where individuals had raised concerns in respect of item 3a, LA04/2016/0559/F, but that, as he had not expressed an opinion on the application, he would take part in the discussion.

#### **Committee Site Visits**

##### **Note of Site Visits**

It was noted that the Committee had undertaken site visits on 22nd and 28th October in respect of the following planning application:

- LA04/2016/0559/F - Construction of 4 office blocks – Block A 10 storeys, Block B 14 Storeys, Block C and Block D 3 Storeys plus 4 retail units, plant and car parking with external plaza and associated landscaping on site at the junction of Stewart Street/ East Bridge Street and West of Central Station East Bridge Street; and

It was further noted that the Committee had undertaken a site visit on 22nd October in respect of the following application:

**Special Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Wednesday, 4th November, 2020**

- LA04/2019/2387/F - Residential development comprising 151 apartments and ancillary uses including; management suite, communal space, reception area and servicing (refuse/recycling/bicycle storage) and plant equipment; and associated car parking and public realm improvements to Scrabo Street, Station Street and Middlepath Street on Land adjacent to Quay Gate House 15 Scrabo Street, footpaths and public realm at Scrabo Street, Station Street and Middlepath Street

**Pre-Emptive Committee Site Visit**

In response to a suggestion from the Planning Manager (Development Management), the Committee agreed to undertake a pre-emptive site visit to the following site:

- LA04/2020/0804/F - Proposed major mixed use development comprising 653 residential dwellings (549 social housing units and 104 affordable housing units); 2 replacement residential care homes; mixed use area including local neighbourhood retail centre (1 convenience retail anchor unit and 3 retail/hot food/coffee shop units and hotel; Class B business uses within employment zone comprising a mix of 6 Class B1a offices; 1 Class B1b/B1c call centre and R&D office; and 11 Class B1b/B1c/B2 call centre and R&D offices/light industrial units.; community facilities including community building; MUGA pitch and play area. Development includes 2 vehicular site access points from Monagh By-Pass (1 signalised), associated internal road network, pedestrian and cycle ways, public open space, children's play area(s), landscaping, 2 no. waste water treatment works, and all other site and access works (amended scheme) at Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane Glanaulin 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School Belfast.

**Planning Applications**

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEM IN PURSUANCE OF THE  
POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)**

**LA04/2016/0559/F – Site at the junction of Stewart Street/East Bridge Street  
and West of Central Station East Bridge Street Belfast**

The Planning Manager reminded the Committee that the application was due to be considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 15th October but, in light of the fact that the membership of the Committee had changed since it first considered the application, the Committee agreed, at its meeting on 13th October, to defer consideration

**Special Meeting of Planning Committee,  
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of the application in order to undertake a site visit, and further agreed that a Special meeting would be held to consider the application.

A site visit for the Planning Committee had taken place on 22nd October, with a second site visit carried out on 28th October for those Members who were unable to attend.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the proposals. The Planning Manager explained that the application had originally been received in March 2016 and reported to the Planning Committee in September 2016, and that the Committee had resolved to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement. Subsequently, permission was issued in June 2017 but subject to a High Court challenge and the Court had quashed the Council's decision in May 2018 on the grounds that the decision failed to have regard to the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) as the adopted plan and failed to take into account the recommendations of the Planning Appeals Commission following the independent examination into Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (dBMAP), which recommended that the site should be zoned for housing.

He reported that the application did not include social housing and the Planning Authority should assess the application before it. He advised that, as set out in the report to the 15th October Planning Committee, significant weight should be given to the most recent version of dBMAP (2014), which had identified the site as un-zoned white land, given its advanced stage and that the only area of contention was related to retail policy at Sprucefield and that, over previous years, it had been the consistent approach of both officers and the Planning Committee.

The Committee was advised that the site was located within the City Centre of Belfast as defined within BUAP 2001 and both versions of draft BMAP 2015. It was located on un-zoned land within the City Centre outside the primary retail core and within the city centre office area and that the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (CCRIS 2015) aimed to increase the employment population of the city centre.

He explained that the site extended to approximately 0.8 hectares and was located adjacent to East Bridge Street, which sat at a higher level with access taken off Stewart Street which sat at a lower level. The site was a vacant, hard standing plot of land which had previously been used as a temporary car park.

He further explained that the site was situated between very different urban forms of development, the high rise commercial development to the north, the elevated Lanyon Place Railway Station to the west and the domestic residential scale and form of the Markets residential area to the south and west.

He highlighted that the key material factors in the post judicial review assessment of this application were as follows:

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- Principle of Proposed land use for Office and Retail at this location;
- Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001;
- Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015;
- Decision of the Planning Committee on 20 September 2016;
- Response from Ministerial Advisory Board;
- Response from Historic Environment Division – St George’s Market;
- Height, Scale & Massing;
- Landscape & Visual;
- Impact on Amenity & Surrounding Properties & Area;
- Traffic Movement & Parking;
- Other Environmental Matters;
- Economic Benefits;
- Pre-Community Consultation;
- Consideration of additional Representations; and
- Section 76 Planning Agreement.

The Committee was informed that 858 objections had been received which had raised issues that included:

- Scale, height and massing – impact on the Markets residential area;
- Harmful impact on residential amenity – overbearing, sense of being hemmed in; overlooking and loss of light;
- Adverse noise and disruption;
- Breach of Article 8 of Human Rights Act;
- Additional traffic and commuter parking;
- Already an oversupply of offices;
- Access and connectivity;
- Impact on Tunnels Project including poor access, lack of daylight and incompatibility;
- Objection from Ministerial Advisory Group;
- No affordable housing; and
- Lack of community benefits.

The Planning Manager informed the Committee that a consultation with the Ministerial Advisory Group had taken place in November 2018 to enable an impartial view to be obtained, responding to the comments from the Judge, and that the Ministerial Advisory Group had concluded that, had it considered the proposal at an earlier stage, it would have recommended that the arrangement of buildings on the site was reconsidered; and that the site should be considered as a transition site between business (at Lanyon) and living (at the Markets) and thus a mixed use scheme should be encouraged to provide the best regeneration opportunity.

He further reported that consultation had taken place with the Historic Environment Division (HED) which had no objection as the proposal was too far removed to impact or harm the setting of St. George’s Market.



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The Planning Manager drew the Members' attention to the Late Items Report and highlighted that a further objections from the Markets Development Association Objection and the MLA for South Belfast raising issues that included:

- Unacceptable height, scale, massing and design in conflict with BUAP and dBMAP;
- Accessibility and connectivity;
- Adverse impact on the Tunnels Project;
- Site should be zoned for housing; and
- Planning permission should be refused and the site should come forward as a mixed-use and inclusive development.

He advised the Committee that the planning permission for the Tunnels Project, a conversion of and extension to existing archways to comprise a crèche, and employment education and training club, community space, café, health and fitness facility with access to East Bridge Street and Lanyon Place Train Station, had been granted in May 2015 and that there was a current application for renewal. He added that the proposed design and layout of the ground floor retail units would complement the Tunnels Project and that a Section 76 Planning Agreement was recommended to secure a Tunnels Protection Scheme and public access to the project.

He informed the Members that officers recommended that the application should be approved with conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement given that the proposed uses accorded with SPPS, PPS 4 and dBMAP 2015, and that the scale, height, massing and design were, on balance, acceptable with regard to impact on the character and appearance of the area and residential amenity of occupants of the housing to south and west. He added that there was sufficient parking proposed, subject to implementation of the travel plan, and that consideration had also been given to the £55m investment, 350 construction jobs and 2,500 operational jobs and that there had been no objections from statutory consultees.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor McDonough-Brown to the meeting and he was invited to address the Committee. He stated that he objected to the application for the following reasons:

- The Planning Appeals Commission report recommended that the site hadn't been adequately represented;
- That the size, scale and massing were inappropriate;
- That the Council needed to recognise the value of inner-city communities and that approving the application would indicate that growth of the city was being prioritised at the expense of the people who live in it; and
- The Council's Corporate Plan highlighted a need for 31,000 new homes in the city.

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The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Whyte to the meeting and he was invited to address the Committee. He stated that he objected to the application for the following reasons:

- That the site was not at street level;
- The impact the proposed high buildings would have on the Markets area; and
- That consideration should be given to the Ministerial Advisory Group's report and focus should be placed upon Sir Bernard McCloskey's recommendation that the area should be zoned for housing.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Gormley to the meeting and he was invited to address the Committee. He stated that he objected to the application for the following reasons:

- The proposals would fatally undermine the Tunnels Project;
- Whilst the applicant had claimed the project delivered and complemented the Tunnels Project, they were opposed to the renewal of the planning permission;
- That the proposed buildings would have a negative impact on the light levels in the tunnels and space around them, and leave Tunnels Project predominantly in the shade; and
- The Tunnels project would be isolated from the Markets community.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Flynn to the meeting and he was invited to address the Committee. He stated that he objected to the application on the basis that the report from the Ministerial Advisory Group advised that the Planning Committee should be presented with all material concerns for the purpose of a fully informed decision and that the Committee report contained a number of significant issues and failed to attain the standard of being fully informed.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. Worthington, Agent, and Ms. B. Dobbin, Vice-Chair of the Market Development Association (MDA), who outlined a number of reasons why they objected to the application, including that, although the Committee report had been updated, the contents remained the same and did not present a fully rounded and balanced picture pursuant to the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) report and therefore the Committee could not make a fully informed decision. Mr. D. Worthington stated that the BUAP should be applicable as it was still relevant and that the Planning Appeals Commission had favoured housing on the site because of a significant shortfall in housing provision in the area.

Ms. B. Dobbin explained to the Committee that she was a resident of the Markets area and that her home was overlooked by a hotel and tall buildings, and with no garden, she had been emotionally drained and fearful of the application as it would further diminish natural light and would be detrimental to the Markets community and that the Tunnels project would become inconsequential.

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In response to Members' questions about how the proposals would affect the Markets community, and if they felt that the Applicant had taken the concerns of local residents into consideration, the deputation together explained that consultation had been limited and that the community felt it had not been consulted with. They added that the loss of light and connectivity would be detrimental to the area and its residents.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. S. Beattie QC, Mr A. Mains and Mr. S. Blaney, representing the applicant, to the meeting. Mr. S. Beattie QC advised the Committee that:

- Mr Justice McCloskey had made no pronouncements on the applicable planning policy or the structure of the policy;
- SPPS for Northern Ireland as the guiding principle was in favour of development;
- The MAG report referred to the kindred constructions of the BT Building and the Hilton Hotel;
- dBMAP 2014 and BUAP designated the site as white land, prompting a presumption of development;
- The red line of the Tunnels application did not encompass all the land required to make the project work, it required external third party land;
- The application delivered employment through a Section 76 Planning Agreement.

A Member asked how the Applicant would mitigate the existing parking and traffic concerns of residents of the Markets community, whilst bringing 2500 employees to the area with a provision of 66 parking spaces. Mr. S. Blaney reported that the Department for Infrastructure had been consulted and had no concerns, and that a Travel Plan had been produced which fundamentally outlined how the proposal could mitigate the number of vehicles entering the city given the site's proximity to a train station and the provision of bicycle spaces.

In response to a further question, as to whether the application maintained connectivity and its impact on the Tunnels Project, Mr. S. Blaney explained that the planning permission for the Tunnels Project had some fundamental problems including the access to East Bridge Street and the proposed lift and stairs existing outside the red line of the application site. He further stated that the Applicant's proposal included solutions to the aforesaid fundamental problems in order to deliver the Tunnels Project.

In response to a further question with regard to community engagement and a wind assessment, the delegation outlined the Applicant's previous engagement and further attempts at engagement with the Markets Development Association and stated that the wind assessment was carried out in response to objections that indicated concern that the proposal would create a wind tunnel effect, and that outcome of the wind assessment was that there would be no issue with regard to wind.

A Member asked the delegation how confident the Applicant was in securing the projected 2500 jobs, and what consideration had been given to the requirement for office

**Special Meeting of Planning Committee,  
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space after COVID-19. In response, the delegation indicated that the proposals would bring around 2000 people to work on construction of the project, however, without planning permission, and the history of the applicant meant securing investment had been difficult but were confident as developers, that there would be a requirement in the future for office accommodation, particularly from international investors.

Following further discussion, the Director of Planning and Building Control clarified the process by which the MAG report had been commissioned, he confirmed that the Council's commission brief was to look at the design of the proposal and to have it integrated effectively with the surrounding area as a means to inform officers and the Planning Committee as the decision makers.

He added that the applicant had fulfilled its statutory obligations in terms of engagement with the local community, through the planning process during the lifetime of the application. He reported that the passage of time which had passed since consultation with the Statutory Consultees did not require further consultation unless there had been a material change in circumstance.

He further added that the site had been designated as white land in the most recent version of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) 2014, and that the application of BMAP was consistent in the officers' approach to all applications which came before the Committee.

Upon hearing suggested refusal reasons from Members, the officers conferred to encapsulate the wording.

**Proposal**

Moved by Councillor Garrett

Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

1. the proposed development, by reason of height, visual impact, scale and massing would have an over-dominant impact on the character and appearance of the area and therefore failed to meet PED9 of PPS4, Planning Policy CC014 of the draft BMAP (2015), the Laganside South and Markets Character Area Policy CC017 of draft BMAP (2015) and Policy CC12 of BUAP (2001);
2. the proposed development, by reason of height, scale and massing would be visually overbearing and have an over-dominant impact on the adjacent housing to the south and west which would unacceptably impact on the living conditions and amenity of those occupants by way of loss outlook and sense of enclosure, and therefore failed to meet PED9 of PPS4; and
3. the proposed development, by reason of height, visual impact, scale, massing and design would have an over-

**Special Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Wednesday, 4th November, 2020**

dominant impact on the adjacent proposed Tunnels Project, particularly in relation to visual dominance, overshadowing, loss of daylight and inadequate access, including a lack of permeability and therefore failed to meet PPSNI and Policy PED9 of PPS4.

The Committee delegates power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the refusal reasons.

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

Chairperson

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# Planning Committee

Tuesday, 17th November, 2020

## MEETING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

- Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);  
Councillors Brooks, Carson, Matt Collins,  
Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Hutchinson,  
Maskey, McCullough, McKeown, Murphy,  
Nicholl and O'Hara.
- In attendance: Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning and  
Building Control;  
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager  
(Development Management);  
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.
- Also attended: Councillors T. Kelly and McDonough-Brown.

### **Apologies**

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of 13th and 15th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in item 6c, Havelock House, in that she had previously made representation in respect of the application, had engaged with objectors and wished to speak in objection to the application. As such, she would leave the meeting immediately after speaking on the item.

Councillor McKeown advised that, in respect of item 6c, Havelock House, he had listened to local residents in regards to the associated planning application but that, as he had not expressed a view in respect of it, he was content that he could participate in any discussion on the matter.

Councillor Nicholl declared an interest in respect of item 6d, Harberton Park, in that she had engaged with objectors and would be speaking in opposition to the application and would therefore leave the meeting immediately after speaking on the item.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 17th November, 2020**

**Schedule of Meetings**

The Committee agreed to the following schedule of meetings for the year 2021:

- Tuesday, 19th January;
- Thursday, 21st January (for training);
- Tuesday, 16th February;
- Thursday, 18th February (for training);
- Tuesday, 16th March;
- Thursday, 18th March (for training);
- Tuesday, 20th April;
- Thursday, 22nd April (for training);
- Tuesday, 18th May;
- Thursday, 20th May (for training);
- Tuesday, 15th June;
- Thursday, 17th June (for training);
- *No meetings in July (recess)*
- Tuesday, 17th August;
- Thursday, 19th August (for training);
- Tuesday, 14th September;
- Thursday, 16th September (for training);
- Tuesday, 19th October;
- Thursday, 21st October (for training);
- Tuesday, 16th November;
- Thursday, 18th November (for training);
- Tuesday, 14th December; and
- Thursday, 16th December (for training).

**Restricted Item**

**Finance Update**

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion of these items 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 (NI) 2014.

The Committee was provided with an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position, and a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures which had and would be taken as the situation evolved.

Noted.



**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 17th November, 2020**

**Committee Site Visit**

It was also noted that the Committee had undertaken a site visit on 16th November in respect of application LA04/2020/0804/F - Proposed major mixed use development comprising 653 residential dwellings (549 social housing units and 104 affordable housing units); 2 replacement residential care homes; mixed use area including local neighbourhood retail centre (1 convenience retail anchor unit and 3 retail/hot food/coffee shop units and hotel; Class B business uses within employment zone comprising a mix of 6 Class B1a offices; 1 Class B1b/B1c call centre and R&D office; and 11 Class B1b/B1c/B2 call centre and R&D offices/light industrial units.; community facilities including community building; MUGA pitch and play area. Development includes 2 vehicular site access points from Monagh By-Pass (1 signalised), associated internal road network, pedestrian and cycle ways, public open space, children's play area(s), landscaping, 2 no. waste water treatment works, and all other site and access works (amended scheme) at Lands West of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Aitnamona Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane Glanaulin 137-143a Glen Road & Airfield Heights & St Mary's CBG School, Belfast.

**Planning Appeals Notified**

The Committee noted the receipt of correspondence in respect of a number of planning appeals which had been submitted to the Planning Appeals Commission, together with the outcomes of a range of hearings which had been considered by the Commission.

**Planning Decisions Issued**

The Committee noted a list of decisions which had been taken under the delegated authority of the Director of Planning and Building Control, together with all other planning decisions which had been issued by the Planning Department between 5th October and 9th November.

**Planning Applications**

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

**LA04/2019/0463/F - Revision of previously approved application  
(Z/2012/0645/RM) and erection of 10 semi-detached dwellings and  
associated site works - Plots 36-45 of residential development on  
lands south of 25 Harberton Park**

Before presentation of the application commenced, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application to enable a site visit to be undertaken to allow the Committee to acquaint itself with the location and the proposals at first hand.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 17th November, 2020**

The Committee noted, as the application had not been presented, that all Members' present at the next meeting, would be able to take part in the debate and vote on this item.

**(Reconsidered item) LA04/2019/2387/F - Residential development comprising 151 apartments and ancillary uses including: management suite, communal space, reception area and servicing (refuse/recycling/bicycle storage) and plant equipment; and associated car parking and public realm improvements to Scrabo Street, Station Street and Middlepath Street on Land adjacent to Quay Gate House 15 Scrabo Street, footpaths and public realm at Scrabo Street, Station Street and Middlepath Street**

The Principal Planning officer reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 13th October, it had agreed to defer consideration of the application to enable a site visit to be undertaken to allow the Committee to acquaint itself with the location and the proposals at first hand and to request further information on sustainable transport measures and the travel plan. The site visit had taken place on 22nd October.

He provided the Committee with an overview of the application. He outlined that the recommendation to approve was subject to the developer entering into a Section 76 Planning Agreement to include green travel measures, including:

- the submission of a residential travel plan;
- travel cards for each of the 151 units for 3 years;
- submission of a car club strategy and provision of 3 parking spaces retained for car club purposes (ongoing/permanent basis); and
- voucher / subsidy for a bicycle for each apartment.

He explained that the Section 76 agreement would also include developer contributions for:

- monetary contribution towards nearby play space facilities (Rotterdam Street) to offset the policy requirement for provision of children's play space/equipment;
- provision and future maintenance of the external amenity space within the site; and
- employability and skills framework/details for the construction element of the proposal.

The Committee was advised that the original report incorrectly stated that the building was 11 storeys. He pointed out that the application sought full planning permission for a 19 storey residential building, comprising an 11 storey podium element (maximum height of 30.6metres), including outdoor amenity area, with a further 8 storey tower element above (maximum height of 55.1metres), for 151 apartments and ancillary uses.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 17th November, 2020**

The Members were advised of the key issues which were considered in the assessment of the proposal, including the principle of the proposal at this location, layout, scale, form, massing, height and design, the impact on amenity, flooding and drainage impact.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the site was within the City Centre boundary in the BUAP and both versions of BMAP, where residential development was acceptable in principle. The site comprised a car park area associated with an adjacent office building and included a hard-surfaced area underneath an existing elevated railway line, and lay adjacent to the junction with the M3 on-slip.

The Members were advised that the proposal supported the aims of the Belfast Agenda around city centre living and that residential uses were located immediately adjacent to the site.

The Planning officer advised that the site was not located in a Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character (ATC), there were no listed buildings or assets of any historic interest on site, nor was the site in close proximity to any heritage assets.

He advised the Committee that it was considered that the scale, height, massing and materials of the building were, on balance, acceptable and appropriate to the site context and the area. He explained that the massing of the building was broken up by the design and that the layout assisted in addressing the townscape of the M3 on-slip and the distance views from Middlepath Street and Bridge End. The solid to void ratio of the fenestration also assisted in reducing the massing of the building.

The Committee was advised that the proposal would not adversely impact on the amenity of existing properties, and included amenity space for prospective residents.

The Principal Planning officer outlined that all consultees including DFI Roads, the Urban Design Officer, DEARA, HED, SES, NI Water, HED, Environmental Health, BCC Landscape Section and Belfast City Airport had no objections to the proposal.

One objection, which related to the height of the proposed building, and one letter of support had been received in relation to the application.

A Member queried how accessible the Rotterdam Street play area would be to the prospective residents, given the busy roads surrounding the site. In response, the Planning officer explained that while there were busy roads, Rotterdam Street could be reached by pelican crossings and that it was within a short walking distance of the site.

A further Member raised concerns regarding the outlook for residents. In response the Principal Planning officer explained that, three apartments on each floor would have an outlook to the carpark and the office building, with the others looking towards the direction of the M3 or to the front.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 17th November, 2020**

In response to a Member's question regarding the usability of the ground floor amenity space which was adjacent to the M3, the Planning officer explained that it was considered acceptable and was enhanced by virtue of the change in level between the amenity space and the slip road, and the existing landscape buffer. He advised that officers felt that the public realm improvements which were proposed as part of the scheme and the size of the residential accommodation were, on balance, acceptable.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Gordon, Turley, to the meeting. He explained that the ground floor would contain non-residential elements, such as plant and the gym, as it was not considered conducive to a quality residential environment. He advised the Committee that drone photographs had been taken on site to consider the views from the upper floor apartments. He added that considerable thought had gone into the residential amenity and that vertical louvres had been added to the external façade in order to allow light in and to reduce the invisibility between the office building and the residential scheme. He added that each apartment had a private external, recessed balcony.

In relation to the play space, he acknowledged that the environment was hard and that it was a difficult network to negotiate and that it would be a judgement for parents to make in terms of how children accessed the park. He explained, however, that the proposal demonstrated a good use of the developers' contributions framework in action, in that it provided approximately an acre of high quality external public realm improvements.

With regards to the height of the building, he explained to the Committee that the site had the capacity to accommodate a tall building insofar as it was not within a Conservation Area or an ATC, and that the Historic Environment Division (HED) had advised that there would be no significant harm to any nearby heritage assets. He highlighted the general poor quality condition of the sites within the east bank shatterzone and that increased use and height was required.

Moved by Councillor Garrett  
Seconded by Councillor Carson,

That the Committee grants approval to the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions set out within the case officer's report and to no new substantive planning issues being raised by third parties, and delegates power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the conditions.

On a vote, eleven members voted for the proposal, two against and one no vote and it was declared carried.

**LA04/2020/0804/F - Mixed use development comprising 653 residential dwellings (549 social housing units and 104 affordable housing units); 2 replacement residential care homes; mixed use area including local neighbourhood retail centre (1 convenience retail anchor unit and 3 retail/hot food/coffee shop units and hotel; Class B business uses within employment zone comprising a mix**

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**of 6 Class B1a offices; 1 Class B1b/B1c call centre and R&D office; and 11 Class B1b/B1c/B2 call centre and R&D offices/light industrial units.; community facilities including community building; MUGA pitch and play area including 2 vehicular site access points from Monagh By-Pass (1 signalised), associated internal road network, pedestrian and cycle ways, public open space, children's play area(s), landscaping, 2 no. waste water treatment works, and all other site and access works on lands West of Monagh By-Pass, South of Upper Springfield Road & 30-34 Upper Springfield Road & West of Altnamona Crescent**

The Senior Planning officer provided the Committee with the details of the substantive scheme in the north west of the City.

He outlined the key issues which were considered during the assessment of the proposed development, including:

- Development Plan considerations
- Principle of Proposed Uses
- Open Space Provision
- Landscaping
- Layout, Massing, Design and Visual Impact
- Traffic, Movement and Parking
- Impact on the Environment and Amenity
- Other Environmental Matters
- Drainage and Flooding
- Natural Heritage including potential impact on Protected Sites, Protected Priority Species and Habitats
- Built heritage / archaeology
- Developer Contributions/ Section 76 Agreement
- Pre-application Community Consultation

He advised the Committee that the principle of the proposed uses and general layout and location of the uses had been established through outline planning permission (Z/2010/1284/O) which was extant. The Members were advised that the uses also sat comfortably with the proposed mixed use zoning in Draft BMAP 2015.

The Committee was advised that the development was proposed on an expansive sloping site just within the settlement limits. The Senior Planning officer outlined that the site was zoned for Employment/Industry (Zoning BT007) in Draft BMAP 2015 (published November 2004) and zoned as a Mixed Use site (Zoning BT002) in BMAP 2015 (published September 2014). He explained that there was also an extant outline planning approval on the site for a mixed use development and that the presumption was therefore in favour of development.

He advised the Committee that, although a large number of trees must be removed to facilitate the development, many protected trees would be retained and that a comprehensive replanting scheme was included, with existing trees integrated within open spaces throughout the development. He added that the scheme respected the site's

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edge of settlement location with a south-north landscape spine as a key design concept, providing a visual bridge between the urban character of the Glen Road to the rural character of the Belfast Hills to the north of the site.

He pointed out that the design and layout responded to the topography of the site in such a way as to minimise the visual impact.

The Committee was advised that the quantum of social and affordable housing would not only contribute towards one of the main aims of the Belfast Agenda but would also provide much needed housing in an area of identified housing stress. He explained that the introduction of retail, office and industrial units, as well as hotel and care homes, would provide jobs for people in the locality and beyond.

The Senior Planning officer advised that the design and access statement outlined that the proposal represented an investment of around £95million from the private sector and during the construction phase would create about 400 construction jobs. Once operational, the proposal would generate approximately 370 local jobs in a range of sectors within the employment, retail, community and trust home uses.

He reported that an Environmental Statement had been submitted with the application and had been considered in the assessment of the application. He explained that after scrutiny from expert consultees it was concluded that the proposal would not have any significant impacts on the environment.

The Committee was advised that, of the statutory consultees, NI Water, DfI Roads, Historic Environment Division (HED) and Tourism NI had no objections subject to conditions.

The Members' attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, whereby a second response had been received from the Belfast Hills Partnership, reiterating that they had no objections but that they had some concerns as detailed within the case officer's report. The response from DfI Rivers had also been received and the Senior Planning officer explained that the relevant conditions had already been included within the Case officer's report.

He explained that NIEA had been re-consulted with additional information and that they had responded with a number of recommended conditions. Shared Environmental Services and the BCC Trees and Landscape Team had also responded with a number of recommended conditions and, if granted, delegated authority was sought to attach the conditions and to finalise wording if necessary.

The Senior Planning officer outlined that two objections had been received, the details of which were outlined within the Case Officer's report. He explained that concerns had been raised regarding the ability of the existing roads infrastructure to cope with an increase in traffic. He explained that DfI Roads had confirmed it was satisfied with the proposal and was content that there would be no unacceptable impact on the existing road network. He added that the mitigation offered by a robust Travel Plan and a 5 year contribution towards a bus route which would run through the site was considered to outweigh any requirement to improve the existing infrastructure serving the site and in the

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surrounding area. He added that DfI Roads was satisfied with the level of parking proposed for the development, where most dwellings were served by two in-curtilage parking spaces.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. T Stokes, TSA Planning, to the meeting. He advised the Committee that the proposal was not just another large housing development and that the applicant wanted to create a new, sustainable community in west Belfast, putting the core principles of society, the environment and the economy at its centre. He further outlined that:

- the residential areas were split into 8 individual character areas, each with their own identity;
- three large areas of public open space were included throughout the development in addition to smaller spaces, well above the minimum guidance, and all were connected via cycle and pedestrian footways;
- it would promote economic development and local employment opportunities within the retail hub, office and light industrial units, hotel and care homes;
- a green boulevard would run through the centre of the site and the layout allowed for many existing trees on the site to be retained, with 1,100 new street trees proposed, along with over 8,000 new native woodland trees and over 60,000 shrubs and new hedging. Existing grasslands would be enhanced and extended, and 25 bat boxes would be added to support the ecology;
- the application had been subject to extensive Pre-Application Discussions prior to submission and, throughout the 10 month process, a number of meetings and workshops were held between the Council and the design team. The discussions had continued when the application had been lodged;
- the fact there had only been two representations objecting to the development was testament to the applicant's successful engagement with the local community;
- there were two new accesses onto the Monagh By Pass, with the main entrance into the site being a new signalised junction, and the proposal included measures to support a new bus service to the site;
- noted the comments from the Council's Local Development Plan Team, suggesting that the density of the site should be around 1,100 dwellings, and it was not often that a developer would turn down the opportunity to almost double the residential density of a site, however, they believed the proposal provided the most sustainable plan for the site; and
- the application had the full support of the NI Housing Executive.

In response to a Member's questions, Mr. T. Stokes confirmed that the wastewater treatment works would be adopted by NI Water and that the applicant had a bond with DfI Roads to adopt the street lights within the development.

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A Member commented that, where possible, they would like to see cycle lanes segregated from pavements and walkways as it was generally acknowledged that this was safer, particularly for those with visual impairment.

A further Member stated that he welcomed the inclusion of the significant number of social housing units within the scheme. He sought clarification on the Local Development Plan Team's objection. In response, the Director of Planning and Building Control advised that the LDP Team's analysis of the application had been somewhat crude in terms of comparing it with the density of the surrounding area. He outlined that the topography of the site had to be considered, particularly in terms of the sites constraints. He added that the proposal would create a site where people would live, work and play.

In response to a Member's question regarding the transport infrastructure to the site, Mr. C. Dickinson, DfI Roads, confirmed that there was an agreement between the applicant and Translink to fund a bus service to the site for the first five years, from day one. He explained that Translink would continue to operate the bus route after that time as it would with any other route.

A further number of Members welcomed the application.

The Committee approved the application subject to conditions and a Section 76 Planning Agreement to secure the implementation of detailed Travel Plans, Employability and Skills Plan, financial contributions to help establish a bus route to serve the site, provision of social housing and the management and maintenance of public open space within the development. The Committee delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, the Section 76 Agreement and to resolve any issues arising from any outstanding consultation responses.

(The Committee adjourned for a five minute recess at this point in proceedings)

**LA04/2020/0067/F - Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 270 apartment building comprising 8, 5 and 3 storey elements, provision of hard and soft landscaping including communal courtyard gardens, public realm, provision of 40 car parking spaces, cycle parking, substation and associated works at Havelock House, Ormeau Road**

The Principal Planning officer provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the proposal to demolish Havelock House and the construction of a build to rent apartment block. He explained that the height of the proposed building varied with a maximum height of 8 storeys located in a central location along the Ormeau Road, with the height stepping down to 7, 6, 5 and 3 storeys to the rear.

He outlined the main issues which had been considered in the consideration of the application, including:

- the principle of demolition;
- the principle of residential development at that location;
- acceptability of height, scale, layout and design;



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- impact on the character of the area including built heritage;
- impact on adjoining amenity;
- access, Car Parking and Sustainable Transport Measures;
- environmental considerations e.g. Air Quality, Noise, Dust, Contamination, Lighting; and
- drainage and flood risk.

The Members were advised that, in the BUAP the site was located within the city centre and was not zoned for any use. They were advised that, in draft BMAP 2004 and 2015 the site was located within the city centre and within the Shaftsbury Square Character Area and was not zoned for any specific use.

The Principal Planning officer advised that 73 representations had been received and he advised that the issues had been addressed within the report. The concerns related to:

- the historical significance and heritage value of Havelock House, which should be listed;
- concern regarding Department for Communities listing evaluation;
- the Heritage Statement was inadequate;
- that it would damage the setting of 5 listed buildings;
- that an Environmental Impact Assessment was required to address the cumulative loss of heritage assets;
- insufficient unallocated parking;
- the scale of the development would be detrimental to the neighbouring properties;
- the potential to destabilise interface associated with the site;
- Disruption associated with noise, dust, site traffic; and
- the level of engagement between the Council and local community in relation to the application, particularly with the challenges of COVID-19.

He advised the Members that the maximum height of the proposed building was comparable to that of the adjoining 8 storey apartment block at Portland 88. He illustrated that the proposed development stepped down from 8 storeys fronting the Ormeau Road to 7, 6, 5 and 3 storeys towards the rear of the site and the adjoining existing established residential area off Donegall Pass. The Committee was advised that the separation distances were considered acceptable. The Principal planning officer reported that the orientation of the building and the path of the sun would ensure that there would be no adverse overshadowing from the proposed development.

The Principal Planning officer explained that HED objected to the proposed development and considered that it would have an adverse impact on the setting of listed buildings, in particular those in the Gasworks due to the height of the proposed development and advised that the proposed development was contrary to Policy BH 11 of PPS 6 and paragraph 6.12 of the SPPS.

He explained that, if the Planning Committee was minded to approve the application, the Council would be required to notify the Department for Infrastructure (DfI)

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given the significant objection from HED in accordance with Section 89 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

He outlined that DFI Roads had no objections to the proposed development, which proposed 40 on site car parking spaces, including 4 spaces for use by a car club and 4 disabled spaces. The applicant had also proposed the following green travel measures to support the development, which would be secured through a Section 76 Agreement:

- submission and implementation of a Residential Travel Plan;
- Travel Cards for each residential unit for 3 years;
- provision of 4 permanent car club spaces; and
- provision of discounted membership of a car club (50%) for a period of 3 years

He drew the Committee's attention to the Late Items Pack. He advised the Members that the Council's Good Relations Unit had been consulted on the objections from Save Havelock House and Donegall Pass Community Forum, which raised specific concerns with regard to the impact of the development on the existing interface at Vernon Street. He outlined that their response had not changed from what was in the Case officer's report, in that they had no objection to the development, explaining that, while the Council had a commitment to promote shared space but, as it did not own or maintain any structures referred to in the planning application, it had no influence in the development of the built environment in that area.

He added that the Council's City Regeneration and Development Team had also been consulted in respect of the concerns regarding the interface at Vernon Street. He explained that they were in support of the development as it met core policies of the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (CCRIS) 2015.

He outlined the details of a number of other objections which had been received since the publication of the case officer's report from Ms. Clare Bailey MLA, Ms. Paula Bradshaw MLA, Dr. Ken Griffin, Dr. Agustina Martire, Friends of the Earth, Save Havelock House, Donegall Pass Community Forum, Markets Development Association and a petition of objection.

The Committee noted that a request had been received from "Save Havelock House" to be permitted five minutes to address historical and technical issues in relation to the application, which they advised were different to the perspective from local residents. The Committee agreed that Dr K. Griffin, Save Havelock House, would be granted five minutes to address the Committee, in addition to the group of objecting residents, who would be represented by Ms. S. Green, Donegall Pass Community Forum. It was therefore agreed that the applicant/agent would be given ten minutes to address the Committee.

Councillor Groogan advised the Committee that she objected to the application for the following reasons:

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- it was contrary to BH11 of PPS6;
- the height would have a significant adverse impact on the listed buildings in the vicinity and that Portland 88 should not be used as justification to continue to pass applications which continued to breach planning policy and which ignored the cumulative impact on the setting of those buildings;
- it represented an increase in height from the Portland 88 building;
- the height was incompatible with Shaftesbury Square Character Area under both version of BMAP, where it should be between 2 and 3 storeys, and that developments should be fine-grained in nature;
- also contrary to BUAP Tall Buildings policy CC12;
- it did not represent sustainable and quality residential development in line with PPS7;
- limited residential amenity space would be provided and it sought to rely on publicly funded open and play space within the area which was not in line with OS2 of PPS8 and did not meet the exception test;
- it failed to comply with LC1 of Addendum to PPS7 due to significant detrimental impact on the environmental quality of residential amenity in the local area;
- it would create increased air pollution, due to increased cars from the development;
- issues with noise, overshadowing and lack of privacy; and
- that she had issues with NI Water's response, given the well-documented waste water capacity issues in the City.

(Councillor Groogan left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Chairperson then welcomed Councillor T. Kelly to the meeting. She advised that she objected to the proposal for the following reasons:

- that residents of Donegall Pass had first-hand knowledge of living beside a construction site while the nearby Portland 88 building was being constructed, and that it had significantly impacted upon their mental health and some had indicated that they may move house if the proposal was approved;
- that, as with any other inner city area, there was already a significant problem with commuter parking and the proposal could mean adding another 230 cars into the area;
- those cars would again reduce the air quality of the area for residents;
- that bin collections and deliveries were already regularly unable to be made as a result of mass commuter parking;
- an eight storey building beside two storey houses was inappropriate and would cause significant overlooking, overshadowing and loss of privacy for existing residents;

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- the tall Portland 88 building should not be used as a precedent for approving the proposed development, given its impact on the Donegall Pass community.

The Chairperson then welcomed Councillor McDonough-Brown to the meeting. He explained that he objected to the application, as:

- the size of the building was disproportionate for its context;
- HED had reservations about the scheme;
- with only 40 parking spaces provided as part of the scheme, for 270 units, there would be a significant insufficient supply which would undoubtedly add to the existing demand in the area;
- that the residents of Donegall Pass and the Markets were at risk of being squeezed out of their areas, due to the significant amount of development around them, and that this should be given significant consideration; and
- that the Committee should consider the listing of the building which was the only television studio on the island which had survived from that period.

The Chairperson then welcomed Ms. S. Green, Donegall Pass Community Forum, to the meeting. She explained that she represented residents who objected to the application for the following reasons:

- Donegall Pass had a significant older community and had some of the highest rates of long-term ill health in the region;
- a high number of elderly residents and both adults and children with long-term mental or physical health conditions were housebound and required high levels of care;
- that residents were so concerned at the proposed development that they had called for an impact assessment to be carried out to evidence their concerns;
- that participation from Section 75 groups, as determined under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, was never easy;
- the pandemic and the restrictions made it even more difficult, if not impossible, for carers to attend information sessions or consultation events as day centres and schools were closed;
- due to the ongoing restrictions, access to the Council's Community Centre hall, the only place large and safe enough for residents to view and consult on the plans, was denied as residents were told it was not allowed to hold one-off meetings;
- residents had limited capacity and access to IT facilities and therefore hard copy of the plans were requested from and supplied on 29th September;
- a site visit to Havelock House was requested by residents but it was denied with no reason given;
- on 5th October residents had met with planners and had brought up issues regarding consultation on interface issues and

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subsequently submitted them, in writing, to the Planning service on 9th November;

- on 10th November they had received a response stating that Planners had been liaising with the Good Relations Unit and the City Regeneration and Development Unit, which had not been mentioned at the meeting on 5th October;
- on 13th November, three documents had been uploaded onto the Planning Portal, one of which was a consultation from the City Regeneration and Development Unit, dated April 2020, which seemed a disingenuous manoeuvre;
- no further opportunity to engage with residents had been given and a complaint and a request to delay the application was submitted to Planning; and
- the current plans reinforced the segregation of, and hemming in of, the Donegall Pass Community.

The Chairperson then welcomed Dr. K. Griffin, representing Save Havelock House, to the meeting. He advised the Committee that he urged the Committee to reject the application for a number of reasons, namely, that:

- Save Havelock House was concerned about the Planning Service's handling of the application and had requested the Council's records of the Pre-Application Discussion;
- it had taken two months to be sent the information, and it had arrived too late for their written submission and that some records were missing;
- they had found records which raised concerns regarding the possibility that the recommendation for approval of the application may have been pre-determined;
- they had received material which showed that planners had prioritised the applicant's wishes over good planning choices;
- the applicant had originally been told by planners that Portland 88 was not an appropriate baseline for development and that cues for height and massing should be taken from the surrounding context of mainly 2 storey development, yet, after engagement with the applicant, Portland 88 had become the Planning Department's baseline;
- issues relating to the interface – whereby the planners report had cast doubt on its existence, yet there was evidence which suggested that the applicant had been asked to make provision for its future reopening, and that the Good Relations Unit had only been contacted regarding the issue ten days ago;
- issues regarding too few parking spaces at the proposed development;
- the building itself had regional cultural significance and national historic importance, and it was the last early regional television station with a large portion of the original fabric intact;

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- the planners' recommendation relied on HED's Listing Assessment, which he felt was a flawed document produced by authors unfamiliar with the architecture involved;
- the impact statement for Havelock House was not included in the applicants heritage report and which would show that the development would have a major impact on built heritage;
- the demolition of Havelock House would likely have a significant impact on cultural heritage, which should have triggered an environmental impact assessment.

The Committee was advised that Mr. B. McKerverey, Historic Environment Division (HED) was in attendance. He advised that HED's objection focussed on the fact that the development was within the setting of a number of listed buildings, including the Rose Cottage, the former Presbyterian Church in Donegall Pass, the Meter House, the Klondyke Building and the Gas Office, and that the proposed development was very tall and heavily massed in comparison. He suggested that HED felt that a smaller, less dominant development which was more subservient to those buildings would be suitable.

In response to a question from a Member regarding the provision of only 40 parking spaces within the development, Mr. C. Dickinson, DfI Roads, advised the Committee that, given its inner city location, the Department considered it a very sustainable solution, as most journeys to and from the site would be on foot, by bus or bicycle.

Mr. Dickinson explained that the evidence held by DfI Roads showed that there would be low car ownership for the apartments in that location. He added that each car in a car club was shown to meet the needs of 40 drivers. He stated that DfI Roads did not feel that overspill parking would be an issue.

A number of Members raised concerns regarding the low number of car parking spaces which were provided. A number of Members also raised issues with the proposed car club spaces and stated that the proposed Travel Plan was idealistic rather than realistic. Members raised the issue of commuter parking and the impact that this had on the wider Donegall Pass community, the lack of progress which had been made in relation to residents' parking schemes across the City, as well as issues with the existing public transport infrastructure.

The Members were advised that Ms. S. McCreesh, Environmental Health officer, was in attendance to answer questions. In response to a Member's query regarding the Air Quality Impact Assessment, she advised the Committee that the inclusion of 40 car parking spaces within an air quality management area was considered acceptable and that they had no concerns regarding the concentration levels of Nitrogen Dioxide or Particulate Matter as a result of the proposals. She did advise, however, that a condition was recommended regarding the installation of centralised heating/hot water system to ensure that there was no adverse impact on air quality as a result of such facilities. A further condition was also recommended seeking the submission of a Dust Management Plan prior to construction.

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A Member queried why the Portland 88 building had been used as a benchmark in terms of scale and massing for the proposal, when it was in fact an outlier, given that the vast majority of the surrounding buildings were two and three storeys. In response, the Principal Planning officer explained that the scale and massing were considered acceptable and an appropriate response to its context. He explained that Portland 88 was one material consideration, as part of the site's context on the arterial route, and that the shoulder height had been reduced through the PAD process to align better with the Klondyke building opposite. He added that the building deliberately stepped down towards the rear in order to integrate with the surrounding residential streets.

A further Member queried the statement made by Dr. Griffin, whereby correspondence showed that the developers had liaised with the Planning Department prior to the application having been submitted. In response, the Planning Manager explained that there was a significant misunderstanding of Pre-Application Discussions (PADs) and that applicants and developers were, in fact, encouraged to discuss their plans with the Planning Department as soon as possible, prior to submission of an application, in order that schemes could be shaped or improved and that the required level of information was submitted with an application to ensure that it was dealt with in the most efficient way. He explained that, specifically in relation to that application, a significantly taller building was initially proposed for the south side and that planners had asked the applicant to lower it. He refuted the allegation that there was any pre-determination of the application.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr P. Stinson, Turley, to the meeting and advised him that he had ten minutes to address the Committee. He advised the Committee that:

- the addition of 270 apartments in a city centre location would make a significant contribution towards one of the aims of the Belfast Agenda;
- it constituted a £28million investment and, over the construction timeline, it would support 88 fulltime jobs as well as apprenticeships as part of the Section 76 Planning Agreement;
- a detailed Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) had taken place with planning officials and statutory consultees over 14 months, resulting in the fundamental parameters for the scale, height, massing and design of the building, having taken account of its relationships with the Ormeau Road, the city centre context and the surrounding residential properties, and that significant changes had been made as a result of that process;
- a pre-application community consultation had been carried out with a public event in September 2018 and that they had engaged with residents and the Donegall Pass Community group, having attended a site visit to their homes in August;
- Havelock House was not a listed building, nor was it within a Conservation Area or an Area of Townscape Character, and the principle of demolition was therefore acceptable;
- the area around the site was characterised by a mix of uses and buildings of varying height and form;

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- HED, the statutory authority responsible for considering the merits of listing buildings, had confirmed that there was insufficient potential for listing Havelock House;
- the design had been informed by the surrounding context, in particular the red brick listed buildings opposite the site;
- the height of the proposed building had taken account of its immediate context, where the top floor occupied a small part of the overall footprint, where it recessed on the main Ormeau Road elevation;
- the design stepped down in height to 3 storeys at its western boundary, and the separation distances met the requirements as detailed within Creating Places;
- the design ensured that any potential overlooking and overshadowing was very limited;
- the proposed conditions, such as the dust management measures during construction, would minimise disruption and protect the amenity of local residents;
- in terms of amenity space, there would be communal space at ground and upper floor levels, a gym was included for residents of the building and the site was also within walking distance of two equipped playparks. Policy OS2 of PPS8 permitted allowances for such provision to be made off site in that manner;
- the Travel Plan included a number of green measures, including travel cards and discounted access to a car club, in addition to 40 on site parking spaces. It was proposed that those measures would be secured through a Section 76 Planning Agreement and that DfI had no objection; and
- NIHE had confirmed that there was no need to recommend further social provision in the area that could not be met on available sites in Donegall Pass.

In response to a query from a Member, Mr. Stinson confirmed that they had met with a number of residents who lived to the rear of the site, at their properties, in August. They had provided plans to the residents to help them understand the proposals.

In response to the transport issues raised by Members, the Director of Planning and Building Control explained that as there was no objection from DfI Roads, as the statutory consultee on highways issues, that it would be difficult to refuse the application on grounds relating to those issues.

He provided the Committee with information in respect of the Council's aims in securing a variety of sustainable transport measures, not just car clubs, and that officers were working alongside the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in relation to their Transport Plan at a City level. He emphasised that a modal shift in attitude was required in respect of sustainable transport. He advised the Committee that its training schedule for 2021 was being finalised and that it included a session with the DfI, including information relating to car clubs. He added that they wanted to expedite residents' parking schemes.



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A Member stated that they remained unconvinced with the evidence that DfI Roads relied upon, using cities in England or Scotland as examples, and that it did not reflect the culture in Northern Ireland.

The Divisional Solicitor advised the Committee that, to refuse an application on the basis of issues around parking, when DfI Roads had confirmed that the proposal was acceptable, it would be difficult to defend, and that the Council would need technical evidence of its own if the refusal was appealed by the applicant. She explained that it would therefore be unlikely to be upheld by the Planning Appeals Commission.

Upon hearing suggested refusal reasons from Members, the officers conferred to encapsulate the wording.

Moved by Councillor Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor O'Hara,

That the Committee agrees to refuse the application for the following reasons:

1. the proposed development, by reason of height, scale, massing and design would have an over-dominant impact on the surrounding listed buildings and therefore failed to meet SPPS Policy BH11 of PPS6;
2. the proposed development, by reason of height, scale, massing and design would have an over-dominant impact when viewed from Ormeau Avenue and the residential streets to the west and north-west, causing harm to the character and appearance of the area, and therefore failed to meet SPPS policy QD1 of PPS7; and
3. the proposed development, by reason of height, scale, massing and design would have an over-dominant impact on the residential properties on Walnut Street, Walnut Court and could result in a loss of outlook and amenity to those occupiers, contrary to policy SPPS QD1 of PPS7.

The Committee delegates power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the refusal reasons.

On a vote, thirteen members voted for the proposal and none against and it was declared carried.

(Councillor Groogan returned to the meeting at this point)

(Councillors McKeown and Nicholl left the meeting at this point)

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**LA04/2020/1873/F - Community space and extension to the children's play area previously consented under planning application ref LA04/2018/0323/F, with 3.6m perimeter fence on lands at Frank Gillen Centre (1A Cullingtree Rd)**

The Principal Planning officer outlined the details of the application which sought permission to extend a previously approved playground and the addition of a community space. She explained that the proposal was to be incorporated into a wider community and recreation scheme at the Frank Gillen Centre, as approved by Committee in October 2018.

She provided the main issues which had been considered in the assessment of the application, including the effect on the character and appearance of the area, and the impact on the living conditions of neighbouring properties and access.

The Committee was advised that officers felt that the extension of the park would improve the local environmental quality and would not result in unacceptable noise or nuisance impacts. The Principal Planning officer added that the proposed security fencing was relatively light weight and was adequately separated from nearby dwellings and that it would not result in any significant impact to residents, in terms of dominance, shadow or outlook.

She explained that Environmental Health and DfI Roads had offered no objections to the proposal and that no third party representations were received.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions set out within the case officer's report.

**LA04/2020/1478/F - Variation of Conditions 4 and 5 of Z/2014/1373/F -relating to proposed gas protection measures, design and verification. At Blackstaff Way, Kennedy Way Industrial Estate**

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that the application sought to vary conditions 4 and 5 of planning permission Z/2014/1373/F. He explained that the original application had granted permission for the erection of a warehouse/office building in 2015. He explained that, given the length of time which had passed since its approval, officers had sought confirmation that the development had commenced. The Members were advised that, on the basis of evidence submitted by the applicant, it appeared that development had commenced within the time limits and that the variation of the conditions could be assessed under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

He advised the Committee that the site was located within the development limits of Belfast within both the Belfast Urban Area Plan and the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (2015) and that it was within a zoned area of existing employment/industry (BT011/30).

The Planning Manager outlined that the variation of conditions 4 and 5 proposed to update the proposed gas remediation protection measures, design and verification.

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He highlighted that approval Z/2014/1373/F included a Contamination Assessment Report and, since it had been produced, BS8485 had been updated in 2015 and again in 2019.

He explained that DAERA Land and Groundwater Team and Environmental Health had been consulted in relation to the amended wording of the conditions and both had responded with no objections to the proposed variations.

The Members' attention was drawn to the Late Items pack where it was noted that Condition 1 was included in error and, if granted, would not be included within the Decision Notice.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions set out within the case officer's report and delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final wording of the conditions.

**LA04/2020/0163/F - 27 apartments within 2 x 3 storey buildings including access, car parking, cycle bays, open space, landscaping and all associated site works on lands adjacent and to south of nos 1-13 (odds) Lewis Park and nos 2-20 Lewis Mews**

The Principal Planning officer provided the Committee with the details of the application. She advised that the site was unzoned whiteland in the BUAP and dBMAP 2004, and that the majority of the site was zoned for housing in draft BMAP 2014. The remaining part located to the south was unzoned whiteland within draft BMAP 2014.

She provided the main issues which had been considered in the assessment of the case, including:

- the principle of the proposal at this location;
- design, layout and impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- impact on residential amenity;
- impact on traffic and parking;
- impact on Historic Monuments;
- flooding and infrastructure capacity; and
- environmental matters

She advised the Committee that the proposals followed the general pattern of previously approved apartments along the river and that the design and layout would not create conflict, was in keeping with the local character, and would not impact on environmental quality or residential amenity in accordance with PPS 7.

The Members were advised that each unit had an adequate outlook and that dwelling units were proposed to be built to a size not less than those set out Policy LC1, providing adequate living accommodation.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,  
Tuesday, 17th November, 2020**

The Principal Planning officer advised that it was considered that the design, layout and separation distances proposed were acceptable and would not significantly impact on existing residential amenity by way of overlooking, dominance or overshadowing.

She outlined that 7 objections, from 3 local residents, had been received and raised issues including noise, dust and disruption during the construction phases, boundary maintenance concerns regarding ground conditions on a neighbouring development, inaccuracies with submitted maps, impact on residential amenity and health and safety concerns. The issues had been dealt with in the Case officer's report.

The Committee was advised that DfI Roads was content with the parking spaces and access provided and that HED (Historic Monuments), Rivers Agency, NI Water and Environmental Health had all considered the proposal and had offered no objections.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to the imposing of the conditions set out within the case officer's report and delegated power to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions subject to no new substantive planning issues being raised by third parties.

Chairperson

## Brexit Committee

Thursday, 11th November, 2020

### MEETING OF BREXIT COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and Aldermen Haire, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Baker, Brooks, Canavan, de Faoite, Ferguson, Gormley, Hanvey, Kyle, Long, Magennis, McLaughlin, McMullan, Spratt, Whyte and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;  
Mrs. C. Sheridan, Head of HR;  
Ms. K. Walsh, Business Research and Development Manager;  
Mrs. C. Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer;  
Mr. D. Connolly, City Protection Manager;  
Mr. J. McConnell, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet)  
Mr. R. Connelly, Policy, Research and Compliance Officer;  
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was received from Councillor Newton.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### Schedule of Meetings for 2021

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings for the Brexit Committee as outlined below and agreed that all meetings would commence at 5.15 pm:

- Thursday, 14th January;
- Thursday, 11th February;
- Thursday, 11th March;
- Thursday, 15th April;

**Brexit Committee,  
Thursday, 11th November, 2020**

- Thursday, 13th May;
- Thursday, 10th June;
- Thursday, 12th August;
- Thursday, 9th September;
- Thursday, 14th October;
- Thursday, 11th November;
- Thursday, 9th December.

**Correspondence - Response from the Minister  
of State for Northern Ireland**

The Committee was informed that correspondence has been received from the Minister of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Robin Walker MP, in response to the Brexit Committee's letter in relation to the UK Government's commitment to the NI Protocol.

The Committee noted the response received from the Cabinet Office

**Presentations**

**Presentation from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions –  
Kevin Doherty (Union Services Officer NI)**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. K. Doherty from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) to the meeting.

Mr. K. Doherty thanked the Committee for inviting representation from ICTU to discuss the impact of the Immigration and Social Security Act 2020, which sought to end the right of free movement and removed the rights of EU citizens to live and work in the UK, and have protection at work and equal treatment.

He reported that the UK government plans for immigration post-Brexit, would introduce a new form of exploitation and encourage undercutting by removing EU citizens right to work and live in the UK without the requirement of a visa and that its proposals would also increase discrimination, lead to further strains on public services and increase shortages in vital jobs.

He highlighted that the immigration act did not set out what the future UK system would look like, and instead, the act gave Ministers the powers to modify primary or secondary legislation through delegated legislation.

He pointed out to Members that in the midst of the Covid19 pandemic it had never been clearer the vital role that migrant workers played as healthcare workers, carers, food producers, transport workers and other frontline workers and that EU nationals in Northern Ireland were mostly employed in lower paid, lower skilled occupations and that nine percent of healthcare workers in Northern Ireland were from outside the UK.

**Brexit Committee,  
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He referred to the EU Settlement Scheme and how an EU citizen who wished to remain the UK beyond 31st December, 2020, and their family members, would have to apply for either settled status or pre-settled status, and those who had not applied within the limited timeframe would be considered undocumented and subject to the hostile environment experienced by non-EU nationals. He added that these undocumented individuals would be vulnerable to criminalisation, removal and deportation.

He further added that ICTU had concerns that the outsourcing of immigration enforcement to businesses, landlords and its structure targets ethnic minorities and those who look or sound foreign and that those without documentation would be denied access to healthcare, housing, employment benefits and bank accounts.

He reported that EU citizens would have to rely on an untested, online database as the only means of evidence of status and rights and that it was unacceptable for the UK government to use EU citizens as an experiment for the digital immigration system and that the introduction of a permit system for EU workers would not be open to lower skilled paid jobs, the types of jobs that migrant workers in Northern Ireland currently occupied.

He stated that ICTU had concerns over the introduction of low skilled job visas for the agricultural sector and youth mobility visas which would be short term and make it easier for employers to use migrant workers to undercut other workers terms and conditions and encourage exploitation.

In response to a question from a Member regarding a conservative government and workers' rights post-Brexit, Mr. K. Doherty stated that, as employment rights were a devolved matter, ICTU would be calling for the Northern Ireland Executive to commit to retaining the existing employment rights in Northern Ireland and that any new workers' rights introduced in EU countries, would also be adopted in Northern Ireland.

Following further discussion, the Committee thanked Mr. K. Doherty for his presentation and he retired from the meeting.

**Update from Attendance at Committee of the Executive –  
Brexit Stakeholder Event**

The Members were reminded that, at its October meeting, they agreed that the Council accept the invitation from the Committee for the Executive Office, to attend its Brexit stakeholder event which was held on the 4th November. The purpose of the event was to provide local councils with an opportunity to brief Committee Members on any issues and concerns they might have as a result of the UK's exit from the European Union. The Chairperson and the City Solicitor had attended the event.

The City Solicitor outlined the key issues that he and the Chairperson had raised in their presentation to the Committee for the Executive Office, which included:

- That key council services had recently undertook a review of preparedness and potential issues had been identified around impact on supply chains and higher costs;

**Brexit Committee,  
Thursday, 11th November, 2020**

- The potential issues at Belfast Port and uncertainty around what new checks will be required; the need to ensure sufficient funding to cover any additional staffing costs, and greater clarity is required on contingency arrangements to ensure trade is not adversely impacted and to avoid delays at the ports of entry;
- That Councils should have a role and work in partnership in co-designing the way in which Shared Prosperity Fund is allocated and managed and that there was a need to ensure monies align with regional priorities such as employment opportunities, economy and tourism;
- The potential for higher living costs for residents and the impact on vulnerable people – the need to build on the partnership work that was developed with DfC and the community sector as a response to Covid to ensure that any support required as a result of the end of the transition period is delivered;
- The potential impacts on the city's economy in particular on key sectors including services, finance and the fact that Belfast is predominantly a micro business economy ;
- That Belfast is significantly reliant on the visitor economy and one key sub-sector is business tourism - the uncertainty around the future relationship has already had a negative impact on future bookings; and
- The challenges of preparing for Brexit that had been made much more difficult by the current circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

The City Solicitor reported that a key thread running through the presentation was the need for the Executive to clarify future funding arrangements for local government to help them address any impacts arising from the ending of the transition period

The Committee noted the update provided and following discussion, agreed to invite representation from the Department of Finance to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the Shared Prosperity Fund.

**Update on Brexit Preparedness**

**Restricted**

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the Members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion on the following item as, due to its nature, 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.



**Brexit Committee,  
Thursday, 11th November, 2020**

The Policy and Business Development Officer, Head of HR, City Services Manager (Resources and Fleet) and the City Protection Manager presented the Committee with an update in respect of the following report:

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

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the process to review the readiness of the council's critical and other key services for the end of the Brexit transition period on 31st December 2020.

**2.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

**3.0 Main report**

**Key Issues**

Members are reminded that a process to review the readiness of the council's critical and other key services for the end of the Brexit transition period on 31st December 2020 has been ongoing. The aim is to provide assurance to Committee and senior management that the Council's critical services will be ready for the end of the transition period and to identify any further actions that may need to be taken. The services were asked to review and update the readiness templates that they had produced previously (September 19) and an analysis of the returns is currently underway.

Some of the key issues raised include:

- All of our critical services continue to seek assurances that from partners and suppliers that they have suitable contingency plans in place to deal with any negative impacts of Brexit.
- Food Safety, Port Health and Waste & Fleet services remain the key critical services which are likely to experience the greatest impact as a result of a 'no free trade deal' Brexit. There remains uncertainty and lack of clarity around the checks that will be required for the movement of goods from GB to NI and vice versa and the potential costs involved.
- Six of the fifteen critical services noted that there had been no change to their assessments since their last Brexit readiness review in September 2019.

- There may be financial and other impacts upon council services in terms of availability and access to goods and components, supplier backlogs and costs passed on by suppliers to cover increased tariffs and resources required to carry out additional administrative duties.
- It is possible that we could see an increase in lead times and costs of supplies for various services given the increased checks required for goods moving from GB to NI.
- Emergency planning has noted that a no free trade deal Brexit will represent a concurrent emergency in addition to Covid-19 and Autumn / Winter adverse weather pressures. The service has implemented several resilience measures to manage this scenario.
- It is possible that Brexit could affect staffing for EU nationals (particularly for Fleet) and for EU funded posts. Corporate HR has noted that departments are currently collating this information in order to assess any impact.
- In summary, a wide range of worst case risks have been considered by all of the critical services. These ranged from delays in obtaining suppliers, staff not being able to get to work or access IT, and potential civil unrest. While some uncertainty remains, services are actively putting arrangements in place to mitigate or manage the risks identified through this process.

Officers from key services will be present at the Committee meeting to address Member queries.

Officers are currently working with services to identify measures that are in place, or that can be implemented if needed, to support businesses and vulnerable people in the city. This is being undertaken in context of Covid 19 planning and an update will be brought to the December meeting of this Committee on this work.

**Financial & Resource Implications**

**There are no financial or resource implications relating to this report.**

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

**There are no implications relating to this report.**

The Committee noted the report and associated presentation.

Chairperson

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## **Invitation to President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris**

“This Council welcomes the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris as President and Vice President of the USA respectively, both as a signal of hope for that country and a repudiation of hatred and division.

The Council agrees to invite President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris to Belfast at the earliest opportunity when circumstances safely permit it.”

Proposer: Councillor McKeown

Seconder: Councillor de Faoite

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Pay for Student Nurses**

“This Council recognises the efforts of student nurses throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, stepping up to help our NHS cope with the extra pressures put on it by the pandemic and providing invaluable support to qualified nurses in our hospitals.

This Council also notes that student nurses were paid during the first wave of the pandemic, as they should have been, in recognition of their commitment and work caring for people.

This Council believes that student nurses should be paid a fair and proper wage for their work and agrees to write to the Minister of Health stating our support for reinstating the pay to student nurses as a matter of urgency.”

Proposer: Councillor Groogan

Seconder: Councillor O'Hara

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Re-Opening Doctors Surgeries**

“This Council notes that, due to Covid-19, a number of GP surgeries remain closed for face-to-face appointments and providing telephone or online appointments. In some cases, GP practices have closed and are currently operating services through another practice within the medical group.

This Council notes with concern that a number of community GP practices based within community developments remain closed, thus restricting the most vulnerable in our communities from having easy access to their regular medical services. Where treatment is needed, many elderly and vulnerable patients are using public transport to access the alternative surgery.

The Council agrees to write to the Health Minister and request that he urgently reviews the restrictions imposed on GP services, particularly within community settings, and to detail the necessary steps needed for GP surgeries to fully re-open.”

Proposer: Councillor Sarah Bunting

Seconder: Councillor Gareth Spratt

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Zero-Covid Strategy**

"This Council resolves to write to the First and Deputy First Minister urging them to pursue a Zero-Covid Strategy in order to avoid an endless cycle of lockdowns, to protect public health, safeguard jobs, and ensure a fairer economic recovery.

The Executive's indecisiveness and failure to implement such a strategy, when community transmission was almost at zero, was a missed opportunity that prolonged and deepened this crisis.

By contrast, the Zero-Covid Strategy approach to the Covid-19 pandemic as adopted by New Zealand, Vietnam, Taiwan, South Korea, and China has minimised loss of life and livelihoods; with Asia-Pacific economies recovering faster and with lower death rates.

As opposed to the Executive's failed 'Living with Covid' approach, a Zero-Covid Strategy pursues an aggressive suppression of the virus with the goal of achieving zero community transmission – an achievable target for Ireland, an island country.

This necessitates the introduction of a fully funded and publicly owned track, trace and testing system, a significant limit on international travel, and major investment into our public health infrastructure: all of which could be funded through the introduction of a cross-border Zero-Covid Emergency Fund.

In order to avoid an endless cycle of lockdowns, protect public health and safeguard jobs: this Council pledges its support for a Zero-Covid Strategy."

Proposer: Councillor Michael Collins

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Establishment of an External Independent Review of Educational Provision**

“This Council encourages and supports reconciliation in our community; congratulates the Integrated Education Fund and the integrated schools movement on being nominated for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize; will write to the NI Executive to show our support for the very early implementation of the agreement to establish an external, independent review of educational provision and the prospect of moving towards a single education system; and will invite a representative from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education to join the Community Planning Partnership to ensure Belfast is equipped to ensure that education is inclusive for all.”

Proposer: Councillor Peter McReynolds

Seconder: Councillor Nuala McAllister

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Privatisation of or within the Housing Executive**

“This Council recognises the length of housing waiting lists across Belfast, the damaging impact on people and families waiting for a home, and the need for many more public houses to be built to address their need.

“The Council welcomes the launch of NIPSA's '21st Century Housing for NI' report earlier this year; agrees with the call from NIPSA for the Housing Executive to be safeguarded as a 'lynchpin of public housing policy'; and, accordingly, agrees to write to the Minister for Communities to state the Council's opposition to privatisation of or within the Housing Executive.

“Finally, the Council agrees to invite NIPSA representatives involved in producing their report to address the Council on the deleterious impact of privatisation of the Housing Executive, including moves towards a mutual/co-operative model, would have on the production of social housing, tenants' rights, workers' rights, and accountability.”

Proposer: Councillor Fiona Ferguson

Seconder: Councillor Matt Collins

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Funding for Palliative and End-of-Life Care**

“This Council recognises that hospice care is a vitally important part of our care system; considers it necessary that people approaching the end of life, their families and carers get the right care and support where and when they need it; notes that hospice staff deserve recognition for the world-class medical care and emotional support they provide, not just to patients but also to their families; and looks forward to the hospice movement going from strength to strength in years to come.

Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, calling upon him to ensure fair and transparent funding in line with demand, and continued high quality palliative and end-of-life care.”

Proposer: Councillor Carl Whyte

Seconder: Councillor Donal Lyons

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **Motion – Disability Strategy**

“That this Council notes that 25 years ago, on 8th November 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act received Royal Assent; recalls that this landmark piece of legislation was the result of a hard-fought campaign by disabled people, with up to 100,000 disabled activists taking part in direct action, campaigning for equal rights and an end to the kind of societal discrimination that saw wheelchair users regularly banned from bars, cinemas and theatres under the guise of health and safety; records that, under this Act, for the first time, it became unlawful to discriminate against disabled people, as employees, customers and citizens using public transport or getting an education; considers that the Act was an important milestone and a recognition of disability equality and disability rights, but notes that many felt it did not go far enough; recognises that, despite it now being against the law, disabled people are still discriminated against, in work, in public places, for example by assistance dog owners being refused access to restaurants and taxis, and with huge swathes of public transport still inaccessible; and joins disability campaign groups in calling for a fresh look at the future of disability equality and what needs to change in all aspects of society, including what steps are needed to ensure that anti-discrimination laws are backed up by meaningful enforcement.

Accordingly, the Council calls on the Minister for Communities to bring forward the Disability Strategy that will improve enforcement, provide sustainable funding and enable the voices of people with disabilities across NI.”

Proposer: Councillor McMullan

Seconder: Councillor Smyth

(To be debated by the Council)

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## **World Environment Day**

“We commend the progressive steps and actions that this Council, its partners and community have begun to take in challenging the existential threat facing the planet through what we recognise as the climate emergency.

In recognising this crisis, it is our duty as a Council to take proactive steps in educating, supporting and resourcing our communities to do whatever we can to face down the emergency.

The United Nations World Environment day takes place on 5th June 2021, with the theme this year focused on Biodiversity. The UN has also proclaimed 22nd May the International Day for Biological Diversity to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

To support biodiversity and positive actions in tackling the climate emergency, we call on this Council, working with partners to develop a similar initiative that other authorities have successfully developed, to freely distribute wildflower seed packs for city residents, schools and community and voluntary organisations.

In building on this initiative, the Council will also mark World Environment Day on June 5th by illuminating the City Hall green, animating our social media channels with awareness raising content and developing a programme of digital or physical events within health guidance to support our citizens in challenging climate change.”

Proposer: Councillor Garrett

Seconder: Councillor Baker

(To be referred without debate to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee)

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