



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Governance Arrangements for the new Council 2023-27</b>
<b>Date:</b>	21st April, 2023
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Nora Largey, Interim City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To consider the governance arrangements to apply for the new Council term commencing in 2023.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to consider the issues set out in the report and agree the governance arrangements for the new Council term.</p> <p>In particular, Members are asked to agree to continuing with the following arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• operating with a traditional Committee structure;</li><li>• allocation of positions of responsibility using the D'hondt method;</li><li>• Committee places allocated using the quota greatest remainder method;</li><li>• current standing Committees remain the same, save for reviewing the membership numbers of Planning and BUWHL Shareholder Committees;</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 political appointments will be made to the PCSP and DPCSPs using D’hondt method from the bottom up;</li> <li>• agree the arrangements for Working Groups as set out in the report; and</li> <li>• appointment to Outside Bodies using the Sainte Lague method.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Background</u></p> <p>At the meeting of the new Council following the local government elections in May, it will be necessary to agree the new Council’s governance arrangements for the period 2023-27.</p> <p>In order for the proper arrangements to be made, including meetings with the Nominating Officers of the Parties returned after the elections, in advance of the Annual Meeting of the new Council on 5th June, it is now necessary for decisions to be made.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Key issues</u></p> <p><b>1. Council Governance Arrangements</b></p> <p>The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 provides for a number of types of governance arrangements, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional committee arrangements (default position)</li> <li>• Executive model</li> </ul> <p>In 2014 and 2019, the Council adopted a Constitution which, amongst other things, agreed the default governance arrangements prescribed in the 2014 Act namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional Committee system</li> <li>• Positions of responsibility selected using the D’hondt model</li> <li>• Committee places allocated using the quota greatest remainder model</li> </ul> <p>Adoption of an alternative arrangement requires a qualified majority vote (80%).</p>

Looking forward to the new Council term, should the Council agree to continue with the existing arrangements as set out in the Council Constitution, then the decision-making process requires a simple majority vote to do so.

Decision required:

- Do members wish to continue with existing governance arrangements that is, a traditional committee system?

Please note that a mini governance review is underway in relation to the remit of Committees, Standing Orders etc. and a report is likely to be presented to the new Council in September.

3.3

**2. Standing Committees**

The Council currently has established seven Standing Committees which promote cross-departmental and thematic working across the organisation supporting the delivery of the Belfast Agenda and the developing process of Outcomes Based Accountability:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Number of Members</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Strategic Policy and Resources	20	Responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its corporate plan and other key corporate and cross cutting strategies and policies and for setting the budget overseeing the appropriate use of Council finances.
City Growth and Regeneration	20	Responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and inclusive growth of the city.
People and Communities	20	Responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes, services and projects aimed at improving life at a local level.
Licensing	20	Delegated responsibility for the consideration of all matters pertaining to policy and legislation in relation to licensing issues save for those matters reserved to full Council.

Planning	14	Delegated responsibility for all the Council's planning functions save for those matters reserved to full Council.
Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders'	14	Responsible for making the decisions required by the Shareholders' Agreement and ensure that the Company complies with the contract for the operation of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Halls.
Climate and City Resilience	20	Responsible for the political oversight of the resilience strategy for Belfast, Brexit and establishing links and collaborating with relevant authorities and organisations on a North/South and East/West basis and connections with Europe.
Standards and Business	20	Responsible for the promotion of standards and conduct of councillors and the improvement of processes in relation to the bringing of business before the Council.

Decisions required:

- Do we wish to continue with these Committees?
- Do we wish to maintain the current remit of each Committee?
- Do we wish to continue with these Committees with the same numbers of Members?

It should be noted that, during the current Council term, Members have suggested that the number of Members on each of the Committees should be equal, with all Committees having 20 Members.

3.4

**3. Annual review of Committee Membership**

In the current Council term, members were appointed to the Committees for one-year terms and reappointed at each Annual Meeting. This allows for any changes in political affiliation which can occur during a council term to be accounted for. The City Solicitor believes this to be in keeping both the spirit and intent of the 2014 Act.

Decision required:

- Would Members be supportive of retaining a one-year committee membership term?

3.5	<p><b>4. Method of appointing positions of responsibility including PCSP and DPCSPs</b></p> <p>The positions of responsibility include the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor, Committee Chairpersons and Deputy Chairpersons, some prescribed outside bodies and the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) and the four District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (DPCSPs). In dealing with the appointments of members to the PCSP and DPCSPs, the Council needs to ensure that the appointments are made in accordance with not only the LGA 2014 but also the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and are considered as part of the allocation of positions of responsibility.</p> <p>The solution, which was agreed by all parties in 2015 - 2019, was that the appointments to the PCSP and DPCSPs were made by allocating those parties' D'hondt choices from the bottom up. Therefore, the parties' earlier choices for positions of responsibility were not adversely affected by the requirements of the Justice Act as to how the appointments to the PCSP and DPCSPs had to be made.</p> <p>A separate decision is also required in relation to the size of the main Policing and Community Safety Partnership. The Justice Act provides that the Council may appoint 8, 9 or 10 Political Members to the PCSP. The number of Independent Members is then set at one less than the number of Political Members. The Justice Act also provides that each DPCSP must have 6 Political and 5 Independent Members so no decision is required with regard to the DPCSP size. In 2015- 2019, the Council agreed to appoint 9 Political Members to the PCSP, resulting in a membership of 17 in total (9 political and 8 independent members).</p> <p>Decisions required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we content to again employ the solution with regard to the Positions of Responsibility in 2023?</li> <li>• Are we happy to again appoint 9 Political Members to the PCSP?</li> </ul>
3.6	<p><b>5. Appointment of Working Groups</b></p> <p>The Council decided to appoint a number of Working Groups in 2019, with a number of additional groups established throughout the Council term. These Working Groups are not specified in the 2014 Act and the Council is free to establish as many as it so wishes and use whatever mechanism it sees fit to appoint members to them.</p>

The following is a list of the 16 Working Groups which the Council has currently:

<b>Current Working Group</b>	<b>Main role(s)</b>
All Party Working Group on the city Centre	Act as a reference panel for the wider development and regeneration of city centre
Audit and Risk Panel	It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.
Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Steering Group	The remit of the Group is to oversee the management of the North Foreshore, especially in regard to policy, resource allocation and financial risk of future development at the site.
Community Planning Working Group	Provide recommendations on the strategic direction and political input to the community planning process within Belfast.
Disability Working Group	To discuss the progress and implementation of the Belfast City Council Disability Action Plan 2022-2025 and ensure alignment with the Council's Disability Strategy.
East Area Working Group North Area Working Group South Area Working Group West Area Working Group	To enable and ensure that the socio-economic conditions and needs of local people, areas and communities are given due consideration with respect to the delivery of our plans, services and projects.
Installations – City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group	Consider and provide recommendations relating to City Hall and its grounds ensuring these are reflective of the principles set out in the EQIA whilst ensuring compliance with City Hall's status as a Grade 1 Listed Building.
Language Strategy Working Group	To provide elected members with a forum to discuss the impact of the languages in the Strategy across the above areas of work.
Party Leaders' Consultative Forum	To receive briefings and updates on the Council's programmes of work relating to the Belfast Agenda priorities.

	<p>Council's Corporate Plan and associated programmes of work.</p> <p>To introduce complex or sensitive reports/issues or proposed reports prior to committee or to discuss issues arising from committees/Council</p> <p>To receive information on oversight of the Council's finances and discuss future rates setting.</p> <p>To receive and consider complex or sensitive information prior to decision making through committee and Council.</p> <p>To raise sensitive resource (particularly human resource) issues</p> <p>To receive and discuss proposals relating to governance arrangements.</p>
Reference Group on Older People	To provide political direction and input to the development of the city planning process for improving the health, wellbeing and independence of older people within Belfast
Shared City Partnership	To assist the elected political leadership of the Council, staff, diverse civil society interests and partnering agencies to engage pro-actively on all Good Relations issues on behalf of citizens and be a collective voice, promoting a common vision for Good Relations in the City.
Social Policy Working Group	Oversee the creation of a robust and ambitious approach for the integration of social value through the Councils procurement processes, with consideration given to financial affordability, legal implications and the maximisation of impact.
Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group	To support cemetery and crematorium development and improvement of bereavement services for Belfast.

It is proposed that the decision to re-establish the working groups as outlined above is taken during the new Council term, except for the following, which approval is sought from the Committee to appoint from the beginning of the new Council term:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit and Risk Panel - the panel is well established working group and, during June, before the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee considers quite a number of reports, including the Council’s Statement of Accounts and it would be beneficial to the decision-making process to have this in place.</li> <li>• Shared City Partnership – Again another established group which includes representation from many outside organisations. The Partnership deals with many funding issues, including PEACE IV. The Group last met on 27th March and be preferable to agree to its establishment from the start of the new Council term.</li> </ul> <p>Decision required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would Members be supportive of the proposals as outlined above?</li> <li>• In line with previous Council policy, to appoint 1 Member from each of the Parties on the Council, with a Party being defined as having 2 or more Members.</li> </ul>
3.7	<p><b>6. Process for Nomination for High Sheriff</b></p> <p>The current Council agreed to use a separate D’hondt process to decide which Parties would be entitled to nominate a person for consideration for appointment as High Sheriff for each year of the Council term. This process sits outside the positions of responsibility process as the appointment is made by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>Decision required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we wish to use this process again from 2023?</li> </ul>
3.8	<p><b>7. Appointment to Outside Bodies</b></p> <p>There are a number of appointments to Outside Bodies. In 2019, the Council decided to use the Sainte Lague method to make these appointments. A report on the appointments to be made would be presented to the first meeting of the new SP and R Committee in June.</p> <p>Decision required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do we wish to use this method again or the more common D’hondt method?</li> </ul>



	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b>
3.9	None at this stage
	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b>
3.10	None at this stage
<b>4.0</b>	<b><u>Documents Attached</u></b>
	None