

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 4th March, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Long and McCusker.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, R.M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Nic Bhranair and Verner, declared an interest in relation to the minute of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd February, under the heading “Discretionary Payments” in that they worked for or were associated with one of the applicants. As the item did not become the subject of discussion, the Members were not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in respect of the minute of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee under the heading “Oireachtas Festival Update” in that she was associated with the organisers and left the meeting whilst the item was being discussed.

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in relation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes under the heading “Response by NILGA” in that his wife worked for the organisation. As the item did not become the subject of discussion, the Member was not required to leave the Chamber.

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The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan and Councillor M. Donnelly declared an interest regarding the minute of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee under the heading “Update on Cost-of-Living Hardship Programme 23/24” in that the organisations they work for operate Social Supermarkets. As the item did not become the subject of discussion, the Members were not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Canavan declared an interest in relation to the People and Communities Committee minutes under the headings “Presentation – Belfast Advice Group” and “Funding Request from Belfast Advice Group” as she was associated with an organisation which was in receipt of funding from the Advice Service. As the item did not become the subject of discussion, the Member was not required to leave the Chamber.

In relation to the City Growth and Regeneration Minutes, under the heading “Belfast 2024 Music Heritage Programme”, Councillor McCabe declared an interest, in that she was employed by Féile an Phobail who were in receipt of funding. As the item did not become the subject of discussion, the Member was not required to leave the Chamber.

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in relation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Minutes under the heading “Northern Ireland Executive Ministerial Meeting” in that a family Member worked for Forge Integrated Primary School, which came under discussion, and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Minutes of the Council

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st and 12th February, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, welcomed to the meeting Councillor McKay, who had replaced the former Member, Councillor Gormley. The Lord Mayor, along with a number of other Members, paid tribute to former Councillor Gormley and the contribution which he had made over the years to the Council and the constituents of Botanic.

Councillor Beattie reminded the Council that sculptures of Mary Ann McCracken and Winifred Carney would be unveiled in the grounds of the City Hall on Friday, 8th March 2024.

The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan, advised that she had been working with DKMS, an international charity dedicated to fighting blood cancer and blood disorders, and invited Members to attend the events on 15th and 16th March, to register in person as a potential stem cell donor.

Councillor Bunting expressed her deepest sympathy to the family of former Councillor Aileen Graham and highlighted the significant contribution which she had made to the Council and the citizens of Belfast.

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Alderman Lawlor gave thanks to the RNLI on its 200th anniversary, 200 years of lifesaving that had seen over 1500 lives being saved in Northern Ireland. He commended the volunteers past and present for their efforts.

The Lord Mayor, at the request of Councillor Maghie, agreed to write a letter of congratulations and best wishes to the Irish Men's Hockey Team who qualified recently for the Olympics this Summer.

Councillor R.M. Donnelly highlighted Seachtain na Gaeilge, the international Irish language festival celebrating Irish language and culture, with more than 80 events taking place from 1st – 17th March across the city.

Councillor T. Brooks wished the Council a happy International Women's Day on 8th March.

Cessation of Council and Committee Remote/Hybrid Meetings

The Chief Executive confirmed that notification had been received from the Department for Communities which advised that the ability for the Council to hold remote/hybrid meetings would cease from Wednesday, 7th March, 2024, therefore, Members would be required to attend meetings in-person from this date onwards.

Change of Position of Responsibility

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from Sinn Fein of the following change in Position of Responsibility:

- Councillor Duffy to replace former Councillor Gormley as the Deputy Chairperson on the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Limited Shareholders' Committee;

The Council noted the change.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Nic Bhranair,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd February, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**City Centre Byelaws Consultation –
Update on process**

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed to invite The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to discuss the issues, together with representatives from the Department of Justice and Police Service of Northern Ireland, at the request of Councillor De Faoite.

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Belfast Agenda Refresh (2024-2028)

At the request of Councillor Beattie, the Council agreed to undertake neighbourhood strategy documents for each area of the city linking to the Belfast Agenda, to include local key priorities for each quarter of the city, and to explore working with stakeholders and the development of plans to help alleviate poverty and deprivation.

Quarterly Update on Notices of Motion

At the request of Councillor R.M. Donnelly, the Council, in relation to the Motion on Environmentally Sustainable Event Spaces (Ref 209) previously raised by Councillor Garrett, agreed that a report be submitted to the next Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to outline the next steps on delivering environmentally sustainable event spaces.

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Council agreed that the Motion on Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness (Ref 331) which had been recommended for closure, remained open and be brought back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for further discussion.

Contracts

At the request of Councillor Nic Bhranair, in relation to the Single Tender Action “City Matters Distribution - Royal Mail”, the Council agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to outline readership statistics, together with value for money analysis.

Northern Ireland Executive Ministerial Meetings

At the request of Councillor De Faoite, the Council agreed that an area meeting was also requested with the Minister of Education to discuss the withdrawal of funding to Forge Integrated Primary School for its new building and how this information was communicated to the schools impacted by the decision.

Illumination Request

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McDowell,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd February, under the heading “Illumination Request”, to approve the request for the illumination of the City Hall to mark the birthday of the President of Ireland, Michael Higgins on 18th April, 2024, be amended to also mark the closing of the gates of Derry 335 years ago, and that the City Hall be lit up in white to acknowledge both events.

On a vote, sixteen Members voted for the amendment and thirty-nine against with one no vote and it was declared lost.

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In reference to the colour of the illumination, the Chief Executive advised that the City Solicitor had contacted the Presidents' office to confirm the correct protocol.

Physical Programme Update

At the request of Councillor T. Brooks, the Council agreed that, in relation to Appendix 3 - Fleet Replacement Programme 2024/25, an update be submitted to a future People and Communities Committee in relation to the power sources of the proposed vehicle replacements.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 23rd February were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 6th February, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 31st January and 7th February, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 21st February, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Bradley and

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

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Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 8th February, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodger,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 22nd February, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson