

City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Tuesday, 18th November, 2025

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson); and
Councillors Beattie and de Faoite

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. C. Burns, Functions and Exhibitions Officer;
Ms. K. Mullen, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. J. Murray, Civic Services Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Member Services and Digital Support
Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported from Councillor Murray.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th August, 2025 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Review of City Hall Exhibition

Following a walkabout of the Exhibition space the Members complimented the use of the space and discussed potential improvements to the area. The Director of Property and Projects encouraged the Members to contact her directly if they had any suggestions.

The Members also noted the improvements to the gift provisions within the shop and encouraged officers to arrange to have bookmarks and prints of the stained-glass windows available, where copyrights permitted.

Noted.

Update on Works to Cenotaph

The Members were advised that essential repair works to repoint the Cenotaph monument were due to commence mid-January 2026 for a period of 6-8 weeks, this timescale would be weather dependant. The Cenotaph would be closed during these works with no access to the public which would be publicised via social media.

Noted.

Cathedral Gardens and Belfast Blitz Memorial

The Working Group considered the undernoted report:

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To provide an update on Cathedral Gardens Scheme which includes a memorial to Belfast Blitz.

2.0 Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to

- Note that works to Cathedral Gardens which includes a new memorial to the Belfast Blitz will commence Christmas 2025 with planned completion Winter 2026
- Note the progress with the design and manufacture of the new Belfast Blitz Memorial
- Note that the design of the new piece in line with previous agreements around public art is confidential and not to be shared in advance of official unveiling
- Note that NIWM (Northern Ireland War Memorial) have agreed a list of names for inclusion on the new Memorial
- Note that once a final programme has been received from the contractor a planned programme of opening events will be worked up for Members' consideration.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Members will recall that Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 21 October 2022 agreed that Cathedral Gardens (to include the Blitz Memorial) be moved to Stage 3 – Committed held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The procurement process has now concluded with a contractor appointment having been made. It is expected that works will commence late November/December with the erection of hoarding around the site. Planned at this stage is expected Winter 2026. Regular updates are provided to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

A new memorial to the Belfast Blitz has been included as part of that scheme and will be the final works package to be delivered. Officers have been engaging with the NIWM to finalise a design which received planning on 11 February 2025. Ralf Sanders is the artist who has been working as part of the Design Team to bring the memorial to life. Members will be aware that NIWM are making a financial contribution to the cost of the new piece. Members should be aware that in keeping with arrangements put in place for other new public art pieces that details of the design are embargoed in advance of the official unveiling. NIWM have agreed to adhere to this precedent.

The memorial will take the form of a bronze high relief on York Street side with a mirrored polished stainless steel side facing Cathedral Gardens. NIWM Board at its meeting on 18 September 2025 approved the final list of 952 names of known fatalities of the Belfast Blitz for inclusion on the Blitz memorial. The names of the 952 known fatalities will be listed in alphabetical order. NIWM have established an adjudication panel, with members of the public being invited to make comment on those they feel should be included.

Once a more detailed construction programme has been received from the contractor Officers will engage with all stakeholders to put in place a planned programme of events for the official opening of Cathedral Gardens and arrangements to mark the installation of the new Belfast Blitz Memorial. Further details will be brought back to Installations: City Hall/City Hall Grounds.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Budget – £5 million (overall capital budget)

Resources – Office time as required to work up proposals

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications

As required.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

Gary Moore Statue

The Working Group was reminded that, at the January meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it had agreed that the Council would explore land availability for the possible installation of a Gary Moore statue within the Cathedral Quarter and that the item be referred to the Installations Working Group for its consideration.

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that officers had met with a representative of the Wild Frontier Memorial Trust in relation to the potential for a Gary Moore Statue to be installed in Belfast, the Trust proposed to crowd fund the statue to

celebrate Mr Moore's contribution to blues and rock. An artist had been appointed to progress the design and installation of the statue and a wax mould was currently at a foundry in Edinburgh. She reported that, once the final mould had been signed off by Mr Moore's family, it was proposed that the images would be shared via social media with a view to securing sufficient funding to make the bronze statue. It was agreed that the officer would circulate the images to the Members of the Working Group via e-mail.

The Trust had asked that the Council consider identifying a suitable piece of land for installation and agree to take on the associated ownership and management/maintenance responsibility, similar to the arrangements put in place for the Rory Gallagher statue. The Members were advised that the Trust had suggested that Cathedral Gardens be considered as the most suitable location for the statue. The Members noted that officers were currently engaging with both the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and Department for Communities (DfC) to confirm landownership of a potential location on the corner of Hill Street and Gordon Street. The location was near to the Oh Yeah Music Centre who had Gary Moore memorabilia included within their exhibition.

The Working Group agreed to recommend the inclusion of a Gary Moore Statue as an Emerging Project – Stage 1 on the Council's capital programme.

City Hall Christmas Tree – Verbal Update

The Civic Services Manager advised the Members that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had completed, the AJC Group Limited had been awarded the contract at a cost of £77,500.00, this included delivery and installation costs for 2026.

In response to a Member's query as to why an artificial tree was being purchased instead of a real tree, the officer explained that, over that past few years, the structure of the real Christmas trees had been weaker due to changes in the climate and that an artificial tree would be more sustainable.

Noted.

Stained Glass Window Health Service – Verbal Update

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that the procurement exercise for the stained glass window was due to close on Friday, 21st November, an update would be provided in due course.

Noted.

Understanding Grief Through the Pandemic – Verbal Update

The Programme Delivery Manager advised that, alongside Memory Stones of Love/Cruse Bereavement Support NI, an event was being held, Understanding Grief Through the Pandemic, on Tuesday, 9th December from 9.00 -11.00 a.m. in the Long Gallery, Stormont Buildings, Belfast, this event was being sponsored by John Blair, Alliance MLA. Elected Members were invited to attend and an e-mail would be circulated to all Members.

The Members also briefly discussed suitable locations for a memorial to those lost during the covid pandemic and asked that when considering this matter further that the Council's park would also be considered as potential locations.

Noted.

Fire Doors at Glass Lift/Stained Glass Windows

The Civic Services Manager advised that it would not be possible for the double fire doors to be relocated to further down the corridor due to adherence to the Council's fire regulations, however, going forward they could be left open with the access rope moved which would enable members of the public to view the stained glass windows. In the event of a fire alarm the doors would automatically close.

Noted.

Chairperson