

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th December, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill,
Smyth and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. E. McConville, Director of Communications, Marketing
and External Affairs;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21st November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st December, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, and subject to the amendments of the minutes under the following headings:

Physical Programmes Update

The Council agreed that the decision in so far as it relates to Fernhill House, be rejected and accordingly, the project be moved to Stage 3.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Draft Amenity Bye Laws

The Council agreed that the decision be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

***Requests for use of the City Hall
And the provision of Hospitality***

The Council agreed that the decision be amended to provide that a report be brought to the Committee that would provide an update on Council investigations into incidents which had occurred during the provision of hospitality and use of the City Hall.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murray declared an interest in items 2.b) Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann and 5.a) Contracts Update in that he was employed for the S.O.S who were a delivery partner of the Fleadh and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest under item 6. (a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership, in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that she worked for an organisation which was funded under the Programme. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

In respect of item 4.a) Physical Programme Update, Councillor Maghie declared an interest in that she was a member of a club which was listed under the Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest under item 7.b) Requests for use of the City Hall, in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

In relation to Item 6. a) Minutes of Shared City Partnership, in so far as it related to the Community Recovery Fund, Councillor Beattie declared an interest as he was associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Long declared an interest under item 3. e) Draft Amenity Byelaws, in that his wife was the Justice Minister, however, was not required to leave the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following five 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 the following five items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were advised that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which takes place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**Revenue Estimates 2026/27 and
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

The Director of Finance provided an update on the key issues influencing the rate setting process for 2026/27 and the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 - 2029/30.

The Committee:

- Noted the challenges since the last update be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting;
- agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2026; and
- Noted a further workshop would be held on 15th January, 2026.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann

The Committee was provided with an update on the planning to support the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Belfast in August 2026.

The Committee:

- Noted the update at the previous meeting on venues, provision within contracts report for contracting key venues;
- Noted the update on governance and risk management;
- Noted the updates in relation to programming, comms and engagement;
- Noted that details on hotel bookings would be reported to the Committee in January; and
- Noted that Members' comments in relation to social media would be considered.

Boxing Strategy

The Committee was reminded that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 4th November, considered an update report on the Belfast Boxing Strategy Q1 and Q2 2025-2026 action plan. The Committee was advised that, during discussion, a Member had referred to the findings of a recently-published report by the Equality Commission Northern Ireland relating to discrimination within amateur boxing in Northern Ireland and it had been proposed and seconded that, until formal assurances had been received that the Equality Commission's recommendations had been implemented by the aforesaid bodies, the Council should withhold any further funding linked to the strategy.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Subsequently, the matter had been referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for clarity and legal opinion.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the Committee:

- Agrees to invite the IABA to a future meeting to discuss the implementation and recommendations made in a NI Equality Commission report;
- Approves the Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 payment to the IABA; and
- Requests that future funding be considered for the delivery and continuation of the Council's Boxing Strategy post March 2026.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor I. McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees not to proceed with the quarter 4 payment of funding arrangement until the IABA provide evidence that it is undertaking work to implement the recommendations made by the NI Equality Commission.

On a vote, five Members voted for the proposal and ten against, with five no votes, it was declared lost.

The original proposal standing in the name of Councillor de Faoite and seconded by Councillor Long was put to the meeting when fifteen Members voted for it and five against and it was subsequently declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Agreed to invite the IABA to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the implementation and recommendations made in the NI Equality Commission report;
- Approved the Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 payment to the IABA; and
- Agreed that a report be submitted to a future Committee regarding future funding options for the continuation and delivery of the Council's Boxing Strategy for 2026/27, together with comparative information on the potential for other single sport strategies.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Belfast City Innovation Programme Update

The Deputy Chief Executive provided an update on a number of urban innovation initiatives, including the final Augment the City learning event; the Local Innovation Partnership Fund; the third Belfast: Inclusive Innovation seminar, a research request from the London School of Economics; the Belfast 5G Innovation Regions Research and Development project; and the iCapital awards.

The Committee:

1. Noted the invitation to the Economy Minister, and to all Elected Members, to attend the Augment the City showcase event on 22nd January, 2026 in the City Hall;
2. Approved the submission of letters of support for the ZETEC, INNOVATION ARC, and IMPACT expressions of interest to the Local Innovation Partnership Fund and noted that any further support would be subject to Council approval of final, detailed proposals;
3. Noted the invitation to Members to attend the third Belfast: Inclusive Futures seminar on 24th February, 2026 at the City Hall which would focus on the challenges and opportunities of AI for the future role of the city's community and voluntary sector;
4. Approved Belfast's submission to the LSE Deep Dive research on City Innovation;
5. Noted the progress on the second phase of the Belfast 5G Innovation Region programme and a planned 12-week R&D project expected to commence in January 2026; and
6. Approved that work commence with Innovation City Belfast partners on an application to the 2027 European Capital of Innovation Award (iCapital).

Bad debt write off

The Committee approved the write-off of ground rent arrears, in accordance with Section M12 of the Council's Financial Regulations, as outlined in the report.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

**Draft Public Health Agency Partnership
and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030**

The Committee was advised that the Public Health Agency (PHA) had recently published for consultation a draft Partnership and Engagement Strategy for the period 2025-2030. The purpose of the draft Strategy was to set out priorities with measurable indicators which showed a strong commitment to working with people and communities. It was highlighted that, a copy of the draft strategy was available @ [Public Health Agency Partnership and Engagement Strategy 2025-2030 | HSC Public Health Agency](#) and feedback was being sought by 19th December, 2025.

In reviewing the draft strategy, there was a clear omission or reference to the role of local authorities and the Council in promoting health and wellbeing within the city or the

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

collaborative work already underway with the PHA in delivering the ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda.

It was reported that the Council was already actively partnering with the PHA, and wider health sector partners, on a number of initiatives and programmes under the auspices of community planning including the joint funding and work being taken forward through the Belfast Health and Development Unit (e.g. Take 5, Active Belfast, Age Friendly Belfast), Healthier Systems 4 Healthier Weight (previously known as whole systems approach to obesity), Belfast Learning Cities.

During discussion, one Member raised concerns in relation to drug misuse in the city centre and the response times to incidents and suggested that representatives of the Public Health Agency be invited to attend a future committee to discuss how it delivers its services.

The Committee:

- i. noted the contents of the report;
- ii. agreed the proposed draft Council response attached at appendix 1;
- iii. agreed that the proposed Council response be submitted to the Public Health Agency (PHA) in line with the deadline (19th December, 2025). The response would state it remained subject to ratification by Full Council in January, 2026; and
- iv. noted that representatives of the Public Health Agency be invited to attend a meeting with Elected Members to discuss how it delivers its services, in particular drug misuse.

**Hardship Programme 2025/26 - Response from
the Department for Communities Minister**

The Committee considered the recent correspondence received from the Minister for Communities, dated 10th December, 2025, confirming that funding would not be made available in future years to support a hardship programme.

Several Member's highlighted their disappointment in the response and the impact this would have on vulnerable residents.

Noted.

Planning Information

The Committee noted the contents of the report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

**Attendance at Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Final
conference in Katowice, Poland and
Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit in
Budapest, Hungary in February, 2026**

The Committee:

- I. Noted that two Council Officers would be attending the UPSURGE Final Conference on 10th – 11th February, 2026 in Katowice, Poland;
- II. Noted that one Council Officer would be attending the Pathways2Resilience Launch Summit on 10th – 12th February, 2026 in Budapest, Hungary; and
- III. Noted that all costs associated with the attendance at the above events were covered within the grant funding.

Draft Amenity Byelaws

The City Solicitor / Director of Legal and Civic Services presented the following report for consideration:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an opportunity to further consider;**
- the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement,
 - the revised draft byelaws which were presented to SP&R Committee last month.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members:**

- note the contents of this report and appendices;
- authorise officers to engage with DfC in relation to the revised draft byelaws to understand which aspects could be approved in the coming months.

**3.0 Main Report
Background**

Members will be aware a report was previously presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 21 November 2025, updating members on the results of formal public consultation on draft byelaws for the city centre and further engagement. In addition, the report sought members approval of the draft byelaws.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

At Full Council meeting held on 1 December 2025, members agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21 November 2025 be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

Following on from some concerns previously raised, members will note that the proposed bye laws do not set a level for fixed penalty notices. £500 is the maximum fine which can be imposed by a Magistrates Court for breach of bye laws. This maximum fine is set by Section 92 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972. The fixed penalty level would be considerably lower than the maximum fine which the Court can impose, typically this is approximately 10% of the maximum fine. The level of fixed penalty would be subject to engagement with DfC and would require Committee approval in due course. Members will note that officers have proposed that the reference to continuing offences is removed as it is not considered that this is applicable to the types of behaviour which these bye laws seek to regulate.

Members will recall that some provisions in the draft bye laws relate to arrangements for special events such as the Fleadh. Therefore it is important that there is early engagement with DfC in relation to these proposals.

Committee is asked for its further views in relation to the revised bye laws which were presented to Committee last month. It is also requested that Committee authorises officers to carry out engagement with DfC in relation to the revised bye laws.

Members are asked to note that correspondence has been issued to PSNI and DoJ seeking;

- to outline the need for a standalone Hate Crime Bill and highlight the requirement for an additional class of offenses, noting that the change model in sentencing did not go far enough.**
- clarity in the use of the PSNI powers under Articles 9 (Use of words or behaviour or display of written material), 18 (Riotous or disorderly behaviour in public place), and 19 (Provocative conduct in public place or at public meeting or procession) of The Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.**

When responses are received, officers will bring a report back to Committee with further proposals in relation to the issues of graphic imagery and alleged hate speech in the city centre. Dependent upon responses being received, it is anticipated

that these proposals will be brought to Committee in early spring 2026.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.2 There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report. As outlined in the report tabled on 21 November 2025, there will however be resource implications in enforcing the bye-laws if approved by DfC. This remains under consideration and more detail will be provided once a response is received from DfC.

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

- 3.3 An equality screening was carried out on the draft byelaws that were presented for public consultation. The consultation provided useful feedback both on the draft screening form and more generally from Section 75 groups. Further screening will be undertaken as the byelaws progress to finalisation.”

During discussion, members raised concerns in relation to the enforcement of existing byelaws and the need for options regarding the issues surrounding the display of graphic imagery in the city centre.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and appendices;
- authorised officers to engage with the Department for Communities in relation to the revised draft byelaws which related only to arrangements for special events, such as the Fleadh; and
- agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee in February in relation to the options on the remainder of the revised draft byelaws, including the enforcement of existing byelaws.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new

facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, approval for best practice site visits to inform the next phase of leisure and an approval to work with DFC to progress the mixed use development at Girdwood.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to –

- Capital Programme Movements -
 - IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver
 - City Hall External Christmas Tree provision – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.
 - Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000.
 - Greening & Growing Project – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 funded through the Shared Island Unit.
 - Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 funded by the Linen Quarter Bid
 - Depot Charging Scheme - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.
 - IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

- Assembly Rooms Cluster - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Public AED Replacement - Agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Belfast Stories – note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.
- Leisure Programme – agree that Member site visits are undertaken in early 2026, to view new products with unique selling points, to consider incorporating within the next phase of leisure.
- Girdwood Masterplan – agree that officers work with DfC officials to progress the mixed-use development site at Girdwood with further information to be brought back to Members

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

Physical Programme

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2 As outlined above Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Project	Overview	Stage movement
IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement	Phased upgrades, enhancements and full replacements to Council websites	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision	Replacement of the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution	Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £77,500
Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26	Improvements to pitches	Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £500,000
Greening and Growing Project	Biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development project at the Waterworks, funded through Shared Island programme	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of €30,000
Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme	Feature lighting to exterior of Ulster Hall funded by the LQ Bid.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of £165,000
Depot Charging Scheme	Improvements to electric vehicle (EV) charging provision on Council depots.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration	HR/Payroll System migration to a new cloud-based platform	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
Assembly Rooms Cluster	Redevelopment of Assembly Rooms Cluster	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging
Public AED Replacement	To replace our current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units	Add as Stage 1 – Emerging

3.3 IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement

This project aims to upgrade the Council's CMS platform and to deliver a modern, secure, and accessible set of council websites that meet evolving legislative, user, and business requirements. The Content Management System (CMS) is software that lets the Council's web editors create, edit, organise, and publish content on the council websites. It acts as the backbone for managing text, images, videos, and other digital assets. The provider of the current CMS has informed the Council that the platform we currently use will no longer be supported after December 2026. This means that there will be no support/ maintenance, patching or security updates from that date onwards. This would represent a significant security and reputational risk to the organisation. The project is now part of the overall IT Programme and a business case has been submitted. Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk, pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement

processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated. A contract will be awarded based on the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver.

3.4 City Hall Christmas Tree Provision

Members will recall that in August 2025 this project was moved to Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. The project aims to replace the current Christmas Tree provision in front of the City Hall with an alternative solution. The City Hall Christmas tree is a major focal point within the City Centre and can set the tone for the city's Christmas celebrations, both for visitors and the local economy. Given issues with the quality and supply of real trees it is proposed to purchase an artificial tree which will be installed from 2026 onwards. The Installation - City Hall/ City Hall Grounds Working Group at its meeting on 18th November was updated that the procurement process for the artificial Christmas Tree had been completed and a supplier had been appointed. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated.

3.5 Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26

Members will be aware of the successful completion of pitch improvement works for the financial year 2024/25 as reported in April and October 2025. Officers have since been working to identify opportunities to use the recurring annual budget of £500,000 for the 2025/26 financial year and are proposing the following schemes:

Location/ project	Overview
Wedderburn Park*	Perimeter fencing to enclose 2 existing grass pitches.
Falls Park	Spectator fencing and hard standing to existing grass pitch
Marrowbone Millenium Park	Height increase of existing fencing from 5m to 8m
Clarendon	Height increase in fencing at goal ends to 6m
CI Ladies Hockey Club	Funding Contribution towards Floodlighting
Belfast Met Montgomery Road	Provision of junior goal posts for use by SBYL
Westlands Pitch	Fencing and improved gates

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025

**A concept design to further enhance Wedderburn Park for the benefit of local residents is being drafted from feedback gathered during preliminary engagement. Further engagement will be carried out and any works arising from this will form a second phase of parks improvements and be separately funded.*

Members are asked to agree that the 'Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26' is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council as a rolling programme of investment. Members are asked to note that should there be an underspend, this could be utilised for other projects from the existing shortlist subject to Member agreement.

3.6 Greening & Growing Project

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in September 2025. This project focuses on biodiversity improvement and sustainable food growing development funded through Shared Island Fund programme. It will be delivered at the GROW NI community garden at Waterworks, in partnership with Belfast City Council and Belfast Healthy Cities. As per the three-stage approval process, the outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 from Shared Island funding.**

3.7 Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme

This project was moved to the Capital Programme at Stage 2 – Uncommitted in May 2025. The project involves the installation of an LED lighting display on the façade of Ulster Hall capable of changing colour similar to City Hall's Illuminate scheme and will be in keeping with the building's listed status. The letter of offer to the Council from Linen Quarter BID for the design phase has been secured. A subsequent letter of offer for the supply and installation is under review. The outline business case has been completed and the project can now progress to delivery stage. **Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 fully funded by the LQ Bid.**

3.8 Depot Charging Scheme

This project was added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging in October 2025, when the SP&R Committee approved the submission of an application for funding under the Government's Depot Charging System. The Depot

Charging Scheme supports the uptake of zero emission HGVs, vans, and coaches by part-funding the installation of charging infrastructure at fleet depots. The scheme covers 75% of eligible costs incurred and 25% will be the Council's counterpart. The project which aims to improve the EV charging on Council sites will support the fleet transition and overall decarbonisation of Council fleet. The application for funding has been submitted and a decision is awaited. Members are asked to agree that 'Depot Charging Scheme' is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course, and update regarding the funding position referred above.

3.9 IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration

The Council's current HR/ Payroll System provider has informed the Council that the platform that it currently uses needs to be migrated to a new cloud-based platform. This includes the ResourceLink system and the Optimum (Time & Attendance) system. Members are asked to agree that the 'HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration' project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow a business case to be developed.

3.10 Assembly Rooms Cluster

At the July 2025 special SP&R Committee meeting, Members agreed that a without prejudice/ conditional offer was made to acquire the Assembly Rooms and adjoining properties – the sale completed on 24 October 2025. The Assembly Rooms Cluster consists of approximately 0.5 acres within the former Tribeca Belfast site located in Belfast city centre. The Cluster is comprised of the following buildings: Assembly Rooms (Grade B1 Listed Building) and including rear extension; part of the Donegall Street carpark site; 5 – 9 North Street (former Laffin Travel building); and the Braddell's Building, 11 North Street (Grade B1 Listed Building). Members are asked to agree that the project is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed with further information to be brought back to Committee.

3.11 Public AED Replacement

The project aims to replace the Council's current suite of public Automated External Defibrillator (AED) units to ensure continuity of service provision. Members are asked to agree that the project is added to Stage 1 – Emerging to allow the business case to be developed.

3.12 Belfast Stories

Members will recall that Belfast Stories Outline Business Case (OBC) update was considered by the SP&R Committee in April 2025. Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and is due to open in 2030. Positioned as a tourism anchor, Belfast Stories is set to deliver significant economic and social impact for Belfast and beyond, helping to regenerate the city centre and connect the tourism offer to the neighbourhoods. The Committee also noted the detailed overview of the OBC following the 5-case model, with the total estimated capital cost of the preferred option at approximately £100m with £35m funded by BCC and £65m by BRCD. Furthermore, it was agreed to submit the Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m funding as part of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) and a Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received. Members will also recall that the project is now at Stage 3 – Committed and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and update regarding the funding position referred above. Members are asked to note that the Contract for Funding (CFF) has now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and is under review prior to acceptance.

Leisure Programme – Site Visits

- 3.13 Members will be aware that work is underway on the development of the next phase of the Leisure Programme with Party Group briefings held in late Autumn. At these the need to look at USPs for the other sites was discussed and the need to look at where there are gaps in provision across the city. To inform this it is proposed that a two-day site visit is undertaken in late January/early February to leisure sites in and around London focusing on sites which provide facilities not currently within the Belfast leisure model. Details of the final itinerary are currently being finalised. It is proposed that this will be for Party Group Leaders or their nominees. Members are asked to agree that site visits are undertaken in early 2026 to London to inform the next phase of leisure.

Girdwood Masterplan

- 3.14 Members will be aware that the Girdwood Masterplan includes several agreed elements, some of which have not yet been delivered. These include the leisure facility, which forms part of the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme; housing at the Oldpark end of the site, which the Department for Communities (DfC) is progressing with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; and the mixed-use development. DfC is

leading on the mixed-use site, and officers have been engaging with DfC officials to explore options for progressing its development, including the potential for the Council to act as a development or delivery partner. Members are asked to note these ongoing discussions and to agree that officers continue to work with DfC to identify an appropriate mechanism to deliver the mixed-use site.

Financial & Resource Implications

3.15 *Financial Implications –*

City Hall External Christmas Tree Provision – capital budget allocation of up to £77,500.

Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26 – recurring capital budget allocation of £500,000.

The Director of Finance has confirmed that these are within the affordability limits of the Council.

Greening and Growing Project – capital allocation of up to €30,000 externally funded via Shared Island Fund. Letter of Offer is in Euro (€).

Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme – capital allocation of up to £165,000, externally funded via Linen Quarter BID.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

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

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees, under Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26, to halt the proposed fencing at Wedderburn Park grass pitches so that further engagement with residents could be undertaken.

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

Resolved - That the Committee agrees, under Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26, and that a report on the condition of the pitch at Cherryvale be commissioned.

After discussion, the Committee:

- **Capital Programme Movements –**
 - **IT Programme—Website Content Management System (CMS) Upgrade and Website Replacement** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with a contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
 - **City Hall External Christmas Tree provision** – Noted that a satisfactory tender return had been received and that the Director of Finance had confirmed that the project was within the affordability limits of the Council and agreed that a maximum of £77,500 be allocated;
 - **Sporting Pitches Investment 2025/26** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £500,000, and that a report on the condition of the pitch at Cherryvale be commissioned;
 - **Greening & Growing Project** – Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to €30,000 funded through the Shared Island Unit;
 - **Ulster Hall Lighting Scheme** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* with a maximum allocation of up to £165,000 funded by the Linen Quarter Bid;
 - **Depot Charging Scheme** - Agreed that the project was moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course;
 - **IT Programme—HR/ Payroll Cloud Migration** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed;
 - **Assembly Rooms Cluster** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed; and
 - **Public AED Replacement** - Agreed that the project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

- **Belfast Stories** – noted that the Contract for Funding (CFF) had now been received from Department for Economy (DfE) for £65m and was under review prior to acceptance.
- **Leisure Programme** – agreed that Member site visits would be undertaken in early 2026, to view new products with unique selling points, to consider incorporating within the next phase of leisure.
- **Girdwood Masterplan** – agreed that officers work with DfC officials to progress the mixed-use development site at Girdwood with further information to be brought back to Members.

Asset Management

The Committee:

- i) **Hannahstown Village - Playground & Public Square Sublease**
 - Approved Council entering a sublease with Hannahstown Community Association for the lands for Hannahstown Village Playground and Public Square situated at Pairc Lamh Dhearg.
- ii) **Cathedral Gardens - Licence for Works**
 - Approved entering into a licence for works with Ulster University for a plot of land adjoining Belfast City Council Lands at Cathedral Gardens.
- iii) **Clement Wilson Park and Barnett Demesne – Lease with DfI**
 - Approved entering into a 10-year lease with DfI for the siting of a pontoon at Clement Wilson Park.
- iv) **Bloomfield Walkway – Licence with DfI**
 - Approved Council entering a new licence with the Department for Infrastructure for the lands for multi-use games area and playground at Bloomfield Walkway.
- v) **Sally Gardens Lane – Acquisition of Lands**
 - Approved the acquisition of lands adjoining Sally Gardens Lane to deliver a footpath.

Area Working Update

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group of 24th November, North Belfast Area Working Group of 25th November, West Belfast Area Working Group of 27th November, and East Belfast Area Working Group of 4th December, 2025.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3);
- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4); and
- Noted the non-procurement expenditure (Table 5).

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Renewal of Eploy online recruitment system	Up to 4 years	£124,800	S McNicholl	Required to maintain the provision of the online recruitment system for the Council	N	N	N
Online security awareness training and provision of phishing tests	Up to 3 years	£69,000	P Gribben	Increasing need to ensure staff awareness and help reduce the risk of security events	N	N	N
Procurement of annual insurance contracts	Up to 1 year	£1,262,000	T Wallace	Annual insurance premiums covering employer's liability, public liability, crime, environmental legal liability, property (excess of loss city hall) and motor fleet. Current annual policies expire on 31st March 2026.	N	Included in annual financial estimates	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Procurement of the Cisco Secure Connect Service	Up to 5 years	£130,410	S McNicholl	The Belfast WiFi service requires a secure DNS facility to protect users and devices. Cisco Secure Connect is a security product with a focus on DNS-layer security which will add layered protection to all Public Belfast WiFi users and devices and protect BCC from possible reputational damage.	N	N	N
The provision of a new regulatory case management solution for City & Neighbourhood Services	Up to 10 years	£2,162,000	S McNicholl	The objective is to replace our current systems (APP/Flare, IDOX – Public Protection Portal – NIHMO and Animal Welfare (IDOX) with a single modern and intuitive case management solution designed to embed mobile technology and digitally transform how we plan, manage and monitor our service delivery across the core areas. This project aligns with the CNS Transition & Improvement	N	Outline business case previously approved through the Capital Programme - Physical Programmes update, S,P&R June 2024	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				Programme by improving customer service, removing duplication, making long-term cost savings, services more sustainable, empowering staff and to improve decision-making. Furthermore, it fits with the strategic themes Customer and Performance in the CNS Business Plan. We also have alignment with the Digital Strategy in terms of Digital Transformation, improved Data & Analytics and reduction of cyber security risk. The existing contracts for current systems will be aligned to the go live date of the new case management system. Capital Year 1: £665,000 & Revenue Years 2-10: £1,497,000			

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services	On published pipeline (Y/N)	Prior Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire of Grounds Machinery with Operator	Up to 3 years	£130,000	D Sales	To complete flail arm work, fraise mowing, overseeding and herbicide application and spiking across the OSS Estate. This supports in house teams/ operations.	N	N	N

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire of Ulster University Belfast Campus (York Street) for use during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 inclusive of setup and de-rig.	Up to 8 days	£200,000	D Martin	Ulster University Belfast Campus has been designated as a central competition and educational hub in the Fleadh operational plan, developed jointly by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Belfast City Council. It provides the only feasible location capable of supporting the complex requirements	Ulster University Belfast Campus	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				of Scoil Éigse and All-Ireland competitions				
Hire of the MAC Arts Centre, Belfast, as a core competition and cultural venue for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026	Up to 8 days	£45,000	K Forster	The MAC is uniquely positioned as the Irish Language and Cultural Hub within the Fleadh 2026 delivery plan and was identified through joint planning with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) and Belfast City Council as a core competition and programming venue	The Mac	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N
Hire of The Belfast SOS Bus for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026	Up to 8 days	£49,000	K Forster	The Belfast SOS Bus provides a mobile, non-judgemental safe space on the streets, offering a range of support including first aid, mental health intervention, and harm reduction. It offers practical assistance like refreshments, transport home, and referrals to	The Belfast SOS Bus	3	Fleadh budget agreed at S,P&R	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				other services. There is no other provider of this service for Belfast.				
Upgrade and contract extension of the Content Management System (CMS) which supports all BCC websites	Up to 4 years	£350,000	S McNicholl	There has been an urgent, unforeseen and essential need to upgrade the current CMS platform to ensure continuity of service. This can only be actioned by the existing supplier. A longer-term procurement strategy to procure a new CMS will be developed to align with the expiry of this requirement. £200k- Capital & £150k - Revenue	Simply Zesty	7	N	N
Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collect vehicles	Up to 8 months	£21,333	S Leonard	Stewart Commercial are the only supplier within N. Ireland to supply the hire of these specialist glass collect vehicles. These 2 vehicles will ensure continuity of supply until the new	Stewart Commercials	1	N	N

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
				vehicles are delivered in August 26. The current T2048 contract expired on 31.05.25 therefore retrospective STA approval is required – see below.				

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Provision of Drama, Puppetry and Script writing CNS 2412	Up to 1 year	Additional £1,584 Original quotation value - £30k	J Girvan	Additional cost for writing a new script for anti-litter/ waste roadshow to be performed in primary schools 2025/26. The supplier was the only respondent to the original quotation process. Being reported as quotation value now exceeds £30k.	Cre8 Theatre Ltd

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason	Other Committee approval (Y/N) If Y name Committee & Date	External Funding (Y/N)
Hire 2 x 7.5T Glass Collect vehicles	Up to 7 months	£18,667	S Leonard	Further to STA request above this is retrospective STA approval to cover hire of these vehicles 01 June 2025 to 31 st December 2025.	Stewart Commercials	1	N	N

Table 5: Non-Procurement Expenditure

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Hire of the ICC Belfast, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall	Up to 7 days	£400,000	D Martin	The spaces available across three sites were identified during the initial planning and bid for Fleadh 2026 in conjunction with the Comhaltas team. Given occupancy of all other viable sites across the city centre there are no other venues available that offer the same level of occupancy/production support required to successfully deliver Fleadh core events alongside multiple competition and performance spaces.	Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

**Audit and Risk Panel Report and
Minutes of Meeting of 2nd December**

The Committee noted the key issues arising at the meeting and approved the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 2nd December, 2025 as outlined in appendix A of the report.

Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 24/25

The Committee approved the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March, 2025 and noted that Management Responses to the 9 audit recommendations identified by the NIAO would be provided to the Committee.

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting of 1st December**

The Committee approved the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 1st December, including:

Presentation – Reconnected Belfast PeacePlus Project

- The Shared City Partnership noted the presentation and recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note the presentation.

Update from Partnership Members

- Updates from members were noted in the minutes for further information, following a proposal from the NIHE, the partnership agreed to receive a presentation from the Housing for All Team to be scheduled for 2026.

Community Recovery Fund Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the contents of the report; and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note and agree the content of the report. The Partnership further agreed that any underspend in the programme should be aligned to the Area Based Consortia, WULO, and resources subject to satisfactory evaluation and proposal, the partnership requests that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also agree the proposal which was outlined in the minutes.

Asylum Dispersal Funding

- The Shared City Partnership noted the report and agreed the proposed approach for the future allocation of dispersal funding, subject to confirmation of further funding from the Executive Office and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note and agree the proposed approach detailed in the report.

PEACEPLUS – Secretariat Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee note the contents of the report.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

Peace Plus Thriving and Peaceful Communities Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Peace Plus Celebrating Culture and Diversity Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Community Regeneration and Transformation Thematic Update

- The Shared City Partnership recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee noted the contents of the report.

Any Other Business

- Key items reported: -
 - Next Meeting: 12th January 13.30 – It was agreed this would be a half day workshop to be held in Girdwood Community Hub, commencing with Lunch; and Key areas of business dealt with at the start of the meeting with the remainder of the time to focus on the New Good Relations Strategy, audit and Action Plan.
 - The Good Relations Manager informed the Partnership that the new VCSE Community Panel had met and 2 VCSE Reps had been allocated to the Shared City Partnership: Irene Sherry representing Ashton Community Trust (North) and JP Sukumaran representing Karma Kalakendram (City-wide)
 - The Good Relations Manager reported that following agreement at the November Shared City Partnership meeting for Council to develop a pilot proposal to progress the programme in conjunction with Social Change Initiative (SCI) a proposal had been submitted, further details were in the minutes.
- The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the items raised under AOB; and recommended that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also noted and agreed the items raised.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of the Party Group Leaders
Consultative Forum of 11th December**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum of 11th December, 2025.

The Committee noted that, in relation to the Display of Flags in some council owned assets, an audit would be undertaken including the Council's Leisure Facilities.

The Committee noted that further information would be submitted to the Committee in relation to the Council's sponsorship of the Lewis Crocker fight, including partnership sponsorship and the intended use of the funding.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
Indian Women's Association	1 March 2026	International Women's Day Celebrations – an event to celebrate local women with speeches, group discussion and cultural entrainment Numbers attending - 120	B & D	£300
Forge Integrated Primary School	11 April 2026	Forge Integrated Primary School 40th Anniversary Gala Ball – School community celebration event to mark milestone with reception, dinner, presentations and entertainment. Numbers attending – 250	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	26 May 2026	Launch of Newly Co-produced Dementia Information Booklet with round table discussion; guests to include community/ volunteer sector and Dementia Acute services. Numbers attending - 80	D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
African Caribbean Community Network (ACCN) and Minorities Recognition Award Northern Ireland (MRANI)	6 June 2026	Africa Day 2026 will be a vibrant cultural celebration designed to honour and showcase the rich diversity, unity, and contribution of African communities living in Belfast and across NI. The event will gather the local community for a day of music, art, dance, food, and cultural exchange. Numbers attending – 300	B & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences (ORAHs)	23 July 2026	Operational Research Applied to Health Sciences Conference Dinner with drinks reception, dinner, awards and entertainment.	A	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th December, 2025**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE
		Main conference being hosted by QUB. Numbers attending – 200		
Ulster Youth Orchestra	16 August 2026	Post-Ulster Hall Concert Reception will follow earlier that week a performance at the Konzerthaus in Berlin, as part of the prestigious Young Euro Classic Festival. The reception will recognise this notable achievement. Number attending – 120	C & D	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>
Thiepval Memorial Loyal Orange Lodge 1916 (Lodge of special purpose)	21 November 2026	Thiepval Memorial LOL 1916 – 30 Year Anniversary Celebration with reception, dinner, awards and presentations Numbers attending – 150	C	<i>Event post April 2026 - Charge TBC</i>

**Minutes of the All-Party Working Group
on the City Centre of 5th December, 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 5th December, 2025.

**Minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds
Installations Working Group of 18th November, 2025**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 18th November, 2025.

Chairperson