

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 6th February, 2026

SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Brennan (Chairperson);
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett,
Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill 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;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City & Neighbourhood
Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor Smyth.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Black and I. McLaughlin declared an interest under item 2.b) Community Support Plan – Large Grant Funding Programme, in that they were associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

In relation to items 2.b) Community Support Plan – Large Grant Funding Programme and 2.c) Community Support Plan Funding – Financial Impact on groups which are currently funded through Community Capacity and Revenue Grant, Councillor R-M. Donnelly declared an interest in that she was associated with a group/organisation which had applied for or received funding and left the meeting whilst the items were under consideration.

Restricted Items

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following six items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were advised that 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.

Community Capacity Pilot

The Committee considered a report which provided an update members on what type of work might be included in a Community Capacity Pilot and seeking approval for officers to further work up the detail and options around how this might be delivered for members consideration at a future committee meeting.

The report also sought agreement that a financial resource of £500,000 would be included in this work and would be aligned to the implementation of the Community Support Plan which had been agreed by the members.

The Committee agreed:

- i. that officers progress options and further detail with regards to the implementation of a CSP capacity programme that is aligned to the Implementation of the wider Community Support Plan. The options paper would also seek approval as to how a budget of £500,000 be used to support this work;
- ii. that the programme be citywide;
- iii. that it be subject to an equality screening;
- iv. that it be looked at in conjunction with the review of the Council's community centres;
- v. the allocation to be based on the outcome of the community support grants process and would be targeted at areas that had the smallest number of applications and fewest successful applications to the process; and
- vi. that data from applications to BCC small grants, both where funding had been approved and where the applications didn't meet the scoring threshold, be included.

**Community Support Plan –
Large Grant Funding Programme**

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services presented a report on the outcome of the assessment of the Community Support Plan Large Grant applications for 2026-2029 which sought the Committee's agreement in relation to the allocation of financial resources.

The Committee:

- i. noted the assessment outcome and agreed to adopt Option 4 as the allocation model based on the information contained in this report and at appendix iii; and
- ii. agreed that officers progress with the funding allocation process, including sending out letters of intent; agreeing programmes of work with applicants based on the recommended funding allocation; processing funding agreements; and ensuring all monitoring requirements are implemented.

**Community Support Plan Funding –
Financial Impact on groups which are
currently funded through Community
Capacity and Revenue Grant**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report to advise the Committee of the outcome of the assessment of the Community Support Plan Large Grant applications for 2026-2029 which might have a financial impact on the groups that were currently receiving funding under the capacity or revenue programme, as a number of those groups were deemed as ineligible and will not receive funding under the new Scheme.

The Committee:

- i. agreed to fund, in 2025/26, 18 groups in the sum of £663,228, which were ineligible under the Community Support Plan – Large Grant Funding Programme and which were currently funded through the Community Capacity and Revenue Grant Programme; and
- ii. to provide total funding of £60,000 to those groups who are currently in receipt of CSP funding but who had scored less than 30% following assessment of the new Community Support Large Grant applications.

Update on Leisure

The Committee considered a report which sought Members' views on taking forward the last project of the £105m Leisure Transformation Programme at Girdwood and which provided an outline on next phase of the Council's leisure programme.

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The Committee:

£105million Leisure Transformation Programme – Girdwood

- noted the Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility update and agreed to adopt Option 2, that is, to progress now with the development of the new facility by utilising a portion of the ring-fenced capital financing allocation of £2m and a portion of the GLL surplus in order to close out the £105m Leisure Transformation Programme; and
- agreed that Girdwood be moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending planning approval 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, with regular reports to be submitted to the Committee on the progress of the scheme.

Next phase of leisure - Shankill, Ozone, Whiterock, Ballysillan, Belvoir and Loughside

- agreed to maintain the USP for the next phase of leisure encouraging people to travel across the city to access facilities and addressing any gaps in provision;
- approved revised strategic outcomes for the next leisure programme;
- agreed the future phasing of the remaining, with the Shankill and Whiterock to be prioritised as Phase A, with the other four facilities to be progressed as Phase B; and
- noted that further detailed reports will be brought back to Members on next steps and proposed USPs for sites.

**Pitches Programme – Proposed
Phasing and Implementation Plan**

The Committee considered a report which provided a proposed phasing and high-level implementation plan for the Pitches Programme.

The Committee:

- i. noted the capital works already undertaken at pitches across the city which had provided 3 new GAA pitches and a range of enhanced facilities;
- ii. noted the proposed projects for this year as agreed by the Committee in December;

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- iii. agreed the proposed phasing for the Pitches Programme as outlined in paragraph 3.11 of the report and at Appendix 1, subject to Dixon Park being included in the initial phase and Blanchflower Park being included in the Masterplan approach;
- iv. agreed that these projects be moved to Stage 3 - Committed on the Capital Programme held at risk pending further development of the projects, planning and contractor appointment;
- v. agreed to ringfence £1million from the current Pitches Programme budget towards a Partner Pitch Enhancement Programme targeted towards the installation of floodlighting allowing facilities to be used in the evenings and at the weekend with further detail on the criteria to be brought back to Members, with the Programme to include the Nettlefields and the Norman Whiteside pitches;
- vi. noted the draft implementation plan as attached at Appendix 1 to the report and that this would be subject to further refinement, with further information to be brought back to the Committee in March alongside the Pitches Strategy;
- vii. authorised officers to commence pre-market engagement with contractors to develop a Procurement Strategy for taking the agreed pitch sites under Phase 1 forward; and
- viii. agreed that a report on the digitising of the booking of pitches be submitted to the next monthly meeting of the Committee.

Revenue Estimates 2026/27

The Director of Finance submitted a report which provided an update on the rate setting process for 2026/27 following the receipt of a revised EPP.

The Committee:

- 1. Agreed that the following decisions would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an inability to immediately implement the decision would result in a breach of statutory duty in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2026;
- 2. Agreed to a district rate increase of 4.85%;
- 3. Agreed to recommend the following cash limits for 2026/27:
 - a. A cash limit of £59,697,436 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2026/27, including £900,000 for the Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal.
 - b. A cash limit of £111,192,369 for the People and Communities Committee for 2026/27.

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- c. A cash limit of £23, 958,554 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2026/27.
 - d. A cash limit of £2,965,419 for the Planning Committee for 2026/27.
 - e. A Capital Financing Budget of £25,774,022 for 2026/27.
- 4. Agreed the use of EPR monies to fund Kerbside Phase 3 roll out and to improve waste collection and management services;
 - 5. Agreed growth of £613,887;
 - 6. Agreed to establish a growth fund of £4,356,113 for 2026/27; and
 - 7. Agreed the next steps to be taken as outlined in paragraph 10 of the report.

Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, that the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 9th February for ratification.

Chairperson