

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 13th 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, Doran, Ferguson, Garrett, Long, Maghie, I. McLaughlin, Murphy, Murray, Nelson, Ó Néill, Walsh, and Whyte.

Also in attendance: Councillors Groogan and R. McLaughlin.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive; Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services; Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance Manager; and Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance Coordinator.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf Councillor Smyth.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following item 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 item 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.

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Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2026/27

The Director of Finance presented the report regarding the Revenue Estimates and District Rate for 2026/27.

Proposal 1

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

This Council agrees to deliver two GAA pitches, an intermediate soccer pitch and small sided games pitches at Boucher Rd playing fields.

The Council also recognises the value of major concerts and events to Belfast and notes ongoing concerns about the continued use of Boucher Road Playing Fields as the primary venue.

The Council commits to working with the large scale events sector, statutory partners, and local stakeholders to identify and assess suitable alternative sites across the city for 2028. This will include consideration of locations such as Ormeau Park, the Titanic Slipways, and the former Sirocco Works site, without limiting the scope to these options.

A report will be brought back within two months outlining viable alternative concert sites, feasibility issues, and engagement plans to support a long term strategy for hosting major events in Belfast

On a vote, ten Members voted for the proposal and nine against and it was declared carried.

Proposal 2

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

Resolved - That the Committee agrees that Suffolk and Hammer Pitches be the proposed projects for submission under the DCMS/IFA Fund.

Proposal 3

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees that the increase in the district rate for 2026/27 should be set at 4.25%, with the reduction being made from in-year underspend and an efficiency savings target of £519,000.

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During discussion, several Members raised concerns in relation to the competency of the proposal.

The Chief Executive, as the Chief Financial Officer of the Council, explained the robust process which had been undertaken in setting the rate, as outlined in the report. He reminded the Committee that the budget needed to be capable of absorbing external factors in a changing environment.

The City Solicitor advised that, as the proposal did not specify how the reduction to the proposed rate increase would be delivered, the proposal was not, in her view, competent, however, the decision to put the proposal to the Committee was with the Chairperson.

The Chairperson stated that, following advice from officers that the proposal was not deemed to be legally competent, the proposal would not be put to the Committee for a vote.

After discussion, the recommendations, as outlined in the report were put to the Committee and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee:

1. Agreed that the decisions under points 1-5 should 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. Confirmed the cash limits agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 9th February as follows:
 - a) A cash limit of £59,697,435 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2026/27, including £900,000 for 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.
 - 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.
 - f) A growth fund of 4.2m;
3. Agreed that the increase in the district rate for 2026/27 should be 4.48%, based on an estimated penny product of £6,652,130 meaning a non-domestic rate of 34.2388 and a domestic rate of 0.4492 and that the amount raised through the district rate in 2026/27 will be £220,388,739;
4. Noted the Chief Executive statement on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and the robustness of the revenue estimates as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011;

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5. Noted the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (Appendix 5) as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011;
6. Agreed that:
 - a. The Council delivers two GAA pitches, an intermediate soccer pitch and small sided games pitches at Boucher Rd playing fields.
 - b. The Council also recognised the value of major concerts and events to Belfast and noted ongoing concerns about the continued use of Boucher Road Playing Fields as the primary venue.
 - c. The Council committed to working with the large scale events sector, statutory partners, and local stakeholders to identify and assess suitable alternative sites across the city for 2028. This would include consideration of locations such as Ormeau Park, the Titanic Slipways, and the former Sirocco Works site, without limiting the scope to these options.
 - d. A report would be brought back within two months, to outline viable alternative concert sites, feasibility issues, and engagement plans to support a long term strategy for hosting major events in Belfast; and
7. That the Committee agrees that Suffolk and Hammer Pitches be the proposed projects for submission under the DCMS/IFA Fund.

Standing Order 14 - Submission of Minutes

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed that, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 13th February, 2026, for ratification.

Chairperson