

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall
on Tuesday, 5th May, 2026 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillors McAteer and McCormick.

Declarations of Interest

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in relation to the item 'Planning Information' in that he was on the Board of Governors of Forge Integrated Primary School.

Councillors P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe, McCann and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Minutes of the Shared City Partnership Meeting' in that they were employed by or associated with organisations which were in receipt of PEACEPLUS funding.

Councillors Beattie, Bradley, Canavan, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, Duffy, Groogan and McCann declared an interest in relation to the item 'Social Supermarket Fund' in that they were employed by or associated with organisations which had applied for or were in receipt of funding.

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Councillors Doran and McCabe declared an interest in relation to the item 'Summer Community Diversionary Fund' in that they were associated with an organisation which had applied.

Councillors Duffy, Groogan and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'City Innovation' in that they were associated with an Area Partnership.

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to the item 'Potential Additional Funding from Special EU Programmes Body - Local PEACEPLUS Action Plans' in that his employer was involved in the delivery of projects.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to item 'Summit of the Cities 2026' in that his employer organised the event.

As the above-mentioned items did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors R. M. Donnelly, Duffy, Lyons and Whyte declared an interest in relation to the item 'NICVA Summit 2026' in that they were associated with the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

Councillors Bunting, D. Douglas, Doran and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item 'Request for Funding' in that they were associated with applicants and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

**Minutes of the People
and Communities Committee**

Councillors Black, Bradley Canavan M. Donnelly, Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item 'Integrated Advice Partnership and Community Support Funding 2026/27' in that they were associated with organisations which had applied for or were in receipt of funding.

Councillor Doran declared an interest in relation to the item 'Summer Schemes – Children with Additional Needs' in that he was associated with an organisation in receipt of funding.

As the above-mentioned items did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item 'Notice of Motion - Pilot Drug and Pill Testing Facilities at Major Events and Festivals', in that he worked for the Public Health Agency, and he left the meeting for the duration of the item.

**Minutes of the City Growth
and Regeneration Committee**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item 'Vacant to Vibrant Programme Update' in that her employer was in receipt of a grant through the scheme.

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Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to the item 'Employability and Skills Update' in that his employer managed the Employability and Skills Provider Network.

As the above-mentioned items did not become the subject of debate, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Notices of Motion

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to the motions 'Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler and E-Scooter Use in Belfast' and 'University of Ulster to rescind decision to cut 450 jobs' in that his wife was the Minister of Justice and he left the meeting whilst those items were under consideration.

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to the motion 'Calling for University of Ulster to rescind decision to cut 450 jobs' in that his partner was a Junior Minister in the Executive and he left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to the motion 'Calling for University of Ulster to rescind decision to cut 450 jobs' in that the University of Ulster was a client of his employer and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Kelly),
Seconded by Councillor Bunting, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council of 1st and 23rd April, 2026, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Councillor Walsh marked the 45th anniversary of the death of Bobby Sands.

Councillor Ó Néill congratulated former Cliftonville Football Club and Northern Ireland captain, Marissa Callaghan, who had been recently inducted into the Northern Ireland Football Writers' Association Hall of Fame.

Councillor Bunting condemned the recent attack on Dunmurry Police Station.

Councillor R. Brooks welcomed that the Sign Language Bill had passed its final stage in the Northern Ireland Assembly and thanked the Minister for Communities for bringing the Bill forward.

Councillor R. M. Donnelly commended the families of the five civilians killed in the Springhill/Westrock area of West Belfast in 1972 for their strength and resilience throughout their fight for justice.

Councillor McKeown paid tribute to local actor Michael Campbell (Patrick) who had recently passed away following a courageous battle with Motor Neurone Disease (MND). At the request of Councillor McKeown, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of condolence to his wife on behalf of the Council.

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Councillor Maghie congratulated CI Ladies Hockey Club on the recent success of several of its teams and praised the work of the club and its volunteers. At the request of Councillor Maghie, the Lord Mayor agreed to send a letter of congratulations to the club.

Councillor Lyons paid tribute to all those who had participated in the Belfast City Marathon and highlighted the efforts of brothers Cian and Jordan Adams from Redditch, Worcestershire, who had completed the marathon as part of thirty-two marathons in thirty-two days to raise money for research into frontotemporal dementia (FTD).

Councillor Long congratulated his party colleague Councillor McAteer and her husband on the recent birth of their son.

Councillor Collins commended Unite Hospitality workers who had organised a recent protest at Queen's University Belfast in response to the proposed closure of café outlets at the University and the potential loss of jobs.

Councillor Doran congratulated Ballysillan resident Louisa Wilson who had recently celebrated her 105th birthday.

Councillor de Faoite extended his condolences to the Donaldson and Shiels families on the recent passing of Marie Donaldson who had been an integral member of the Rosario community on the Ormeau Road through her work with the youth and football clubs.

Change of Membership on Outside Body

The Chief Executive advised the Council that notification had been received from the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) which indicated that it wished to replace the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty) with Councillor Whyte on the Board of the Ulster Orchestra.

The Council noted the change.

Requests to Address the Council

University of Ulster Job Cuts

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the notice of motion on the agenda regarding the University of Ulster's decision to cut 450 jobs.

The Council acceded to the request and the Lord Mayor welcomed Ms. Aisling O'Beirn and Mr. Paddy Mackel of the University and College Union (UCU), and Mr. Albert Hewitt of Unite the Union (Unite) to the meeting

Ms. O'Beirn and Mr. Mackel welcomed the motion on the agenda, which would be proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Flynn, and outlined the devastating impact the potential job losses would have on the University, its staff and students. They stated that the University's decision would cut a substantial number of the workforce and would have a significant negative impact on staff workloads and the education of students.

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The deputation raised concerns in respect of how the University communicated its decision with staff and highlighted that there was considerable uncertainty amongst staff, current students and potentially prospective students.

Ms. O'Beirn and Mr. Mackel advised the Council that the three trade unions within the University, namely UCU, Unite and Unison, were all united in their opposition to the potential job losses and called on the University of Ulster to rescind its decision to cut 450 jobs.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for their presentation and they left the meeting.

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

The Lord Mayor advised that a request to address the Council had been received in relation to the notice of motion on the agenda regarding Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD).

The Council acceded to the request and the Lord Mayor welcomed Ms. Melanie Law and Ms. Katie Watson to the meeting.

Ms. Watson explained that Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) was an endocrine disorder and was the abnormal reaction to fluctuations in hormones. She reported that 82% of people with PMDD experienced suicidal ideations and that 34% of people with the condition had attempted suicide. Ms. Watson stated that, although PMDD affected 1 in 20 women, more needed to be done within the education system and the medical profession to raise awareness of the condition and develop specialist advice services in order to help support people with PMDD.

Ms. Law described to the Council her experience of living with the condition which included her physical, emotional and mental symptoms. She outlined the impact that PMDD had on her daily life and career and highlighted the importance of increased awareness and education of the condition.

The deputation urged Members to support the motion on the agenda, which would be proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor Maghie, and stated that it was crucial to help raise awareness of PMDD and could potentially save lives.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for their presentation and they left the meeting.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Brennan,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

“That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th and 30th April, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.”

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NICVA Summit 2026

At the request of Councillor Murray, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th April, 2026, under the heading “NICVA Summit 2026” be amended to provide that the Council contribute £20,000 of sponsorship to support the NICVA 2026 Summit event.

Notices of Motion - Quarterly Update

At the request of Councillor Collins, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th April, 2026, under the heading “Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update” be amended to provide that the Notice of Motion ‘Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness’ (ID 331) remained open.

**Notice of Motion –
Proposed City Ambassadors Scheme**

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that the Notice of Motion ‘Proposed City Ambassadors Scheme’, proposed by Councillor Long and seconded by Councillor Nelson, which was considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 24th April, 2026, be amended to include the following paragraph:

“Proposals shall be brought back to the Committee in respect of addressing the gender imbalance amongst recipients of the Freedom of the City, including a process, in consultation with the women's sector, to identify four women who have made a lasting positive impact in Belfast, to be awarded the Freedom of the City as part of the International Women’s Day programme of events in March 2027.”

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“This Council will introduce a City Ambassadors scheme which recognises those in the city who have made outstanding contributions in various sectors. These individuals will have a formal role in promoting Belfast.

This new scheme will be more inclusive and allow for more diverse recognition than the Freedom of the City scheme and allow us to better recognise the achievements of those in Belfast.

Proposals shall be brought back to the Committee in respect of addressing the gender imbalance amongst recipients of the Freedom of the City, including a process, in consultation with the women's sector, to identify four women who have made a lasting positive impact in Belfast, to be awarded the Freedom of the City as part of the International Women’s Day programme of events in March 2027.”

Bonfire Update

At the request of Councillor Bunting, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 30th April, 2026, under the heading “Bonfire

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Update” in relation to the temporary fencing of bonfire sites, be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

Requests for Funding

At the request of Councillor I. McLaughlin, the Council agreed that the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 30th April, 2026, under the heading “Requests for Funding” be amended to provide that the Director of Finance submit a report to the Committee which would outline how the remaining requests could be funded.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th and 30th April, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee were thereupon approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain,
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 14th April, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Notice of Motion - Pilot Drug and Pill Testing Facilities at Major Events and Festivals

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that the Notice of Motion ‘Pilot Drug and Pill Testing Facilities at Major Events and Festivals’ proposed by Councillor Murray and seconded by Councillor Smyth, which was adopted by the People and Communities Committee at its meeting on 14th April, 2026, be amended to provide that Queen’s University Belfast be included as part of the Council’s engagement with relevant stakeholders.

Integrated Advice Partnership and Community Support Funding 2026/27

At the request of Councillor R.M. Donnelly, the Council agreed that the minute of the People and Communities Committee of 24th April, 2026, under the heading “Integrated Advice Partnership and Community Support Funding 2026/27” be amended to reflect the Committee’s decision for the uplift payments in respect of the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund to be distributed on an ‘equal split’ basis as set out within option 2 of the report.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 14th April, 2026, were thereupon approved and adopted.

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

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

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 15th April, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 22nd April, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 21st April, 2026, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor Hanvey,
Seconded by Councillor McKay and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 29th April, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor S. Douglas and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 16th April, 2026, be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 28th April, 2026, be approved and adopted.

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Notices of Motion

**Premenstrual Dysphoric
Disorder (PMDD)**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

“This Council recognises that April is PMDD Awareness Month. PMDD stands for Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder, which is an endocrine disorder and is the abnormal reaction to fluctuations in hormones.

This Council notes that PMDD affects 1 in 20 women and those assigned female at birth and has serious impacts on their mental and physical health. Symptoms can be emotional, physical and psychological including mood swings, fatigue, pain and suicidal ideations, and can affect those with the conditions for up to two weeks of every month. 34% of those with the condition have attempted to take their own life, yet despite how serious the condition can be there is a lack of training and awareness of the condition throughout GPs and medical practitioners. It can take twelve years to get a diagnosis and it can often be misdiagnosed and therefore mistreated as bipolar disorder.

This Council will write to the Department of Health to ask them what training and awareness campaigns they provide for medical practitioners of the symptoms of PMDD and will also write to the Public Health Agency to ask them to launch a public campaign to highlight the condition and how to track the symptoms.

This Council will work with the PMDD Project to hold workshops for councillors and all council staff to provide more awareness and information of how to get help for the condition.”

The motion was put to the Council and passed.

**Tackling Anti-Social Scrambler
and E-Scooter Use in Belfast**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks,

“Belfast City Council expresses serious concern at the growing impact of antisocial scrambler and e-scooter use across the city, which has caused significant distress to residents, poses a clear risk to public safety and, in some cases, has resulted in serious injury and loss of life.

The Council recognises that, when used responsibly and in appropriate settings, such vehicles can have legitimate recreational value; however, their

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misuse in residential areas, parks and public spaces is causing serious and growing concern across Belfast.

The Council notes ongoing enforcement challenges and the need for stronger, more effective interventions to tackle dangerous use and repeat offending.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to:

- write to the Minister of Justice calling for strengthened powers for the PSNI to seize and, where appropriate, retain or dispose of vehicles being used in a dangerous or antisocial manner;
- call for the introduction of mandatory registration of scramblers and e-scooters at the point of sale;
- support the provision of additional enforcement tools, including the use of drone technology and dedicated resources to assist in identifying and tackling offenders; and
- request a detailed briefing from the PSNI — open to all Members — on enforcement activity, hotspot areas, and barriers to effective action within Belfast.”

Amendment

Moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Doherty),
Seconded by Councillor McCusker,

“After the final bullet point, insert:

- *support the development of community-led intervention schemes, aligned with the justice system and delivered in partnership with local schools, youth centres, community organisations and statutory agencies, alongside the exploration of dedicated, safe and properly managed sites for scrambler use, recognising that similar targeted programmes have shown significant reductions of dangerous and antisocial use by engaging young people directly and providing safer, structured alternatives.”*

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“Belfast City Council expresses serious concern at the growing impact of antisocial scrambler and e-scooter use across the city, which has caused significant distress to residents, poses a clear risk to public safety and, in some cases, has resulted in serious injury and loss of life.

The Council recognises that, when used responsibly and in appropriate settings, such vehicles can have legitimate recreational value; however, their misuse in residential areas, parks and public spaces is causing serious and growing concern across Belfast.

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The Council notes ongoing enforcement challenges and the need for stronger, more effective interventions to tackle dangerous use and repeat offending.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to:

- write to the Minister of Justice calling for strengthened powers for the PSNI to seize and, where appropriate, retain or dispose of vehicles being used in a dangerous or antisocial manner;
- call for the introduction of mandatory registration of scramblers and e-scooters at the point of sale;
- support the provision of additional enforcement tools, including the use of drone technology and dedicated resources to assist in identifying and tackling offenders;
- request a detailed briefing from the PSNI — open to all Members — on enforcement activity, hotspot areas, and barriers to effective action within Belfast; and
- support the development of community-led intervention schemes, aligned with the justice system and delivered in partnership with local schools, youth centres, community organisations and statutory agencies, alongside the exploration of dedicated, safe and properly managed sites for scrambler use, recognising that similar targeted programmes have shown significant reductions of dangerous and antisocial use by engaging young people directly and providing safer, structured alternatives.”

The motion as amended was put to the Council and passed.

**Calling for University of Ulster
to rescind decision to cut 450 jobs**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

“This Council:

- expresses deep concern at the announcement of up to 450 redundancies at University of Ulster (UU);
- stands in solidarity with workers at UU in campuses in Belfast and across the north against these jobs losses;
- calls on and will write to senior University of Ulster management urging them to rescind these proposals to protect jobs and educational provision;

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- will also write to the Economy Minister requesting an urgent intervention by the Stormont Executive to protect jobs and educational provision in UU; and
- supports the UCU, UNITE and other trade unions representing workers at UU and supports action to resist the loss of 450 jobs and the resultant impact on educational provision.”

The motion was put to the Council and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson