

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 12th January, 2021

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Baker (In the Chair);
Alderman Rodgers; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, Michael Collins, Corr,
de Faoite, Flynn, Garrett, M. Kelly, Magee, McAteer,
McCusker, McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton,
Pankhurst, Smyth and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Ms. J. Wilson, Business Manager;
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Also In attendance: Councillors Beattie, Kyle and O'Hara.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Cobain.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 7th January with the following addition - "the City Solicitor agreed that the briefing paper which was to be submitted to a future meeting in respect of the legislation that existed around bats and their habitats, would also include:

- a legal opinion outlining whether the Council, having asked one promotor to carry out an environmental assessment for the use of Botanic Gardens, had set a precedent to require all future promotors to do the same; and
- any relevant legal considerations which the Committee should be aware of in relation to the potential 24 hour opening of the Council's Parks."

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McAteer declared an interest in relation to item 2(b) on the agenda, Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces. – Belfast MELA 2021, in that a family member was an employee of ArtsEkta. Councillor Newton declared an interest in relation to item 4(d), Response to the Food Standards Agency Consultation, as he was an employee of an organisation which provided support to the Food Standards Agency.

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Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 2 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 Committee meeting during discussion on the following 3 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Finance Update

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources, at its meeting on 31st July, had received an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position and a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures, which had and would be taken as the situation evolved. It had agreed to continue to provide Members with a monthly update on the financial position and that the same report would be presented to the subsequent standing Committees for noting and to provide further information on ongoing work.

The Director of City Services provided a verbal update to the Committee to highlight the ongoing difficulties that staff within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department were experiencing due to the impacts of Covid on capacity and resilience to try to ensure the continued delivery of essential services.

The Members discussed the ongoing response to the tightened restrictions, including recent announcements in respect of working from home, the closure of schools, shielding advice and increased infection rates and the impact that this was having on the continuity of services. The Members were asked to note that the main focus for the organisation at present and in the immediate future was sustaining and maintaining operations for critical and vital services.

The Director also highlighted that some of the Motions and Issues Raised and being brought forward might take more time to progress and asked that the Members note the increasing pressure on staff and the organisation at this time.

Several Members commended the officers for their ongoing work and commitment during the pandemic and asked that their thanks be conveyed to all the staff for their continued dedication to ensure the delivery of vital Council services. The Members unanimously agreed with the proposed more balanced approach in regard to Motions and Issues being raised to try and help alleviate some of the pressure on staff.

The Committee noted the December 2020 financial update and verbal update from the Director.

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Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces – Belfast MELA 2021

The Committee considered a report which sought permission from ArtsEkta seeking to use Botanic Gardens to deliver the Belfast Mela in Botanic Gardens on 28th and 29th August 2021 and also seeking financial support for the event.

The Committee approved the use of Botanic Gardens for the above event and to provide £20,000 financial support, subject to the following:

- that Officers consider how the financial investment strands for this event could be streamlined and aligned under the Cultural Strategy, via the Economic Development Unit and the Core Multi Annual Grant (CMAG).
- that the appropriate legal agreements for the events, including bond arrangements be prepared to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor;
- that the Event Organisers meet all statutory requirements and responsibilities, including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, Food Safety and licensing and adhere to any Covid 19 regulations;
- the timely payment of the bond as required in the legal agreements; and
- that Event Organisers consult with public bodies and local communities as necessary.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

Motion – Creating Better Access into the Hills

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 7th January, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Donnelly and seconded by Councillor Garrett, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“As a City, one of Belfast’s best natural attributes is its surrounding hills and landscape. The Cavehill and Divis mountains offer spectacular views of the city that visitors and Belfast residents flock to all year around to enjoy.

More so now than ever before, locations like Divis mountain offers space for outdoor recreation and essential health and well-being. As a city council we must work with partners to develop a plan which is respectful of the natural environment and surrounding area but also supports the increased demand for parking and user facilities at Divis Mountain.

Therefore, we call on this Council, working alongside partners in the Department of Infrastructure, The National Trust and the Belfast Hills Partnership, to develop and implement a resourced plan for enhanced user facilities, including parking at the Divis Mountain walk site on Divis Road, Hannahstown, as well as cyclist parking and to explore the creation of further access points into the hills from different locations across the city which in

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itself will take pressure of the car park and allow residents to access the hills on foot from their neighbouring communities.”

Councillor Garrett addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion. He stated that, whilst he was keen to see the initiative progressed, he was aware of the ongoing pressures that the Council officers were currently experiencing as a result of the ongoing pandemic. He highlighted that he was keen that the Council remained involved in discussions around the further opening up of the hills and whilst he did not wish to Council to take the lead in progressing the initiative, he was keen for it to continue to link in and engage with the various other stakeholders.

The Committee:

- adopted the motion seeking for the Council to continue to be involved with the work to create better access to the Belfast Hills and agreed that an update report on the progress of the various stakeholders be submitted to a future meeting; and
- noted the pressure that officers were experiencing to ensure the continued delivery of services during the ongoing pandemic and that, as liaison would have to take place with external stakeholders, there was likely be a delay in the report coming back.

Motion – 30 by 30 Biodiversity Campaign

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 7th January, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor M. Kelly, had, in accordance with Standing Order 13(f), been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“This Council recognises the positive steps made during this term to improve its environmental commitments. It is also aware of the 30 by 30 pledge made by 64 Nations at the UN Biodiversity Summit in September 2020, to return 30% of land and sea to nature by 2030, and signals an ambition to reverse biodiversity loss within the next 10 years. This Council also notes the increasing awareness of the citizens of this city to the climate crisis and their willingness to play their part, no matter how small and, in this context, welcomes progress on the Council working with others to assist residents in transforming their alleyways and open spaces”

Building on this, the Council will develop and put together a 30 by 30 biodiversity campaign in collaboration with its partners that will educate, inform and support our citizens and communities to maximise the green spaces they have around their homes to support urban biodiversity throughout the city.

We believe that a 30 by 30 Biodiversity campaign can deliver positive benefits and can help meet this Council’s legal obligations under ‘The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011’ to further and strengthen biodiversity in this city for the decades to come.”

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Councillors Smyth and M. Kelly addressed the Committee and outlined the context of the motion. Both acknowledged that they whilst they were keen and excited to see the creation of a biodiversity campaign being progressed and for liaison to take place with other stakeholders they were mindful of the current pressures.

A Member highlighted his concern at the recent announcement that a neonicotinoid pesticide for use on crops that was believed to kill bees had recently been re-authorised for use in England, despite an EU-wide ban on its use outdoors two years ago and a government pledge to keep the restrictions.

A number of Members also spoke in support of the motion and stated that they were keen to see the rewilding and further enhancement of existing green spaces throughout the City.

The Committee:

- adopted the motion for the Council to develop and put together a 30 by 30 biodiversity campaign in collaboration with partners and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed be submitted to future meeting; and
- noted that, as liaison would have to take place with external stakeholders, there was likely be a delay in the report coming back due to current departmental pressures.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Multi-Agency Support Hubs - Belfast Pilot

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with details of the Multi-Agency Support Hub concept and to seek a decision on Council’s participation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- **Agree to Council’s participation as outlined in the report below and to support Botanic DEA as the pilot area.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 The Multi Agency Support Hub concept brings key professionals together to facilitate early, better quality

information sharing and decision making to work together to improve a vulnerable person's situation. Support hubs are designed to help vulnerable people get access to the right support, at the right time, from the right organisation in their local area in keeping with the following principles:

3.2

- Accurately assessing and meeting need. (Information sharing)
- Enabling agencies to cooperate in order to prevent 'persons of concern' from suffering significant harm. (Coordinated intervention)
- Promoting sound decision making. (Collaborative decision making)
- Ensuring the provision of appropriate services – and the integration of these into a coherent plan.
- Avoiding duplication of assessments and service provision.
- Ensuring compliance with statutory duties.
- Preventing 'persons of concern' from having to repeat their 'stories'.
- Reducing the impact of harm and promoting good outcomes for 'persons of concern'.
- Preventing or managing risk with respect to 'persons of concern',

3.3

All partners are equal within the Multi-Agency Support Hub with a chairing organisation/individual identified from within the group. Administrative support is normally provided by the Community Safety Team within each local authority but this has yet to be discussed for Belfast (with a small amount of additional financial support available from Department of Justice to cover costs).

3.4

The Support Hubs can help people who may be experiencing a range of problems. This can include being a victim of ongoing antisocial behaviour or crime. Other people may need support in order to avoid being drawn into behaviour which may lead to offending. Others may find themselves in difficult situations which can affect their personal safety, physical or mental health. The person seeking help will be asked for their consent to be supported by the hub as the individual's opinions and welfare are at the centre of any decision and action taken. Support Hubs firmly focus on reducing the vulnerability for individuals.

3.5

With specific focus on early intervention, the work of those in the support hub also includes identifying concerns about individuals who as yet may not have been referred to the hub.

In these cases, agencies will work together to provide early intervention with individuals in order to reduce vulnerability and improve wellbeing.

- 3.6 To date, Belfast is the only local authority area in Northern Ireland without an operating Multi-Agency Support Hub.

Belfast Support Hub Proposal

- 3.7 The proposal for the Belfast Support Hub was discussed with partner agencies (detailed below) at a collective meeting on 17/01/2020.

- 3.8 **Proposed Partners:**

- PSNI
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Local Council
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Youth Justice Agency
- Probation Board for NI
- Education Authority
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

- 3.9 Representatives from these agencies participating in other Support Hubs were present and were all very positive in relation to the benefits it brings, specifically acknowledging the following:

- Having health partners around the table ensures that where there may be an underlying mental health issue contributing to the wider vulnerability, it can be properly identified and the person appropriately supported.
- It creates streamlined information sharing arrangements. There is no need for ISA or GDPR considerations as this is all done with the persons consent.
- Opportunity to refresh existing collaborative structures and focus service on the most vulnerable
- Co-ordinated support and cutting down on duplication of work by different services
- Improving the life of vulnerable people in society whilst at the same time easing the pressure on front line services.
- Focuses on the underlying causes of problems, facilitates information exchange and contributes to early intervention.

- 3.10** It was acknowledged however, that in Belfast there are a range of existing multi-agency working arrangements e.g. Family Support Hubs, Anti-Social Behaviour Forums. Whilst this is the case, there remain a significant number of individuals who are not meeting the threshold for the more specialist services in these multi-agency groups but may still require additional help and support from more than one agency. These individuals often do not know who to turn to for help and will contact multiple organisations or engage in the wrong services because their needs are not being looked at holistically.
- 3.11** It is for this reason partners agreed that because Belfast was a much larger area than other local authority areas and also had higher degrees of vulnerability, it would be extremely complex to establish Support Hub arrangements across the city and that a pilot area should be taken forward to test the concept in Belfast. A Support Hub pilot area will allow for appropriate evaluation and ‘ironing out’ of any implementation challenges in a Belfast context before consideration is given to whether a wider roll out is appropriate and it should not automatically be assumed it will work effectively in Belfast, just because it works in other local authorities in Northern Ireland.
- 3.12** Following discussion on possible pilot areas, Botanic DEA was suggested as a suitable area for a pilot within Belfast. The reasons for this were that it is a diverse community with a range of complex needs, there are high levels of crime and ASB and there is a mixture of settled and transient communities co-existing within the area.
- 3.13** Partners present at the meeting agreed that Botanic DEA should be the pilot area within Belfast, however, Council Officers present reminded those at the meeting that a formal Council position could only be taken on this after Committee decision and ratification at Full Council.
- 3.14** The Support Hub concept aligns well to the Belfast Agenda, Belfast: Our Recovery and our Inclusive Growth agenda ensuring all partners in the city work to make life better for residents, support vulnerable people more effectively by addressing any barriers they face, supporting early intervention/prevention and ensuring Belfast’s success can reach every citizen.
- 3.15** For Members information, the proposal for a Multi-Agency Support Hub Pilot to be established in the Botanic DEA has been endorsed by Belfast PCSP and the Living Here Board of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership.

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- 3.16 Members are asked to consider if they will endorse this and Council's participation in the pilot.**

Next Steps:

- 3.17 If Council endorses the recommendation that there should be a Support Hub Pilot established in Botanic DEA, a small project team of Officers from each partner agency will be pulled together to plan implementation.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.18 There are not expected to be any financial implications beyond staff time. In other local authorities, administrative support is usually provided by the Community Safety Team within the Council. This is yet to be agreed for Belfast and will need to be considered carefully considering the high demands on Council Officers at present. Department of Justice will provide a small grant to cover administrative costs for up to 3 years.**

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

- 3.19 None at present, but will be kept under continuous review."**

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Committee Update on Local Air
Quality Management Matters**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The Committee will be aware that a number of ambient air quality initiatives and projects have been progressed by officers within the City and Neighbourhood Services Department during 2020. Including the development of new Air Quality Action Plan for the city, procurement of consultancy services to deliver a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and the provision of local site operator and technical project support to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to enable research into the chemical composition of particulate matter within the city, to include the role of ammonia (NH₃) in formation of local particulate matter. An update report on these initiatives and projects was provided to the Committee at its meeting of 8th September 2020.**

1.2 This report serves to provide a further 'year-end' update to Committee and to provide an overview of the how these projects are to be progressed during 2021.

2.0 Recommendations.

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- Note contents of this report.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues.

3.1 Air Quality Action Plan

Committee Members will be aware that the current Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan is scheduled to conclude at the end of 2020. Accordingly, officers have already engaged with a range of government Departments, the Public Health Agency, local public transport providers, the Port of Belfast and sustainable environment and transport organisations in order to develop a new Air Quality Action Plan for the city. In accordance with government policy guidance, a Steering Group, comprising representatives from the above-mentioned organisations, has been convened in order to oversee development, implementation and delivery of the new Air Quality Action Plan.

3.2 Organisations represented on the Steering Group have recently provided the transport and related actions that each organisation proposes to implement throughout the anticipated 5-year duration of the Air Quality Action Plan in order to address any remaining nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) hot spots and to improve ambient air quality generally across the city. In addition, it is anticipated that the new Action Plan will also reflect actions to address fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) once the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide and fine particulate matter has been concluded and reported by December 2022.

3.3 The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has provided a standardised Action Plan template for local authorities and Steering Group partners to populate with their actions, under the headings of public health, planning and policy context, source apportionment, the required reduction in emissions, key priorities and action plan measures. It is for council officers, working alongside their Steering Group counterparts to now populate this Defra template in order to create a draft Air Quality Action Plan for the city. It is anticipated that the key components of the draft Action Plan will be

presented to the People and Communities Committee for consideration at its meeting of 9th February 2021.

- 3.4 In addition, and by way of a limited internal consultation, ahead of any formal engagement process that might be required in March and April 2021, it is proposed that the draft Action Plan will also be presented to the council's 'Living Here' Board in February 2021 in order to ensure consistency with the Belfast Agenda Community Plan. An overview of the draft Plan will similarly be presented to the Climate Plan Programme Board in order to ensure consistency with the council's Resilience Strategy and its associated actions on climate change. Subject to any comments received through both internal and other engagement processes being addressed within the Plan, it is anticipated that the Air Quality Action Plan will be presented to the 11th May 2021 meeting of the People and Communities Committee and to the June 2021 Council meeting for formal consideration and adoption.
- 3.5 The Air Quality Action Plan must then be uploaded to the Defra Local Air Quality Management Report Submission Website so that an appraisal of the technical aspects of the Plan can be completed. The outcome of this appraisal process is normally known within 4 to 6 weeks of the submission date. Where necessary, technical aspects of the Air Quality Action Plan will be amended to take account of the appraisers' comments and it is anticipated that the Action Plan can then be implemented from August or September 2021.
- 3.6 Detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5})
- Members were previously advised that officers had completed development of a detailed technical specification for the appointment of a suitably qualified and experienced environmental consultancy to deliver a detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) for the city. This specification has since been issued by way of local and European tenders, with the council's Air Quality and Procurement staff currently engaged in the evaluation process, with a view to appointing a contractor from early 2021.
- 3.7 The detailed assessment project will comprise additional ambient monitoring for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) across the city through the deployment of a number of small sensor air quality monitoring equipment; the development of an up to date local emissions inventory for the city for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) sources; and atmospheric dispersion

modelling employing the local emissions inventory data in order to generate spatial and temporal predictions for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) concentrations across the city. The dispersion modelling will also identify the locations and extents of any exceedences of national, European or WHO air quality standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}).

- 3.8 The detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) project is being supported via the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) local air quality management grant process and the project is scheduled to be concluded and reported by December 2022.

3.9 Installation of an Ion Chromatogram analyser at the Belfast Centre Lombard Street monitoring site

In the previous update report of 8th September 2020, Members were advised that as an addendum to the detailed assessment for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), council officers were liaising with their DAERA counterparts and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology regarding a project to identify and quantify the water-soluble gases and aerosols in air containing different sizes of particulate matter. The aim of this project was to aid in the better understanding of some of the chemical mechanisms involved in the formation of particulate matter in Belfast and across Northern Ireland. It was therefore proposed that council officers would undertake a local site operator role for the Monitor for AeRosols and Gases (MARGA) ion chromatogram equipment that was to be installed at the Belfast Centre Lombard Street monitoring site. Council air quality staff already provide local site operator functions for some of the analysers located at this Environment Agency operated monitoring station.

- 3.10 However, as a consequence of detailed discussions with DAERA and the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology staff regarding the technical and operational requirements of the Marga equipment, it was concluded that the project could not be reasonably and safely undertaken at the Lombard Street site at the current time due to various national, regional, travel and workplace Covid 19 restrictions. Accordingly, it has been proposed that delivery of this project will be revisited whenever Covid 19 restrictions and working practices safely permit.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

Permission for the public advertisement of Tender T2044 for ambient air quality assessment within the Council boundary for PM_{2.5} and NO₂ ambient pollutants was obtained at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting of Friday 24th January 2020. Funding of up to £125,000 to support delivery of the detailed assessment project has been secured from the DAERA Local Air Quality Management grant scheme for the 2020-2021 grant year.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments

None.”

Following a query, the Director advised that the consultants would determine, using data and evidence, where the monitors would be located throughout the City but added that this would be further down the line in the assessment process.

The Committee noted the update provided and also that a report in respect of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Discussion Document regarding the development of the first Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland would be submitted to the February meeting for consideration.

'Amazing Spaces Smart Places'
Small Business Research Initiative

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Committee with an update in regard to the progress of the 'Amazing Spaces Smart Places', Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) challenge.

He reminded the Members that funding had previously been secured from the Department of Economy (via the Department of Justice) to facilitate fully funded innovation contracts with a small number of SMEs to support the following objectives:

- to ensure that open spaces were more welcoming environments to be enjoyed by everyone;
- to increase the positive usage and animation of open spaces;
- to empower and involve communities;
- to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in open spaces in the City; and
- to reduce maintenance and security costs.

The Committee noted that the SBRI process was a 'pre-procurement' exercise, designed to enable SMEs with funding for research/design and prototyping to stimulate innovative solutions, services and products to meet public sector needs, it was used widely across both the UK and Ireland. Belfast City Council had previous experience leading on

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a successful SBIR project - the Rates Maximisation challenge in conjunction with Land and Property Services (LPS).

The Director advised that the Council had been successful in securing funding at both Phase 1 (£120K) and Phase 2 (£225K) to support the work and there was no cost to the Council. He reminded the Members that the Committee had previously identified the implementation of Phase 2 as a priority action in the 20/21 Committee Plan. The number of organisations in receipt of funding had reduced as the feasibility (technical and operational) and commercial viability (condition of the DfE funding) of proposed solutions had been worked through at each stage and Council was now working with two SMEs as part of Phase 2.

The Director then drew the Members' attention to two technological solutions that remained as potentially feasible and commercially viable, SparoWatch and Civic Dollar. He advised that both solutions had been fully developed and tested in a lab/office environment and on site testing was required for the prototypes in Quarter 4 2020/21 to determine effectiveness against the programme objectives and the technical robustness of the solutions.

SparroWatch was developing a range of technology to be used in Belfast's parks and open spaces. They were developing a combination of hardware and software that would be used to improve safety and park management and also designing battery-powered cameras that would provide a simple and low cost installation option to monitor parks. The cameras would be located at Ormeau, Falls Park/City Cemetery and Dunville Park. It was anticipated that the prototype would help to address the ongoing issues of vandalism and antisocial behaviour problems at these locations. SparroWatch would send a weekly statistical report to the Council (this would not contain any information that would enable the identification of individuals) but would analyse park usage in Belfast through insights generated by Google Maps.

The Civic Dollar prototype platform would be a unique product which would use a mixture of technology, psychology and gamification to encourage greater use of the parks and open spaces. It was anticipated that, if properly utilized, it would have the desired effect of encouraging people to visit parks, open spaces and attractions as well as affecting behavioral change and driving footfall to local businesses.

The Director explained that it was hoped that the prototype would encourage users to visit tourist areas across Belfast and Northern Ireland by creating geo-fences and earning CivicDollars whilst they visited which could then be traded with local hotels, restaurants and businesses. It would expand the functionality of the platform to allow more business to drive footfall back by trading CivicDollars for a greater range of goods and services and also allow businesses to trade CivicDollars with the government (central/local and with businesses) to encourage the use of the system (the viability of this was being tested as part of Phase 2).

The Committee noted that on site testing was initially planned for the parks/open spaces along the Connswater Community Greenway before a role out to a small number of other parks/open spaces across the North, South, East and West of the City.

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The Director advised that concerns about any privacy/data protection issues in relation to the proposed projects had been identified at the initiation stages and a full privacy/data protection screening exercise had been undertaken. He further advised that the Council's Information Governance Unit (within Legal Services) had been actively engaged in providing support to officers and the successful SME's in ensuring ongoing and full compliance with legislation and Information Commissioner Officer Guidance. Additionally, based on political and community feedback, proactive community engagement had been undertaken both by Officers and by the SME's themselves to provide reassurance that no data that would identify any individual would be used.

The Committee noted the update provided.

Response to the Food Standards Agency consultation on the review of the Food Law Code of Practice, Food Law Practice Guidance and implementation of the competency framework

The Committee considered the undernoted report and draft response available [here](#) to the Food Standards Agency consultation on the review of the Food Law Code of Practice, Food Law Practice Guidance and implementation of the competency framework.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) as the central competent authority for food and feed regulation in the UK, is responsible in overseeing the official (food law) controls undertaken by district councils. As part of this role the FSA provide a Food Law Code of Practice (FLCOP) and Practice Guidance (FLPG) for all district councils. The Food Law Code of Practice is statutory and gives instructions that district councils must consider when enforcing food law. Local authorities need to follow and implement the relevant sections of the Code that apply. The Practice Guidance is non-statutory and is offered as a complement to the statutory Code of Practice. The Practice Guidance gives general advice on the approach to enforcement of the law.

1.2 The most significant change to the FLCOP is the removal of the baseline qualifications previously required by Environmental Health Officers (EHO's) to work in the Food Safety and Port Health functions of a district council. This will instead be replaced with a Competency Framework to be assessed by the Lead Food Officers within the food safety and port health units of each district council.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the consultation and the draft consultation response.**

- Note the draft response was submitted in line with December deadline, subject to final response being submitted following committee consideration.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Under the current Food Law Code of Practice (Northern Ireland), officers authorised to carry out Food Safety official controls and other interventions to verify compliance with food law are required to have a baseline qualification issued by the Environmental Health Registration Board (EHRB) / Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH). This baseline qualification requires a period of practical training to have been completed prior to the officers' certification, and authorities are not permitted to authorise officers to carry out food safety official controls without that EHRB certification.
- 3.2 The proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice remove the necessity for the full certification from EHRB/CIEH. This change has been introduced as a result of the CIEH ceasing the provision of the baseline qualification assessment and the need to urgently recruit EHO's and Technical Officers (TO's) to the port health function ahead of EU exit.
- 3.3 Belfast City Council have already had to avail of this proposed change in the qualifications in order to recruit staff to the Port Health section, in preparation for EU exit. A derogation from the FSA was given to Belfast City Council in advance of the FLCOP consultation. In the consultation response the Lead Food Officer in Port Health has asked that the FSA give consideration to the implementation of the NI Protocol and the need for significant sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) checks on GB-NI trade. A review of the qualifications and competencies required to complete the checks on the documents that must accompany imported foods has been suggested. BCC suggest only EHRB qualified officers should be authorised to refuse entry to a food import if it fails by virtue of unsuitable accompanying documents, reject a consignment or take enforcement action.
- 3.4 The proposed Competency Framework will apply to all EHO's and TO's working in the Food Safety and Port Health functions, including those who already have the appropriate baseline qualifications issued by the CIEH and undergone the current FLCOP competency assessment. These EHO's and TO's are currently deemed authorised and competent to carry out official food safety controls appropriate to their role/unit. This proposal

will cause a time burden on district councils, both on EHO's and TO's completing the Competency Framework and on the Lead Food Officers assessing. The consultation response recognises the need for a replacement to the baseline qualification for new officers, however it presents the case for reducing the prescriptiveness and complexity of the proposed Competency Framework and that it should not be required for those who have the appropriate qualifications and competency.

Finance and Resource Implications

Financial

- 3.5 The FSA are not offering any financial assistance to compensate for the officer time that will be required to complete the proposed Competency Framework, which is currently estimated at 10 working days per officer and 4 days per officer for the Lead Food Officer to assess. The impact on the ability of the Food Safety team to absorb this will be kept under review.

Human Resources

- 3.6 There are no human resource implications.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report. A rural needs assessment is not required."

The Committee endorsed the draft response to the Food Standards Agency's consultation which had been submitted by the 10th December deadline and agreed that this be forwarded as the Council's final response.

Belfast City Council response to the new substance use strategy for Northern Ireland - "Making Life Better - Preventing Harm and Empowering Recovery: A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use"

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, 2019, it had agreed the Council's response to the pre-consultation exercise for the development of the new substance use strategy for Northern Ireland. Following the pre-consultation exercise, the Department of Health had now developed its draft strategy which it was consulting on. The consultation had opened on 30th October, 2020 and was scheduled to close on 5th February, 2021 at 5.00 p.m.

Several Members of the Committee welcomed the draft Council response that had been prepared by Council officers, available [here](#). They referred to the importance of

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addressing substance misuse and mental health issues and noted that the pressures of the ongoing pandemic had further exasperated many of these problems.

The Director concurred and advised that, as with the pre-consultation response, the Council had made the case within its response that the new strategy, and the structures associated with it, needed to integrate and align with community planning structures to ensure that both regional and local impact could be maximised.

A Member requested a specific addendum in relation to question 2 (d) and it was subsequently agreed that the Committee approved the draft consultation response and for it to be submitted to the Department of Health by the deadline of 5th February, 2021, subject to the following addition: at question 2 (d) 'that a citizens assembly is commissioned for NI to explore radical harm reduction'.

**Belfast City Airport Request - Rookery at Victoria Park:
Implications to Air Safety**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is for Members to consider a request from Belfast City Airport (BCA) to gain access to Victoria Park to carry out works to mitigate against perceived risk of bird strike from rooks. The request is as a result of the BCA reporting an increased frequency of rook occurrence around the airport and their plan to manage any associated risk, in line with their Wildlife Hazzard Assessment and the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.**

The requests seeks permission from the Council, via an agreement, to carry out works such as;

- 1. The removal of old rook nests by Mid-January 2021;**
- 2. Thinning of sheltering pines, structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy;**
- 3. Potential removal of nest foundations in late February/ March, should nest building resume.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members views are sought on the request from Belfast City Airport to grant them access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate;**

- 1. The removal of old rook nests by Mid-January 2021;**
- 2. Any necessary thinning of sheltering pines, structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy;**

3. Potential removal of rook nest foundations in late February / March 2021, should nest building resume.

Members are advised that any agreement would be developed by the Councils Legal Services Department and will include a requirement to ensure that any works are permissible, the required licences are in place, an effective communication plan is agreed and the needs of the park users are taken into consideration.

Any licence would be progressed under the Directors delegated authority, taking into consideration Members views.

3.0 **Main report**

Key Issues

- 3.1 In line with Belfast City Airport's national aerodrome license requirements and associated guidance material presented in CAP772: Wildlife Hazard Management at Aerodromes, the airport have a concern regarding the recent establishment of a rookery at Victoria Park.
- 3.2 In spring 2020, rooks formed a small colony containing 20 nests in the northern corner of the park - 300 metres from the airport's southern approach. As the habitat currently selected for nesting is prevalent throughout the park, the airport is concerned of the potential for this rookery to expand unless some level of intervention can be explored.
- 3.3 In response to officer request for more detailed supporting information, BCA submitted a report. The report outlines George Best City Airport's Wildlife Hazard Assessment. The assessment identifies the source of the risk, assesses the relative severity of the risk, and outlines the recommended action in order to reduce and maintain the risk to an acceptable level in compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.
- 3.4 In the interest of public safety and to meet their obligations to act with due diligence, the airport have identified the potential threat presented by the small rookery (circa. 20 nests) which became established at the northern corner of Victoria Park in spring 2020, 300 metres from the Airport's southern landing approach.
- 3.5 BCA are seeking to carry out initial remedial actions in the first instance which would involve the removal of old nests – outside of the breeding season - to prevent them advertising

the suitability of the site to new prospecting pairs. In order to mitigate against the associated risk, the old rook nests should be removed from trees by mid-January in advance of the 2021 nesting season in an attempt to reduce the area's attractiveness to prospecting rooks

- 3.6 As site fidelity after only one year might still be strong, any signs of rebuilding would need to be discouraged until the habitat can be modified to the extent that rooks no longer find it attractive. Such management prescriptions would include thinning of sheltering pines, strategic structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, and reducing shelter from high level ivy.
- 3.7 The concern is that rooks will start to rebuild nests this coming Spring. The intention is that the requested access to Victoria Park to support an early removal of nest foundations will decrease the probability of nesting at this site. The report suggests that, given there is similar habitat contiguous to the present rookery, it would be prudent to assume that after any breeding success the colony will likely expand further into the park.
- 3.8 The BCA report notes that if the proposed measures have limited success and nest building resumes, the issue of active discouragement by regular removal of nest foundations in late February/March becomes a more delicate necessity. They recognise this will require an active stakeholder communications plan in order to manage any negative feedback. They note that habitat modification should be explored as a longer-term solution going forwards from Autumn 2021.
- 3.9 Belfast City Airport have confirm that any necessary activity to mitigate against any risk would be exercised under a general wildlife licence. They note that habitat modification should be explored as a longer-term solution going forwards from Autumn 2021.
- 3.10 If members are minded to support the request, BCA will appoint a suitable contractor with previous experience to undertake the work.
- 3.11 If members are content, officers will review the submitted risk assessment and insurance certificates in line with procedure and work with Legal Services to issue the requested licence. The licence will include relevant conditions to ensure that Belfast City Airport confirm that all works is permissible and any required licences are in place to allow work to take place

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within the required timescales. The licence will also place an onus on Belfast City Airport to ensure that health and safety measures are implemented, essential signage is assembled, one-way systems are established where necessary, and any COVID specific mitigations are in place.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.12 BCA will be responsible for any costs associated with the request.**

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

- 3.13 None.”**

The Committee considered the request. A Member stated that he was content with the proposed preventative measures but asked that the Committee’s concern be highlighted to Belfast City Airport in regard to the potential removal of rook nest foundations in late February/March should nest building resume.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- Noted that any licence would be progressed under the Director’s delegated authority; and
- requested that the Director update the February meeting of the Committee in relation to the airports progress.

Operational Issues

Proposal for naming a new street

The Committee approved the application for naming a new street in the City as set out below:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Gardenmore Green	Off Summerhill Road, BT17	Radius Homes

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**CCTV equipment CS Lewis Square and to
Consider the CCTV needs for the remainder
of the Greenway - Councillor Newton**

Councillor Newton addressed the Committee and requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would further consider the erection of CCTV equipment at CS Lewis Square and along the Greenway.

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A Member raised concern in regard to ongoing antisocial behaviour in Council parks and open spaces. Discussion ensued in regard to role of CCTV, lighting and the animation of parks and open spaces and a request was made for an update report in respect of recent vandalism to parks and the associated remedial costs.

A further Member raised concern at the lack of gritting of the Greenways which were dangerous as people were falling and injuring themselves. The Members also discussed the lack of gritting of minor roads.

The Committee agreed:

- that reports in respect the erection of CCTV equipment at CS Lewis Square and along the Greenway, along with a update report in regard to the vandalism and the associated remedial costs to Council's parks, be submitted to a future meeting;
- Members noted that there was likely to be a delay in the reports coming back due to current departmental pressures; and
- agreed to write to the DfI Minister and the Chief Executive of Transport NI seeking the gritting of Greenways and more minor roads in the network.

Colaiste Feirste and Divis Back Path - Councillor Beattie

Councillor Beattie addressed the Committee and requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would try and progress the use of the school's sports facilities by the community when not being used by the school.

The Director of Neighborhood Services advised that a Service Level Agreement had been developed some time ago which had included arrangements for community use of the facilities. Officers were currently reviewing the agreement, in conjunction with Colaiste Feirste, and a further update report would be submitted in due course.

Chairperson