

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th February, 2021

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford;
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Garrett, Groogan,
Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown,
McLaughlin, McReynolds, Murphy, Pankhurst
and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of the High Sheriff (Councillor Long) and Councillor Carson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Haire declared an interest in respect of item 8b, Requests for the Use of the City Hall and the Provision of Hospitality, insofar as it related to an application from the County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast, on the basis that he was a Trustee of that organisation, and left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following eleven 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 these items as, due to

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the nature of the items, 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.

**Draft Consultation Response –
DfI Living With Water in Belfast**

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's approval the Council's draft response to the Living With Water in Belfast consultation document, which would inform the overall Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan for Belfast. Representatives of the Living With Water Programme had attended the Committee meeting in October to review the consultation document and had presented it to each of the four Area Working Groups in early January. The Council's draft response had been informed by the discussion at those meetings.

She pointed out that the following deputation from the Department for Infrastructure and NI Water was in attendance in order to provide a presentation on the issues raised within the Council's response and wider capacity issues within Belfast:

- Ms. L. MacHugh, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department for Infrastructure;
- Ms. S. Venning, Chief Executive, NI Water;
- Mr. S. Richardson, Living With Water Programme Director, Department for Infrastructure; and
- Mr. P. Brow, Head of Living With Water, NI Water.

The Committee was informed that the current Minister for Infrastructure was fully committed to the Living With Water Programme, as a means of delivering a new, strategic, long-term approach to drainage and wastewater management to protect from flooding, provide a cleaner and greener environment and ensure that Belfast was open for business and investment.

It was reported that the Living With Water in Belfast consultation period had closed on 29th January and that twenty-seven responses had been received to date, the majority of which had been supportive of the proposals set out within the document. A number of organisations, including the Council, had been granted additional time in which to submit their response. The next steps in the process were outlined and it was anticipated that Executive approval of the final plan would be secured in May/June.

In terms of funding, it was estimated currently that £1.4 billion would be needed to deliver all elements of the integrated drainage proposals over the next twelve years and the point was made that capital funding for NI Water had not, for some time, kept pace with Northern Ireland's needs.

The Committee was provided also with details on the findings of the annual review of the capacity of waste water treatment works for Belfast for 2020 and on a risk mitigation plan which had been implemented in October, 2020. The presentation concluded by referring to a

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waste water system capacity constraints map for Belfast and outlining the measures which NI Water had put in place to mitigate those constraints.

The deputation was thanked by the Chairperson, following which the Committee noted the information which had been provided and approved the following response to the Living With Water in Belfast consultation:

**Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan –
Consultation Response**

General Comments

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to this strategic consultation. Long term investment in drainage and waste water infrastructure is required to meet the ambition for growth of the City and to alleviate the impacts of climate change.

We support the adoption of an approach to the provision of drainage and wastewater infrastructure which promotes holistic and integrated solutions that achieve multiple benefits at reduced cost and disruption. Whilst it is recognised that significant investment will be required in more traditional ‘hard engineered’ infrastructure we welcome the acknowledged contribution that other sustainable measures such as Green and Blue Infrastructure and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can deliver. This sustainable approach is supported by both the Local Development Plan (LDP) as set out in the Draft Plan Strategy vision, aims, objectives and policies as well as in the council’s Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan.

With regard to the draft SDIP strategic context we welcome that it acknowledges (para 2.19, pg 23) that LWW and investment plans must contribute to the delivery of the Local Development Plan and Belfast Agenda as well as the council’s Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan, Open Space Strategy and Resilience Strategy.

It is noted that the document (para 4.16-4.17, page 51) makes reference to the growth aspirations as set out in the Belfast Agenda and indicates that their delivery could be impacted by the lack of capacity in the sewerage network and WwTWs. However, the Council welcomes that the SDIP clearly states that NI Water will honour their existing commitments to provide connections for previously approved applications (para 4.18, pg 51). Whilst the document is not able to define the precise quantum of connections to which this relates, the LDP monitoring data which has been shared with NI Water set out the estimates for dwellings units and commercial floorspace with planning approvals to inform that baseline position. In addition it was highlighted that additional commitments for other uses such as hotels and purpose-built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) needed to be recognised.

The extent of housing need/stress that exists within the City has been known for some time. Meeting that need is a priority for the City, recognised by a range of stakeholders. Accordingly NIW should be providing the necessary investment on a priority basis to ensure that that need can be met.

Whilst NI Water has indicated (para 4.18, pg 51) that without investment it may have to refuse new connections and that negative planning consultation responses may have to be provided it should be recognised that there is a criteria based assessment process under which new connections can be assessed to take account of past and extant consents. It is therefore considered that there is scope to avoid this scenario and it is vital that this is articulated in the document as a caveat alongside with the recognition that negative responses would absolutely only be as last resort. Innovation and local solutions should also be pursued where possible.

The phased approach as outlined in the Plan's strategic programme (pg 140) indicates that Belfast WwTW Phase 0, which is intended to provide an initial increase in capacity to permit positive responses to planning application consultations, is a committed/urgent project. Although delayed this should, by April 2023, allow some parts of the wastewater capacity constrained areas, as illustrated on the map on page 51, to be reassessed. In addition the potential for the majority of constraints to be removed by 2026/27, subject to funding, is also welcomed. This is well within the life of the LDP.

The timeframes suggest that there could potentially be a window within which there will be an increased possibility of negative consultation responses to planning applications. However, following discussions with NI Water and further clarification it is understood that the company are actively working to avoid this scenario through the consideration and development of a range of mitigation measures including:

- separation of storm and wastewater in new developments (to reduce the 'load' generated);
- increases in on-site storm water storage and SuDS to reduce impact during high levels of rainfall (where pressure on the system is at its highest);
- recognising and taking account of the existing permitted development and discounting it from proposed new developments;
- extensive pre-engagement with developers prior to applications being submitted;
- accepting the potential for like for like development; and

- utilising conditions/ informatives on consents highlighting that connection is not likely until 2023 or after.

The SDIP must reflect this potential mitigation and the proactive approach that can be brought forward in collaboration with the council as the planning authority.

The ambition of the comprehensive bid to deliver the Plan is recognised as challenging and it is considered as imperative that there should be clear prioritised investment for the LWWP elements that can be delivered in a phased manner should there be an inability to confirm the full capital allocation. This should clearly address what the priorities are to support the continued growth of the economy and any potential short term constraints – in recognition of the under investment that has occurred during the period of programme planning.

The priority status for the SDIP is supported by the NI Executive in the New Decade, New Approach document (January, 2020) where under the immediate priority of ‘Investing for the future’ (pg 8) it is stated that the Executive will “invest urgently in wastewater infrastructure which is at or nearing capacity in many places across Northern Ireland, including Belfast, limiting growth’. Furthermore, ‘New Decade, New Approach’ goes on to state (pg 52) that under the UK Government financial and economic commitments to Northern Ireland the Executive will benefit from increased capital infrastructure investment as a result of the UK Government’s infrastructure revolution and cites that “Essential sewage investment (LWWP)” as a capital project that will benefit from the funding. This concept of needing to ‘turbo-charge’ our infrastructure is further endorsed by the Ministerial Advisory Panel on Infrastructure in their October 2020 report ‘Turbo-charging Infrastructure to deliver cleaner, greener, sustainable and inclusive growth for all’.

Furthermore, Belfast must play a specific role as a driver for the regional economy as has been acknowledged in the Regional Development Strategy. Investment in Belfast is needed to sustain development in the city which will support growth in the region as a whole. As Northern Ireland’s first and largest city, its development still lags some way behind contemporary European cities. Accordingly investment in infrastructure needs to be prioritised in order to sustain growth, with a much wider collateral regional benefit.

The Council, therefore, welcomes the commitments as outlined regarding the need for urgent capital investment in water infrastructure however the Council believes that funding allocations to the sewerage system for Belfast should be commensurate with the current problems created by under investment to ensure that the city can play its full role as regional driver for the economy of NI, as set out in the RDS.

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The Council recognises that a partnership approach is required to address the drainage infrastructure challenges Belfast is currently experiencing. The Council will therefore continue to work with the Living with Water team, NI Water and key stakeholders to support the development and delivery of the sustainable drainage solutions that will help deliver the shared visions for the city. We urge the Department to continue this approach through the planning and implementation stages of this programme. This partnership approach should not only be between NI Water, DfI and BCC, but recognise a number of other key partners in the city who own substantial areas of land that will also be integral to the successful implementation of this programme including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Education Authority, the National Trust. The Council would also highlight the need to engage with private landowners in looking at options.

The Council welcomes the close working relationship that it has developed with the Living With Water Team and the Department in terms of the delivery of key projects under the SDIP including pilot projects which are being brought forward at Ballysillan Paying Fields (extending the river floodplain) and the proposed installation of leaky dams at Belfast Castle and at Forth River as part of the Council's Peace IV funded Forth Meadow Community project and would like to build on this going forward in the development and delivery of other key projects.

QUESTION 1: Do you agree that Belfast is facing significant drainage and wastewater management issues?	
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With Greater Belfast being the largest population and economic driver of Northern Ireland, it is vital that the challenges of flooding, barriers to development and the resulting impact on the community and economy are effectively addressed through long term solutions addressing climate change and much needed sustainable growth.

Climate change and the ambition for growth should be features which are considered in the development of an investment and infrastructure plan that sits parallel with the ambitions set out in the LDP. The resilience of the city to absorb shocks, whether they be environmental or economic, requires robust and integrated planning.

Appropriate infrastructure is a fundamental enabler of Northern Ireland's construction industry and any future growth ambitions. NI Water recently noted that 70 per cent of its network is over 50 years old and it has a legacy of underinvestment.

Whilst the injection of the £164m Belfast Sewers Project back in 2010 has had a positive impact on wider system, it is not in keeping with the pace of investment and development in Belfast. Alongside this, the sewerage networks were designed as combined systems with both

sewage and surface water flowing through the same pipes. The further separation of systems for dealing with sewage and surface water should be prioritised in terms of infrastructure development for the future as rainwater is currently pumped and treated unnecessarily. Excessive rainfall can overload the system resulting in flooding and pollution. The need for Combined Sewer Overflows are necessary to manage the flow of surface water and sewage appropriately. The provisions are clear within the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive sets minimum standards for the collection, treatment and discharge of urban waste water and controlling the state of the water environment. Both directives have a responsibility to protect water ecology, biodiversity and seek to protect against flood risk by determining the level and types of capital infrastructural investment that is necessary to alleviate the problem which will in turn have a multiplier effect for economic and environmental benefit.

The Belfast Agenda sets out a vision for Belfast in 2035 with an ambitious aspirations of increasing the population with an additional 66,000 residents to include 33,000 new homes and 46,000 additional jobs and 1.5m square feet of additional Grade A office space. This highlights the importance of appropriate sustainable development to make the city competitive and to connect people to opportunities. Fundamental to creating the conditions for and enabling this inclusive growth, is infrastructure. The Belfast Agenda also recognises that there are gaps in Belfast's key infrastructure which must be addressed if the city is to grow. The Agenda identifies that infrastructure planning and investment for Belfast needs to be taken forward in a strategic and integrated way and a core goal of the Agenda is to create a partnership and plan for sustainable urban infrastructure.

The infrastructure investment should be targeted to release the greatest economic potential and support inclusive economic development that provides the opportunity to sustainably increase GVA, and the ability of the region to compete internationally. The Council would therefore re-iterate that funding allocations to the sewerage system for Belfast should be commensurate with the current problems created by under investment to ensure that the city can play its full role as regional driver for the economy of NI.

The Belfast Resilience Strategy identifies the central importance of infrastructure to the city's economic and climate resilience and includes a number of recommendations for reform, in particular the importance of integration of infrastructure, and of systems efficiency. The strategy was developed following detailed analysis of what works in similar cities. A key learning from this analysis is the importance of good infrastructure in attracting capital to ensure sustainable funding models over the short and long term.

It must also be noted that, until the LWWP is fully implemented, existing partnership engagement remains critical to plan, respond and recover

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from the flooding risks which are faced by the City. Such linkages include for example Belfast City Council's Emergency Plan, Belfast Emergency Preparedness Group (Multi-agency Partners) and the Regional Community Resilience Group (Multi-agency Group focused on promoting and supporting resilient communities).

The risks posed to Belfast from tidal inundation, particularly in the City Centre are sobering – Belfast Tidal Flood Alleviation Scheme with 8.6km of new flood defences seeks to address this, however the scheme is complex with lots of engagement with different land owners required. This is taking longer to deliver than initially envisaged. This is only one scheme, so in order to implement the LWWP and integrated plan huge emphasis must be placed on delivering a collaborative approach by all partner agencies.

QUESTION 2: Do you agree that we need to change the way we manage water flowing through our urban areas?	YES
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The document adequately sums up the main issues, concerns and challenges of managing water flowing through urban areas. The need to do things differently is encouragingly recognised - we believe it is essential to overcome the significant challenges waste water brings to Belfast. It is imperative that key partners work together to provide a sustainable and integrated approach to drainage, using a catchment-based approach in line with contemporary best practice.

The Council would note that many of the proposed projects within the consultation impact on Council assets. As highlighted the Council is working closely with the Department on a number of pilot projects and will be playing a key role in terms of delivery moving forwards. For projects to be successful the Council urges that these need to be co-designed with early input from specialists and planned with partners and stakeholders taking account the following important areas:

- **Meaningful engagement with local communities including park users, local residents and stakeholders e.g. sports clubs;**
- **Understand current site usage, feasibility and commerciality;**
- **Open space typology, functionality and ensuring a balance of local needs;**
- **Existing natural environment including current ecosystem services benefits and constraints such as Invasive Alien Species (IAS);**

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- **Current and future management and maintenance requirements and costs. Depending on proposals this could include the need for new machinery, additional staff resources and management of increased invasive species; and**
- **Early ecological input is required to maximise opportunities. We encourage the implementation of natural flood management (NFM) that protects, restores and mimics the natural functioning of rivers and the coastal ecosystems.**

Belfast has a paucity of open water and many rivers and streams have been partially or almost fully culverted. The use of NFM will enable the restoration and creation of riverine and coastal habitats which are key priorities to address biodiversity loss.

The LWWP and integrated plan provides a major opportunity to address broader environmental issues but most especially a unique opportunity to contribute to nature recovery in Belfast.

QUESTION 3: Do you agree that during periods of heavy rain, green spaces in urban areas should be used to hold water on a temporary basis to help prevent the flooding of homes and businesses and help prevent sewage spilling into the City's rivers and Belfast Lough?	YES
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Belfast benefits from a wide range of open spaces, covering around a quarter of the city's total area i.e. approx. 2,390 hectares (ha). Belfast City Council have developed a Belfast Open Spaces Strategy (BOSS) in collaboration with a range of partners and stakeholders, which includes the agreement of a long-term vision, seven guiding strategic principles (SPs), a range of opportunities and headline actions, which complement the integrated solutions proposed within the LWW in Belfast Integrated Plan. Of particular relevance within the BOSS is 'Strategic Principle 5 – Increase resilience to climate change' and 'Strategic Principle 6 – Protect and enhance the natural environment'. Given our concerns regarding the threats posed by climate change and biodiversity loss, we believe that our open spaces can play an important role in increasing the city's resilience to climate change and we would be keen to work in partnership to create and enhance natural habitats. As part of Council's community planning duty, we will continue to work with partners, stakeholders and local communities to develop area based plans and interventions which will include improving the provision, accessibility and quality of our open space network. Protecting, improving and enhancing our open spaces is vitally important to meet growing demand.

The document makes reference to mainly Council owned green space along with some other public owned green space e.g. Colin Glen and Stormont. We feel it is important that all other public and private owned

green spaces are also considered. We would recommend that each proposal is assessed on a case by case basis at a site level, providing solutions for local areas, making sure that physical delivery is carefully designed and planned, taking account of the following key areas:

- Early Council input to influence and shape the opportunities and proposals across the Council sites identified and a flexible iterative approach in conjunction with users;
- Meaningful engagement with local communities including park users, local residents and stakeholders e.g. sports clubs;
- Current site usage, feasibility and commerciality;
- Open space typology and functionality - ensuring a balance of local needs;
- Existing natural environment including current ecosystem services benefits and constraints such as Invasive Alien Species (IAS); and
- Appropriate financial impact assessments carried out to identify and agree current and future management and maintenance arrangements and budgets put in place to support this prior to development. Depending on proposals this could include the need for new machinery, additional staff resources and management of increased invasive species.

In light of the key areas above the Council welcomes the opportunity to work closely to influence and shape the opportunities and proposals outlined across the Council sites identified. We would also stress that physical delivery at the local levels needs to be carefully developed and designed.

The potential savings in substituting hard engineering solutions with green and blue infrastructure development are huge. Although the 'step change' to blue and green infrastructure development has begun it will require an integrated and holistic approach from a wide range of public and private partners and stakeholders. Belfast City Council (BCC) launched a Green and Blue Infrastructure Plan (GBIP) for Belfast in 2020 which outlines how vegetated areas (the green) and waterways (the blue) can provide a broad range of economic, social and environmental benefits in and around our more urban areas.

The GBIP recognises that these natural and semi-natural assets are increasingly seen as 'infrastructure' and like any type of infrastructure, these assets will only continue to provide us with benefits if we actively plan, invest in and manage them to ensure that they are utilised sustainably. To do this, it sets a vision that by 2035, green and blue infrastructure will be strategically planned to enhance ecosystem

services that benefit everyone visiting, living and working in Belfast. This now provides a solid foundation for progressing the Living With Water Programme approach across the plan area. Furthermore, there are obvious community cohesion and wellbeing benefits to be derived from investing in the development and expansion of blue and green infrastructure that serve as greenways and open spaces; a catalyst for increased biodiversity, and more active and sustainable travel.

The Council, working alongside key partners, has already demonstrated the success of taking such an approach in terms of the use of urban green areas to prevent flooding through the exemplar £40m Connswater Community Greenway project in the East of the city. East Belfast had a history of severe flooding. The 2007 flood was the largest on record with 340 flooded properties within the catchment of the Loop, Knock and Connswater rivers. Consequently, a number of at risk areas were identified where flood alleviation measures were necessary. In 2006 funding was secured from the Big Lottery's 'Living Landmarks Programme' to develop and build a 9km linear park scheme. It became apparent that construction work for the flood works and the park could be combined. Because both proposals involved works along the same river corridors there were many areas of overlap which allowed the project to be designed in such a way that it created both an enhanced urban asset and provided flood alleviation measures. This joined-up approach minimised disruption to local communities and businesses affected by the works and delivered better value for money. It also meant that the scheme provided 1,700 properties within East Belfast with the national standard of flood protection against fluvial and tidal events.

The Council is already working closely with the LWW on a number of projects across the city including pilot projects at Belfast Castle, Ballysillan Playing Fields and the new Forth Meadow Community Greenway project and would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the LWW Team on identifying other projects in the city which could present opportunities for joint working.

QUESTION 4: Do you agree with the catchment based approach to address drainage and wastewater management problems?	YES
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A more strategic approach to natural management of rainwater is welcomed, and use of a catchment based system enables collaborative partnership working to explore opportunities and address potential problems in a bespoke manner, tailored to each catchment. More effective rainwater management will reduce the impact on wastewater infrastructure in general, reducing peak pressures thereby reducing the likelihood of release of untreated sewage into Belfast lough.

The implementation of NFM systems will help protect, restore and mimic the natural functioning of river and the coastal ecosystems. Soil and land management are key areas that should be addressed at the

catchment level including enhancing soil structure, soil compaction and supporting sustainable agricultural practices to deliver broader ecosystem services.

We note that the Newtownbreda WwTW is missing from the plan and there are significant residential developments in the Newtownbreda area and Saintfield Road, which are currently under construction. Although this is not part of Belfasts City Council's LGD as it forms part of Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council, the outfall of the WwTW is just upstream of the Stranmillis Weir and it serves a major urban area with the Belfast Metropolitan Area. We ask that consideration is given to including the Newtonbreda WwTW in the programme.

QUESTION 5: Do you agree that we have identified all of the pressures and issues and set the correct objectives for each study area, as set out in chapters 7 – 10?

As noted, the Council is working closely with the Team in relation to the proposed projects within each of the catchment areas and would like to ensure that this close working relationship continues. In relation to the pressures, issues and objectives the Council would be keen to see the detail including the process and data sets used to identify these. We also found it difficult to comment on specific issues, pressures and objectives due to the limited detail, data and information provided. A summary of some of the issues/ constraints for further consideration within the study area includes the following:

- Limited reference to invasive alien species (IAS), erosion, aquatic alien invasive species, water quality issues and tidal surge mentioned throughout the study areas;
- The need for meaningful engagement/ involvement of all partners, stakeholders and users at very early stage of design and also throughout physical delivery;
- All open spaces have a typology and functionality and offer something for all users – need to balance this very carefully in terms of scale and impact within design proposals;
- Risk implications for people living near or at waterbodies; and
- Potential long term financial implications and pressures (i.e. management and maintenance budgets) of the proposals for Council and ultimately the rate payers of Belfast.

The Council does not have any specific comments in relation to the pressures in the individual study areas but would note as above that the implications of the Newtownbreda WwTW not being included.

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Blackstaff Study Area	YES / NO
N/A	
Connswater and Lagan Embankment	YES / NO
N/A	
North Foreshore Study Area	YES / NO
N/A	
Inner Belfast Lough Study Area (WwTW)	YES / NO

QUESTION 6: Do you agree that we have identified all of the opportunities for integrated drainage measures for each study area, as set out in chapters 7 - 10?

The Council agrees, in principle, with the concepts identified for integrated drainage measures for the study areas, The Council is one of the biggest landowners in the city as outlined above. In addition the Council has one of the largest capital programmes underway across the city. This therefore places the Council in a unique position in terms of looking at potential opportunities alongside the LWW Team. The Council also notes that potential solutions does not necessarily need to be close to the issue and therefore this presents opportunities across the city.

The Council would note that many of the opportunities identified within the consultation to overcome the pressures and deliver on the objective propose the use of Council assets. The Council would however note that many of these are still conceptual and the Council therefore welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Team on these from the outset.

The Council believes that there are a number of potential other opportunities as outlined below. We would however highlight that this is not exhaustive and the Council would request that there are continued opportunities to take this under review as other projects are agreed across the city – either Council led or other partner lead projects. We would recommend that the following key principles are considered prior to the development and delivery of proposals within Council sites;

- Consultation and engagement with local communities and users at the local level – to ensure buy-in;
- Early Council input to influence and shape the opportunities and proposals across the Council sites identified and a flexible iterative approach in conjunction with users; and

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- **Appropriate financial impact assessments carried out to identify future management and maintenance arrangements agreed and budgets in place to support this prior to development.**

In addition, the Council would urge that any new developments should be required to meet certain standards to ensure no flooding issues would arise, similar to green field runoff

Blackstaff Study Area	YES / NO
The Council would welcome the inclusion of a potential SUDs scheme at Distillery Street. The Council is already working with a range of statutory partners in bringing forwards proposals for an underused piece of land at the bottom of Distillery Street including LWW. This provides an opportunity to build on the works already underway as part of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway proposals.	
Connswater and Lagan Embankment	YES / NO
N/A	
North Foreshore Study Area	YES / NO
Within the North Foreshore study area, the North Foreshore/ Giant's park isn't mentioned, which is one of the biggest open spaces in the city, with potential for opportunities i.e. water attenuation and habitat enhancement. The Council would be keen to work in partnership to identify additional opportunities for habitat restoration, access and recreation potential. The Council would therefore request that the North Foreshore is included and would welcome an opportunity to discuss this in greater detail with the Team.	
Inner Belfast Lough Study Area (WwTW)	YES / NO
N/A	

QUESTION 7: Do you agree that the proposed measures adequately address the pressures and issues and meet the objectives for each study area, as set out in Chapters 7 - 10?

Yes in principle, please see responses to Question 5 and 6 above.

Blackstaff Study Area	YES / NO
N/A	

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Connswater and Lagan Embankment Study Area	YES / NO
N/A	
North Foreshore Study Area	YES / NO
N/A	
Inner Belfast Lough Study Area (WwTW)	YES / NO
N/A	

QUESTION 8: Do you agree that the levels of investment identified within this plan are necessary and should be considered a high priority by the NI Executive?	YES
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Whilst the levels of investment are significant in this draft programme, we feel that it is absolutely necessary to address the critical problems with drainage in Belfast. Belfast City Council believes that a funding model is pivotal to the success of this plan. Whilst we agree with the general approach and believe it can provide the long term, sustainable solutions needed, nothing can be delivered without a fully funded financial model that is agreed by the NI Executive. Given the urgency of the situation, this must be agreed from the 2021 financial year.

Whilst we understand the difficult financial situation, we ask that the Executive recognise the urgency of this matter and commit to fully funding the proposals contained within the programme. The Council would re-iterate that funding allocations to the sewerage system for Belfast should be commensurate with the current problems created by under investment to ensure that the city can play its full role as regional driver for the economy of NI, as set out in the RDS.

In relation to the catchment areas, we would also recommend that a detailed financial impact assessment of each area is carried out as part of the finance and delivery section of the plan. This will identify future management and maintenance arrangements that need to be put in place, as a result of the proposals and appropriate budgets to be established to support this prior to development. Depending on detailed proposals additional costs for Council will include the need for new machinery, management of IAS, additional staffing and resources and capacity building, to name but a few. These costs must be considered as part of the overall financial model.

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Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2021-22

The Committee:

- i. confirmed the following cash limits, as agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 22nd January:
 - a. a cash limit of £45,309,102 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2021/22, including £3,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £2,500,000 for City Deal;
 - b. a cash limit of £83,949,408 for the People and Communities Committee for 2021/22;
 - c. a cash limit of £18,237,846 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2021/22;
 - d. a cash limit of £1,362,893 for the Planning Committee for 2021/22; and
 - e. a Capital Financing Budget of £21,774,022 for 2021/22;
- ii. agreed that the increase in the District Rate for 2021/22 should be 1.92%, based on an estimated penny product of £6,459,786, meaning a non-domestic rate of 26.4147 and a domestic rate of 0.3459 and that the amount raised through the district rate in 2021/22 will be £165,173,988;
- iii. noted the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resource's 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 (Northern Ireland) 2011;
- iv. noted the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011; and
- v. agreed that the aforementioned decisions should not be subject to call in, as it would cause an unreasonable delay in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 1st March 2021, which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interest.

Finance Update

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update under each of the five steps which had, in June, 2020, been adopted as a financial management approach to manage the impact of Covid-19 upon the Council's finances. The report provided also details of the revenue outturn for Quarter 3 2020/21 and on the progress of a potential VAT refund claim and had recommended that, in

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light of the mitigation measures which had been put in place for 2021/22, the Council revert to the normal quarterly financial reporting process, as set out in section G.12 of the Financial Regulations.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and adopted the recommendation.

Update on Licence Fees

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 22nd January, it had approved criteria to assess applications for rent relief in respect of its own estate and that a cap on this had been established. That relief could be of benefit to those leaseholders across the Council estate who could demonstrate that they were suffering financially as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee had agreed also that officers should examine the potential for including other businesses, such as street traders.

The Chief Executive explained that street traders and licence applicants for, for example, amusement arcades, cinemas, entertainment venues, pavement cafés and petrol stations did not have a lease with the Council. Instead, they were required by law to apply to the Council for a licence, which was approved by the Licensing Committee and managed through the Building Control Service. Relief did not, therefore, apply in those cases.

In terms of the measures which the Council had put in place over the course of the pandemic to assist licence holders, the Chief Executive confirmed that application fees for temporary pavement café licences had been waived and that those wishing to renew their Street Trading Licence or Entertainments Licence had been provided with the option of either paying their fee or having it deferred until a later date. It was envisaged that those arrangements would remain in place until at least 31st March. In addition, the Department for Communities had, on 10th February, confirmed that it was amending the fee requirements for all Entertainments Licences for 2021/22, to the effect that renewal applications would, from 6th April, incur a nominal fee of £1, as opposed to a maximum potential fee of £2,000.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting indicating whether there were any additional ways in which licensed street traders could be supported.

**Update on Managing Organisational
Capacity and Covid-19**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which highlighted the activities associated with the ongoing management of and response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the recovery approach being adopted for 2021/22 and provided a number of service specific updates.

**Recruitment of Director (Operational)
of Planning and Building Control**

The Committee was informed that Mr. Aidan Thatcher, the current Director (Operational) of Planning and Building Control, would be leaving the Council shortly to take up a post with Wigan Council.

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The Committee noted the timeline for the recruitment of the post and agreed that the selection panel should comprise:

- i. the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Committee (or their nominees);
- ii. a Member of the Planning Committee from a Political Party not represented by the Chairperson or the Deputy Chairperson; and
- iii. the Chief Executive (or her nominee) and a Director.

**Destination Hub – Update
on Outline Business Case**

(Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy, and Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reminded the Committee that the Belfast Destination Hub was Belfast's key project under the tourism and regeneration pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal. The project mirrored the ambition of the Belfast Agenda and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy to deliver a second world-class visitor attraction and would generate additional tourist spend and footfall in the City centre.

He reviewed the main components of the Destination Hub and the associated capital spend and confirmed that the Outline Business Case, which had been completed in December, 2020, had been found to be compliant with HM Treasury's Business Case Guidance framework for preparing business cases and with the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation. The Hub concept, together with the architectural design, had been completed to RIBA Stage 1 – Strategic Brief, in line with the Outline Business Case process.

The Programme Director stated that the City Deal Executive Board had agreed recently that the Destination Hub Outline Business Case would be one of the seven projects within the Belfast Region City Deal's Tourism and Regeneration pillar to be recommended for inclusion in the Deal Document. However, the detail and timelines for the City Deal funding approval process were still being worked through with the Department of Finance. In anticipation of securing City Deal funding, an appropriate site needed to be secured, in order to enable building designs and associated costs to progress to RIBA Stage 2. Options for site acquisition were currently under consideration and would be presented in due course to the Committee. She concluded by outlining the draft programme which would lead ultimately to the completion in 2026 of the Destination Hub.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Covid-19 Community Support Funding

(Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item.)

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The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that both the Council and Central Government had provided community and voluntary partners with a significant amount of additional funding to support vulnerable individuals, families and communities who had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. That support had extended primarily to food provision and access to food, financial assistance for fuel/utilities and connectivity.

He explained that those partners had worked tirelessly to ensure that the committed funding had had the desired effect. However, the problems posed by the current extended restrictions and the fact that significant amounts of Department for Communities' funding had only been awarded in December/January had created a situation whereby the expectation of full delivery by 31st March, 2021 would not be possible in all circumstances. That applied also to many micro grant recipients and to some Strategic Area and Community and Thematic Partners.

In line with the Committee's decision of 10th December, the Chief Executive had written to the Permanent Secretary within the Department for Communities to highlight the aforementioned difficulties and had requested a delivery extension until 30th September for all community/voluntary grant recipients.

He confirmed that a response to that letter had yet to be received and, therefore, recommended that the Committee grant approval to write to all grant recipients to inform them that the delivery period had been extended until 30th September. Should the Department for Communities fail to grant the required extension, the Council would still maximise the available Central Government grant funding up to 31st March, as set out within the report, with any remaining amounts to be covered by 2021/22 Departmental budgets.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Bonfire Approach 2021

(Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, in April, 2018, it had approved governance and delegation arrangements in relation to a range of bonfire-related work. That had been followed in August, 2018 by further clarification of governance arrangements relating to August bonfires/bonfire material on land owned by the Council, other agencies and private organisations. In order to ensure that this approach was followed, officers had developed an overall programme of work, with individual work streams and associated governance structures, to ensure that senior officers were aware of decisions which could be taken under delegated authority and those which required Committee approval. Those arrangements still stood, including the delegation by the Council of authority to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that, with the likelihood that the Covid-19 restrictions would be extended, the delivery of all elements of the programme of work for 2021 might not be possible. In line with the aforementioned guidelines, officers would commence work on the following:

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- Strategic Interagency Approach/Community Engagement;
- Operational Delivery;
- Funded Programmes; and
- Communications.

He recommended that the Committee approve this approach for 2021 and confirmed that a report would be presented to the meeting in March providing details of the specifics of the bonfire approach and the key decisions required for 2021, including alternative funding arrangements, should the Covid-19 restrictions continue.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Lyons,
Seconded by Councillor Heading,

That the Committee agrees to include the work which was being undertaken through the City Growth and Regeneration Committee around the stimulation and animation of the City in any revised bonfire funding arrangements.

On a recorded vote, six Members voted for the proposal and twelve against and it was declared lost.

<u>For 6</u>	<u>Against 12</u>
Councillors Groogan, Heading, Lyons, McAllister and McDonough-Brown.	Councillor Black (Chairperson); Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Garrett, McLaughlin, Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

The Committee approved the proposed bonfire approach, as outlined, and noted the information which had been provided by the Director of Neighbourhood Services around the measures which the multi-agency task force would implement to address issues such as illegal music events over the course of the bonfire season.

Brexit and Port Health – Transition Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which:

- i. outlined the key areas being pursued with the United Kingdom/Northern Ireland Governments, including the need for oversight and leadership around issues for Local Government in delivering statutory Port Health/competent authority role in implementing official Control Regulations;

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- ii. confirmed that the City Solicitor had, on behalf of Local Government, sought a legal opinion on the specific responsibilities and accountabilities conferred on councils, under the European Union Brexit Agreement and Northern Ireland Protocol;
- iii. provided details of correspondence which the Council had been issued to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and to the Food Standards Agency, setting out key areas of collective concern which required urgent resolution and outlining the estimated budget for the period 2021/22; and
- iv. provided information on a report which had, on 11th February, been presented to the Brexit Committee examining the challenges faced by and the support given to the business community in the context of Brexit.

The Committee noted also that the Chief Executive would request from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs a copy of any documents relating to security concerns/considerations which had been taken into account before it had removed its staff from port health inspection duties.

Independent Investigation - Events at Roselawn Cemetery

The Chief Executive drew the Committee's attention to a report which had been published by Mr. Peter Coll QC on the outcome of an investigation which had been commissioned by the Council into events at Roselawn Cemetery on 30th June, 2020. The report had been published on the previous day and a copy had been forwarded to all Members of the Council.

She referred to that part of the report relating to the lessons to be learned from those events and the recommendations to be implemented to prevent a recurrence and requested the Committee to consider the recommendations, as a basis for implementation. The Committee would receive progress reports on a regular basis moving forward.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed that, rather than endorsing the recommendations at this stage, a report be submitted to its next meeting outlining how they would be implemented and monitored and reflecting a number of issues which had been raised by Members.

The Committee agreed that Council officers would arrange for any Political Party, who so wished, to be briefed by Mr. Coll QC and a number indicated that they wished to avail of that. It was noted that a copy of the report could be obtained, upon request, from the City Solicitor's office.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Motion: Pay for Student Nurses –
Response from Department of Health**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st December, had passed the following motion on Pay for Student Nurses, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor O'Hara:

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“This Council recognises the efforts of student nurses throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, stepping up to help our NHS cope with the extra pressures put on it by the pandemic and providing invaluable support to qualified nurses in our hospitals.

The Council notes also that student nurses were paid during the first wave of the pandemic, as they should have been, in recognition of their commitment and work caring for people.

The Council believes that student nurses should be paid a fair and proper wage for their work and agrees to write to the Minister of Health stating our support for reinstating the pay to student nurses as a matter of urgency.”

The City Solicitor drew the Committee’s attention to a response which had been received from Mr. P. Barbour, Assistant Director of Workforce Policy, on behalf of the Minister of Health.

Mr. Barbour had referred the Council to the Minister’s announcement on 27th January of a special recognition payment of £2,000 to be made to all qualifying healthcare students who had been on special pre-registration programmes during the period from 1st October, 2020 to 31st March, 2021. The qualifying courses were, it had been pointed out, the nursing and midwifery, Allied Health Professions, Social Work and Physician Associate pre-registration programmes commissioned by the Department of Health from Queen’s University and the Ulster University.

The Committee noted the response.

**Motion: Proposed Future Development – Writers’
Square – Response from Department for Communities**

(Prior to this report being presented, the City Solicitor advised those Members who were also on the Planning Committee that they should remove themselves from the meeting, should it become a matter of discussion. However, as no issues were raised, they were not required to do so.)

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, had passed the following motion on the Proposed Future Development of Writers’ Square, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor McKeown:

“This Council recognises the significance of Writers’ Square to the city of Belfast as a public and civic space and its historical significance. The Council calls upon the Department for Communities to ensure that any development brief relating to Writers’ Square respects the civic use of the Square as a place facilitating lawful protest and celebration. Furthermore, the Council calls upon the Department to ensure that the setting of St Anne’s Cathedral is protected.

The Council will write to the Minister for Communities to that effect.”

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a response had been received from Mr. C. Donnelly, Director of Belfast Regeneration Directorate, on behalf of the Minister.

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Mr. Donnelly had pointed out that the Minister and her Department had noted the content of the motion and that it would be given further consideration, should the Minister decide to proceed with a development brief for the Square.

The Committee noted the response.

**Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations –
Response from Police Service of Northern Ireland**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 7th January, had passed the following motion on Black Lives Matter Demonstrations, which had been proposed by Councillor Matt Collins and seconded by Councillor Ferguson:

“This Council notes the recent Ombudsman report into the policing of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in Belfast and Derry on 6th June, 2020. The Council notes, in particular, the Ombudsman’s conclusions that the PSNI’s actions on the day were disproportionate, discriminatory and showed disregard to people’s human rights in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of protest and further notes the inappropriate use of the Serious Crimes Act (2007) to caution organisers of the events.

Accordingly, the Council calls for all penalty notices to be rescinded and prosecutions against Black Lives Matter activists relating to 6th June protests to be abandoned, as the first step toward redress. Furthermore, the Council calls on the PSNI to exercise its discretion to withdraw or rescind the applications made to the courts for registration of the Fixed Penalty Notices. The Council reiterates its support for the Black Lives Matter movement and its call for a real and robust racial equality strategy to help tackle the systemic problem of institutional racism.”

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee’s consideration a response which had been received from Chief Superintendent Singleton, on behalf of the Chief Constable.

Chief Superintendent Singleton had highlighted the ongoing challenges being faced by communities and by the Police Service and pointed out that the Service had struggled to find the correct balance between upholding the continually changing restrictions and the rights of all individuals in the community. Whilst those restrictions were often a fundamental interference with individual human rights they had been made morally and legally necessary by the scale of the public health threat posed by Covid-19. The Police Service had, therefore, unsurprisingly, prioritised the Article 2 ‘Right to Life’ under the European Convention on Human Rights over all the rights, except for Article 3. This, it believed, had been in line with both the intention and the spirit of the Coronavirus regulations, as agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive.

He had gone on to state that the Police Service had welcomed the support, analysis and challenge contained within the reports of the Northern Ireland Policing Board and of the Police Ombudsman and that, rather than be defensive about any aspects of its approach or the findings in the reports, it was keen to acknowledge shortcomings, admit mistakes and learn lessons. Having carefully considered both reports, the Police Service was, he pointed out, in a position to accept the vast majority of recommendations. However, it was unable to

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accept the recommendations relating to the withdrawal of Fixed Penalty Notices and prosecutions, pursuant to its enforcement of Health Protection Regulations.

Chief Superintendent Singleton then stated that the Police Service had been advised that the existing Regulations made no provision for Fixed Penalty Notices to be rescinded either by it or by the Public Prosecution Service. The only mechanism by which an enforceable penalty registered under Regulation 12 could be set aside was by direction of the Magistrates' Court. Those individuals who had been reported to the Public Prosecution Service for suspected breaches of the Regulations would have their cases independently assessed in terms of available evidence and public interest. The Police Service had been advised that, should it interfere with prosecutorial decision-making, it would raise questions around potential breaches of human rights.

He had concluded by pointing out that those recommendations resulting from the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman reports which had been accepted by the Police Service would be added to its overview systems and allocated timeframes and responsible owners. The Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman would be provided with regular updates as that work progressed.

After discussion, the Committee noted the response.

**Motion: Uplift on Universal Credit –
Response from HM Treasury**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 7th January, had passed the following motion relating to Universal Credit, which had been proposed by Councillor Heading and seconded by Councillor Lyons:

“This Council recognises the positive impact of the £20 uplift on Universal Credit implemented in April 2020.

The Council also recognises that, since March 2020, the unemployment claimant count has doubled to at least 60,000 in Northern Ireland and with a recession expected in the spring only to worsen the situation for many households. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has failed to provide certainty that the £20 uplift on UC will remain beyond March 2021 meaning many families are potentially facing a loss of £1,040 a year to their incomes overnight. Charity Action for Children has warned that more than one in 10 families in the north are already having to choose between paying bills and eating meals. The Council calls on the UK government to put a protective shield around struggling families by ensuring March's Budget makes clear that Universal Credit will not be cut by £20 a week in the spring. Finally, the Council agrees to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting they maintain the £20 uplift on Universal Credit in April 2021 and extending the £20 uplift to all legacy benefits.”

The City Solicitor reported that a response had been received from HM Treasury, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

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The response had explained that the £20 per week in the Universal Credit standard allowance and Working Tax Credit basic element formed just one part of a wide-ranging package of support which the Government had provided to protect people's jobs and referred also to income support schemes, mortgage holidays, support for renters, a £500 million local authority hardship fund, £500 payments to help those on low income to self-isolate under NHS Test and Trace, a £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme and help with utility bills.

The response had gone on to state that, in order to support families who relied on the safety net of the welfare system, the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed Universal Credit claimants had been suspended temporarily and the Local Housing Allowance Rates for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit had been increased to cover the bottom third of local rents. The Government was also spending £7.4 billion on its package of increased welfare support this year.

It was pointed out that the increase in Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit was aimed specifically at providing significant temporary support to low income families who may have seen their income fall as a result of the immediate impact of the Covid-19 crisis and was due to end in April, 2021.

It indicated also that the Government would, as it had done throughout the current crisis, continue to consider the most appropriate forms of support as the public health and economic situation developed. However, as an illustration, extending the £20 per week increase by a further twelve months would cost over £6 billion, which would be equivalent to adding 1p to the basic rate of income tax and increasing fuel duty by 3p.

The response had concluded by confirming that the Government was, moving forward, focused on supporting people by helping them gain employment and was making up to £30 billion available through the Plan for Jobs initiative. This included launching the £2 billion Kickstart Scheme to create hundreds of thousands of fully subsidised jobs for young people and investing £8.6 billion in infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance jobs to create jobs.

The Committee noted the response and agreed that a further letter be forwarded to the Chancellor of the Exchequer highlighting the importance of the uplift payment, given the high levels of poverty in Northern Ireland, and urging him to extend it beyond March, 2021.

**Motion: Funding For Palliative and End-of-Life
Care – Response from Minister of Health**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 7th December, had passed the following motion on Funding for Palliative and End-of-Life Care, which had been proposed by Councillor Whyte and seconded by Councillor Lyons:

“This Council recognises that hospice care is a vitally important part of our care system; considers it necessary that people approaching the end of life, their families and carers get the right care and support where and when they need it; notes that hospice staff deserve recognition for the world-class medical care and emotional support they provide, not just to patients but also to their families; and looks forward to the hospice movement going from strength to strength in years to come.

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Accordingly, the Council agrees to write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, calling upon him to ensure fair and transparent funding in line with demand, and continued high quality palliative and end-of-life care.”

The City Solicitor drew the Committee’s attention to a response which had been received from the Minister of Health.

The Minister had highlighted the valued service which hospices in Northern Ireland provided in caring for and supporting people living with palliative and end-of-life care and those who were important to them. Department of Health officials and their colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board worked closely with hospices and were aware of the both the contribution which they made and the challenges they faced.

The Minister, in recognising the financial pressures which hospices were facing, had pointed out that Covid-19 had had an impact across the community and voluntary sector and referred to similar issues across other areas and organisations, where there were also increasing demands for services and associated financial pressures.

He explained that the Health and Social Care Board had Service Level Agreements in place with each of the hospice providers in Northern Ireland for both inpatient and community based services. Separate arrangements were also in place with Health and Social Care Trusts for hospice night services, as required. The Marie Curie charity also provided a regional out-of-hours service.

In terms of funding, the Minister stated that guidance which had been put in place by the Department of Health in 2004 had introduced 50/50 funding for agreed adult inpatient hospice services, with effect from 2004/05, and 50% funding for agreed adult community services, with effect from 2005/06. Those arrangements provided for the funding of agreed commissioned services, not a hospice’s total running costs.

He pointed out that children’s hospice services were funded differently to adult services, with separate commissioning and funding arrangements in place for children’s palliative care and hospice services. In addition to core funding for children’s services, the Department of Health had agreed, following the closure of the Horizon West children’s hospice, to fund on a 50/50 basis an additional bed in the NI Children’s Hospice at Horizon House for three years from 2018/19.

Since 2018, a Paediatric and Life Limited Service had also been commissioned from the NI Children’s Hospice. That service had provided a specialist nursing role to support children, families and clinicians in recognising and managing end-of-life needs, as well as access to a dedicated bed in the NI Children’s Hospice or in the child’s home. Funding of £186,000 for the service had been made initially through Confidence and Supply transformation funding. The Department of Health had extended that funding for a further year to ensure the continued delivery of the service by the NI Children’s Hospice.

The Minister had gone on to state that, in recognition of the challenges being faced by hospices during the current pandemic, the Health and Social Care Board, with the agreement of his Department, had put in place arrangements to support hospices’ cash flow. Those arrangements had applied also to contracts between hospices and Health and Social

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Care Trusts. The Health and Social Care Board worked closely also with hospices around the availability of Personal Protection Equipment, fit testing and access to sanitising equipment and to keep them informed of the broader system approach to responding to Covid-19.

The Minister welcomed the additional funding which had been made available to hospices, in recognition of the restrictions on fundraising opportunities and retail, as a result of Covid-19, and had referred to £6.75m and £7.3m which had been allocated to local hospices and the Cancer Fund for Children in May and October, 2020 respectively.

He explained that the Health and Social Care Board had recently completed a review of adult hospice funding, which had identified a total funding shortfall of £867,360 between the 2019/20 funding provided to hospices, when compared against benchmarked costs assessed as part of the review process. That additional funding had been made available to hospices and had been backdated to April, 2019. In October, 2020, the Health and Social Care Board had also approved a 4% uplift for 2020/21 to the value of its core contract Service Level Agreements held with hospices in Northern Ireland. The Minister believed that, given that the current funding arrangements date back to 2004, it would be appropriate to review those arrangements in light of the changing context and demographics for palliative care and trusted that hospices would engage in that process.

The Minister had concluded by stating that the New Decade New Approach deal included a commitment to increase investment on palliative and end-of-life care to fully implement service improvements, including enhancing the contribution of hospices, and to increase support for palliative perinatal care. Investment to meet the New Decade New Approach commitment had been captured within his Department's bids for additional funding in the Department of Finance Budget 2021-22 exercise.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Update on City Region Growth Deal

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal, including an update on the development of Outline Business Cases and progress on agreeing a phased deal with the NI and UK Governments.**
- 1.2 The Committee will also be separately considering a report on the Belfast Destination Hub, Belfast's key project under the tourism and regeneration pillar which outlines the progress made in relation to the Destination Hub Outline Business Case.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note:**

- the programme overview and the progress that has been made in Outline Business Case development for all projects and on the development of an agreed approach with the NI and UK Governments to the delivery of a phased deal; and
- the update on the BRCD Council Panel and the minutes of the BRCD Council Panel held on 25th November, 2020.

3.0 Main Report

Programme Overview

- 3.1 In December, the Committee received a detailed update on progress across the programme and were advised that Outline Business Cases (OBCs) were due to be completed for all projects by the end of December. Partners have now passed a major milestone with draft OBCs prepared across all the pillars of Investment. However, as previously reported, it is recognised that further revision of OBCs may still be required for projects that are at an earlier stage of development. Formal submission of OBCs to NI and UK Governments will commence in the coming weeks.

Deal Document and Timeline

- 3.2 Members were also updated on the ongoing discussions between partners and the NI and UK Governments in relation to agreeing a phased deal. The phased approach recognises the varying states of readiness of projects across the programme, allowing the Deal Documentation to be completed & agreed and phased delivery to commence. This approach has now been agreed in principle by the NI City/Growth Deals Delivery Board. Once the details of the phased deal are agreed with government partners a further update report will be brought back to Members.
- 3.3 Detailed work is now being progressed with the Department of Finance on the development of the deal document, which is required in order that funding can begin to flow. The document will outline the impact of the City Deal (outcomes, benefits, economic impact) along with a summary of the programme and projects. It will also include an implementation plan, financial plan, governance framework and communications protocol. Proposals for the content of the document are now being developed and will be brought to the Executive Board for further discussion over the coming months.

Investment Priorities

Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.6 Partners have worked intensively to develop a Tourism & Regeneration programme that not only supports the delivery of

inclusive economic growth but will play a key role in the recovery of the tourism industry and our town and city centres, following the impact of Covid-19. Following extensive OBC development and engagement with partners and Departments the Executive Board has now approved the Tourism and Regeneration programme which recommends seven projects for inclusion in the Deal Document. These are Belfast Destination Hub, Bangor Waterfront, Destination Hillsborough, Carrickfergus Regeneration, The Gobbins, Mourne Mountain Gateway and Newry Regeneration. Members should note that these projects are at different stages of development/state of readiness and this will be defined in the deal document.

Innovation

- 3.7 The innovation projects have been significantly rescaled and are now in line with the funding available to support this Pillar. OBCs for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, Global Innovation Institute and Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) will now be formally submitted to NI and UK Governments. Initial feedback has now been received from key stakeholders for the revised OBC for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology and is being considered. A first draft OBC for the Screen Media and Innovation Lab has now been submitted for review and consideration by the UK and NI Governments following consideration by the Executive Board.

Digital

- 3.8 The draft Digital Innovation Programme Business Case and the OBC for i4C digital innovation project have been submitted to NI and UK Government for review and consideration and some initial feedback has been received which is currently being addressed. As previously reported, the programme business case will prioritise a flexible 'funds-based' approach with the increased use of Challenge Funds alongside an Infrastructure Enabling fund which will support connectivity and other enabling infrastructure. It will also ensure that innovation support reaches across priority sectors across the region, through investment in Regional Innovation Hubs.

Infrastructure

- 3.9 Interim OBCs for the Newry Southern Relief Road and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 have now been reviewed by the Department for Infrastructure Economists. Interim OBCs have been produced for these projects due to the very early stage of their development, in advance of the necessary consultations on route development. Given the early stage of development of

Newry Southern Relief Road and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 there are high levels of optimism bias included in their financial cases and this has contributed to the affordability challenges. An OBC has been completed for the Lagan Pedestrian & Cycle Bridge and approved by DoF. Discussions are taking place with the Department for Infrastructure and Department of Finance on proposals for an Infrastructure pillar level budget, which would enable the Lagan Pedestrian and Foot Bridge to progress and enable further development of both the Newry Southern Relief Road and Belfast Rapid Transit projects, whilst additional funding sources continue to be explored.

Employability and Skills (E&S)

- 3.10 A draft Employability & Skills Proposition has been created incorporating three core component elements of an Employability & Skills Partnership (including an E&S Hub), a core E&S programme and approach to deliver inclusive growth. Engagement sessions have been ongoing with partners along with key industry stakeholders to review the proposition. Feedback is being addressed and it is anticipated that it will be submitted for approval to the Executive Board in the weeks ahead.
- 3.11 Simultaneously, work continues on developing and implementing partnership projects in advance of the overall E&S programme. The Committee was updated previously on the Digital Futures programme and since then a range of promotional activities has taken place to engage employers across the region. Equally, developmental work is underway with council partners to develop a new digital transformation programme for businesses. Funding has also been secured through the Department for Economy's Apprenticeship Challenge Fund to undertake developmental work enabling exploratory work to be undertaken within high value sectors on the development of new apprenticeship pathways. Work is underway to explore the need for new apprenticeship pathways aligned to BRCD priority sectors, as well as undertaking research to inform the development of a virtual apprenticeship platform. Delivery of this project is being undertaken by BRCD partners on a cost recovery basis, the larger partner contributor is Belfast Metropolitan College with an allocated funding budget of up to £37,000. The Committee will be updated as this work progresses.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.12 Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as

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previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest parties.

- 3.13 Virtual meetings of the Panel were held in November 2020 hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council and January 2021 hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (minutes of the November Panel meeting approved at the January meeting are attached. At these meetings, the Panel received detailed updates on progress across the programme and the ongoing discussions between partners and the NI and UK Governments in relation to agreeing a phased deal and a Deal Document. Members also discussed the Tourism & Regeneration programme recommendations at the January meeting. The next meeting will be held on 21st April and will be hosted by Ards and North Down District Council.

Next Steps

- 3.14 The BRCD is now entering a critical stage with formal submission of the most developed projects for consideration to NI and UK Governments. In parallel, detailed work will now be progressed with the Department of Finance on the development of the deal document, based on the agreed approach to the delivery of a phased deal. Work is also ongoing to support profiling, affordability and deliverability across the Deal. The Deal Document will include agreed pillar, and as appropriate, project budgets alongside indicative capital financial profiles and implementation timescales. Strategic engagement with key stakeholders is crucial and engagement with key political and business representatives is due to commence.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.16 The Approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;

‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying

out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Customer Focus Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** Members are reminded that, in September 2020, the Committee was provided with an update on the Customer Focus Programme ,which included an update on further activity in support of Covid 19 Recovery and a revised programme plan.
- 1.2** A further report was presented to the Committee in October 2020 to provide details of the establishment of the Customer Hub and approval was given to proceed with the proposed staffing structure including application of the relevant staff transfer processes and recruitment of required posts.
- 1.3** This report provides an update on the main components of the first phase of the Customer Focus programme to be implemented from 29 March 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to note:

- 1.** the update on Phase 1 of the implementation of the Customer Focus programme and specifically the planned start of operation of the new Customer Hub function from 29 March 2021;
- 2.** the update on services to be provided for Elected Members as part of Phase 1. This work has been progressing in partnership with the Customer Focus Task and Finish Group for Elected Members;
- 3.** the initial works undertaken to refurbish the reception area of the ground floor of Cecil Ward Building which will form part of the physical Customer Hub;
- 4.** progress with development of missed bins; and
- 5.** progress with provision of enabling infrastructure.

3.0 Main Report

What we will deliver in Phase 1 of the Customer Hub

3.1 Appendix 1, which has been circulated, sets out the future blueprint for the Customer hub which was presented at the May and September 2020 Committee meetings. As reported in September 2020, the complexity of the customer programme does not support the implementation of all of its elements at one time. Appendix 2, which has also been circulated, is a reminder of the high level plan previously presented to achieve implementation of the Customer Hub by April 2021.

3.2 The 'go live' date of the Customer Hub has been revised to 29th March, 2021. For this phase of the programme, we will have the following in place:

Customer Hub

3.3 This new function will deal with customer contact for all departments and services, across all channels (online, mobile, telephone, face-to-face, email, and social media).

Initially, the hub will manage all customer contact for cleansing/waste and calls currently through the main switchboard and corporate complaints numbers. Work is continuing on the co-design of processes including the handoff from customer hub to services in other departments. The implementation initially will be on a 'wide and thin' basis i.e. a basic level of information and signposting for customers will be provided at the first point of contact for all services across all channels.

3.4 This will provide a platform for on-boarding of services in the future phases beyond April 2021, deepening the information and value at first point of contact as services are designed end to end - thus improving customer experience.

3.5 As reported in October 2020, the customer hub team will grow to up to 20 staff as we on-board services, with 16 staff in post by April 2021. These staff will facilitate all customer contact channels, provide customer support for digital channels and build capability in service performance and analysis, working with departments and the Continuous Improvement team to inform and shape service improvement.

3.6 To achieve this, working closely with the Corporate Human Resources team, a transition plan for staffing and recruitment for the Customer Hub was established and is now nearing

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completion. Integral to this stage has been the inclusion of staff and Trade Unions in understanding the impact of these changes on current posts and post holders and the plans to transition to the new Customer Hub.

- 3.7 Work has commenced on training and development of staff who will be in post in time to allow for their training and the building of capacity and support systems and processes for hub operation.
- 3.8 Members should note that the Customer Hub is being financed by a re-alignment of existing budgets and does not add an additional burden to the ratepayer.

Elected Members' Future Blueprint

- 3.9 The work of the Customer Focus Task and Finish group for Elected Members is continuing with a further workshop scheduled to take place on 24 February 2021. The workshop will facilitate feedback on the products developed and will discuss plans for implementation of phase 1 including members' support and training needs.
- 3.10 Within the functionality to be provided there will be a dedicated contact channel (telephone and email address) for elected members within the Customer Hub. Additionally we will provide members with information on service delivery so they can be informed of issues earlier, enabling them to be responsive to constituents' queries. Members will also have the ability to track issues they have raised and will have visibility of issues emerging in their areas. A future blueprint for services for elected members can be found at Appendix 3, which has been circulated.

Physical Customer Hub

- 3.11 Since October 2020, plans for the refurbishment of the Ground Floor of Cecil Ward Building as the physical Customer Hub have been developed and progressed. Whilst it is unclear when 'face to face' services will fully resume, the plans include a refurbishment of the reception area as a first phase providing a more welcoming customer interface and acting as the physical focal point for the customer service. This work has provided the opportunity to upgrade digital infrastructure and also to deep clean stonework. We anticipate the first phase being completed by April 2021. A plan of the new reception area can be found at Appendix 4, which has been circulated.

Missed Bins

- 3.12 Aligned to the overall Resources and Fleet transition and improvement programme, we have been focussing on how we can improve issues with missed bins including information flows between Elected Members, customers, staff and managers. A prototype of an app to report missed bins has been developed. A pilot to prove that the technology works involving 10 out of 50 collection squads has been completed. We have assessed the outcomes of the pilot and the plan for phase 1 of Customer Hub from April 2021 is to address issues identified during the pilot and, taking full cognisance of current Council policies and procedures around bin collections, to fully embed the processes and procedures contained within the scope of the pilot. Once this has been achieved a plan will be developed to roll this model out further.

Enabling Infrastructure

- 3.13 The success of the Customer Focus programme is wholly dependent on the delivery of enabling infrastructure and specific to Customer Hub, the technical infrastructure provided via telephony and systems delivered by Digital Services.
- 3.14 As evidenced through lockdown and now into recovery our telephone solution is one of the Council's most mission-critical systems. Digital Services completed the upgrade of our telephony solution in September 2020. The upgrade simplifies administration, and enhances security and business continuity. The system upgrade also introduces enhanced features and services which will be required to support modern digital workplace requirements and the integrated telephony features needed for the Customer Focus Programme.

- **Contact Centre**

Improves customer experience by ensuring that customer contact from any channel is directed to the right agent with the right skills. It also provides real-time information to improve agent effectiveness.

- Voice, Chat, SMS, Email, FAX, and AI Chatbots
- Built-in Call and Screen Recording
- Built-in Workforce Scheduling

- **Customised CRM integration**

Phone and CRM system integration provides visibility of calls made and received, quick access to customer information and the ability to receive and make calls directly within the CRM.

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- Automatically access customer information
- Pre-populate CRM with customer information
- Click to dial – call, text or email customers within CRM

- **Softphones**

Bring all the functionality of a desk phone onto a laptop or mobile phone. This enables the staff working in the Customer Hub to operate remotely or in the office.

- make and receive calls on your laptop, mobile phone or desk phone
- voicemail integrated with email.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 The SP and R Committee agreed in November 2017 that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project. The operational cost of Customer Hub was reported to October 2020 committee as nil cost to Council and the changes have been reflected in the 2021/2022 budget.
- 3.16 The cost of refurbishment of the reception area of Ground Floor Cecil Ward Building has been accommodated within the 2020/2021 capital financing budget.
- 3.17 Staff and Trade Unions have been engaged throughout the programme. As we move to delivery, with Trade Union agreement we have established a sub group of JNCC to facilitate further engagement and consultation on staff implications of the programme in line with agreed HR policies and procedures.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.18 Work on the EQIA for the Customer Focus Programme has been completed and the outcome published on our community engagement platform, Citizenspace.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations

**Working Group on the Climate
Crisis – Work Plan 2021-22**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report outlines the work plan for the Working Group on the Climate Crisis for this forthcoming financial year 2021/22, for

discussion and agreement. As a non-decision making group of Elected Members, this work plan is presented to the SP and R Committee for approval.

2.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to agree the priorities recommended by the Working Group within this work plan.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Resilience and Sustainability is a core priority in Belfast City Council's Corporate Plan and therefore the primary focus of the Working Group's work plan for 2021/22 is to ensure progress in the achievement of the objectives set out.

3.2 In the forthcoming financial year, the Working Group will prioritise the following:

- 1.** Overseeing the development of a draft Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan for Belfast City Council, for SP&R approval by end of December;
- 2.** Working with the Resilience and Sustainability Board to ensure Belfast City Council Priorities in the Belfast Climate Plan are progressed- this will include taking advice from the Belfast Climate Commission as appropriate;
- 3.** Ensuring that Belfast City Council contributes to progress on climate adaptation and mitigation at a regional level, e.g. through the DAERA Green Growth Task Force; and
- 4.** Ensuring that Belfast City Council plays its part in contributing to the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow in 2021.

Further detail on each of these is provided below.

Belfast City Council Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan

3.3 The working group previously agreed that the BCC Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan would be developed by June 2021 for approval by SP&R. To date, work is mostly on track, and we have tried to ensure that Covid-19 lockdown has not reduced momentum, as much as possible. The plan will be supported by three separate studies:

- A Climate Adaptation Plan, being developed by Climate NI for BCC. Work is ongoing, and on track, and a detailed

report will be brought to the All Party Working Group in February to ensure progress continues.

- A Sustainability Audit, being developed by KPMG for BCC. Work is ongoing and on track, and a detailed report will be brought to All Party Working Group in March, to ensure progress continues. Working Group members have asked that the review specifically ensure improvements in integration across Council on the issue of sustainability, e.g. more holistic approach to the circular economy and inclusive growth, and considers governance improvements to ensure our approach to sustainability is as effective as possible,
- An Energy Review. This work is to be commissioned, and may be delayed due to recruitment of new Climate Commissioner. A further update on progress will be made available as soon as possible.

- 3.4 It is intended that work on delivery of the Climate Adaptation Plan and implementation of the findings of the Sustainability Review will commence in advance of the summer, to ensure we are ahead of schedule, and therefore any delays to the Energy Review will be mitigated somewhat. That will enable us to meet most of the original timetable of June 2021 for the BCC Plan, and any amendments due to the delayed Energy Review will be brought to this committee in the autumn, well in advance of the end of year.
- 3.5 Members are aware that the Resilience Assessment and Climate Plan were launched in December 2020, and the city-wide Resilience Board is taking forward delivery of the 30 programmes contained in the document. BCC are responsible for leading several of the programmes (e.g. coordination of One Million Trees), and contributing to delivery of others (e.g. Architects for Change programme). For this reason, the All Party Working Group will receive regular reports from officers, to outline progress (1) with BCC programmes (2) with the wider plan. It may also be useful to have a joint meeting with the co-chairs of the board from time to time to discuss progress.
- 3.6 A number of structures have been set up at Executive level to coordinate action on (1) climate adaptation (2) climate mitigation (3) green growth. The Resilience Team at BCC work closely with colleagues in various departments to ensure we are contributing to policy and strategy at a regional level. The Working Group will receive regular updates – as a Standing Item- on policy and strategy being developed at a regional level to ensure BCC makes a full contribution.
- 3.7 At present, Council officers are preparing a response to DAERA's Discussion Document on a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill. Due to the limited timeframe for consultation an officer response

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will be submitted on this occasion. The officer response will be brought to the Working Group in March to be noted and to SP&R Committee in April.

- 3.8 COP 26 - the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow is a significant moment for cities who are committed to action to tackle climate change. It represents an opportunity to press for government action in this area, to fund areas of priority and to highlight the work taking place in Belfast, to a global audience. However, it is also an opportunity to offer a platform to young people to set out their aspirations for action. In the coming months, in partnership with the Belfast Climate Commission, we will use our engagement platform 'Your Say Belfast' to provide an opportunity for young people in Belfast to make a strong ask of global decision makers in the run up to COP 26. An update on this work, and other work ongoing as part of our existing networks, to influence and contribute to COP 26 will be brought to each meeting of the Working Group. Although the importance of youth and their aspirations for the future of the city are important, we also recognise the importance of engagement with older people and will coordinate a conversation through the G6 group.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 None at present, however future reports will set out emerging financial and resource implications of the above workplan.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 None at present."**

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Safe City Charter Status

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd August 2019, the following Motion on Domestic Violence was passed:**

'This Council is saddened at the levels of domestic violence in Belfast and recognises that this manifests in many different forms, including emotional and economic abuse.

Belfast needs to become a city that has zero tolerance towards domestic violence or abuse – a 'Safe City' which is proactive in

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supporting victims of domestic violence and challenging perpetrators. A Safe City recognises that domestic violence impacts upon many residents, regardless of age, religion, ethnic or cultural background.

The Council pledges to build on the work already achieved by engaging with relevant partners to support victims of domestic abuse and challenge perpetrators and to update the Belfast City Council Domestic Violence Strategy.'

- 1.2 Onus is a social enterprise organisation offering best practice advice and specialist training on domestic violence and abuse and in January 2020 the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to work towards the Onus Safe City accreditation. This report outlines action that has been taken by the Council and its partners to support victims of domestic violence and achieve the Onus Safe City status.

2.0 **Recommendation**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note that the Council was awarded Onus Safe City Charter status on 2nd February 2021.

3.0 **Main Report**

Key Issues

- 3.1 A Safe Borough / City, is defined by ONUS as a Borough / City that:
- promotes zero tolerance to domestic violence or abuse;
 - recognises that domestic violence or abuse impacts upon many people living or working there, regardless of age, religion, disability, ethnic or cultural background and while the majority of victims are female, domestic violence or abuse can be experienced by men and by people in same sex relationships; and
 - aims to provide an inclusive means of providing information on the range of organisations available to help anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse.
- 3.2 At its meeting on 23rd January 2020, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to the Council progressing an action plan to attain the Safe Borough / City accreditation. The requirements for a Safe City / Borough accreditation are:
1. the Council has attained Platinum Workplace Charter Status;

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2. the Council's management and elected representatives have signed and will display the White Ribbon Charter: a personal pledge to never commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence;
3. the Council is demonstrating civic leadership through Safe Place Advocacy;
4. the Council is committed to working in partnership to develop new means of extending Safe Place message;
5. the Council is committed to working in partnership with Onus to develop new means of rolling out the various Pathways for Participation to create safer workplaces, churches and communities and
6. consideration to be given to how awareness of services for anyone experiencing domestic abuse is prevalent in education, housing and health services

Update on activity to gain Safe City Charter Status.

Platinum Workplace Charter Status

- 3.3 Continuous review of the Council's Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace policy, development of our Trusted Colleague support framework and the associated communication and training programme are key to Council's annual assessment to retain re-accreditation of the ONUS Workplace Charter (Safe Place) at Platinum level. Following our annual assessment in November 2020, we were successful in retaining our Platinum Workplace Charter Status for another year.

The White Ribbon Charter

- 3.4 The White Ribbon Charter is part of the largest male-led Global campaign to end men's violence against women, with a presence in over 60 countries. Within the requirements for Safe City accreditation, is an action that 'Council management and elected members have signed and will display the White Ribbon Charter: a personal pledge to never commit, condone or stay silent about domestic violence'. Annually the White Ribbon Campaign is marked with 16 Days of Action, which run between the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25th November) until Human Rights Day (10th December). The Council has supported this campaign over a number of years with the display of a White Ribbon on the cobbled area in front of City Hall. The campaign was marked in 2020 in line with Covid restrictions by a socially distanced photograph of the Lord Mayor, the Chief Executive and the Head of HR signing the White Ribbon Charter and an associated internal and external

communication campaign to mark the start of the 16 Days of Action.

Further requirements for a Safe Borough / City

- 3.5 Council officers, through engagement with ONUS and the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PSCP), collaborated on the roll out of an extensive programme of Safe Churches training across the city supported and promoted through a range of partners including the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). Safe Churches is a bespoke pathway that enables churches to recognise and respond to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse. Once accredited, the churches can offer information on the wide range of support services available to anyone affected by domestic violence or abuse and they possess a range of Safe Place resources to signpost individuals to the appropriate assistance.
- 3.6 In addition, the Council, through the PCSP, continues to support a range of work linked to the Belfast Area Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership (BADSVAP), including work to raise awareness of domestic violence and services available for those experiencing domestic violence; such as the series of 'Domestic Violence Raising Awareness Sessions', which took place throughout the latter part of 2020 and early 2021, in each quarter of the city.
- 3.7 Officers are pleased to advise Members that Belfast has been assessed by ONUS and has met the standard for the criteria at point 3.2 by ONUS. This is a credit to the strong and effective partnership working across all sectors in Belfast.
- 3.8 Council officers will continue to engage and work with a wide range of partners to build on all the activity cited above, as part of our ongoing commitment to Belfast being recognised as a Safe City and ensure that this accreditation is retained on an annual basis going forward. Plans to communicate and promote the Council's success in attaining this accreditation are currently being developed.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 There are no Financial or Resource implications to the recommendations outlined above.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 The work to raise awareness of Domestic Violence and Abuse, and support available, has been progressed through the

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Women's Steering Group as part of the Council's Gender Action Plan. The revision and development of the Council's Domestic Violence and Abuse in the Workplace policy was undertaken with engagement and support from a number of Section 75 groups and supports the Council's wider equality agenda."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Systems Operator NI Consultation on Draft
Transmission Development Plan 2020/29 –
Council Response**

The Committee approved retrospectively the following officer response to SONI's consultation on the draft Transmission Development Plan 2020-29 and noted that further discussions would take between the Council and SONI to explore opportunities for collaboration:

SONI Draft Transmission Development Plan (2020-29) - December 2020

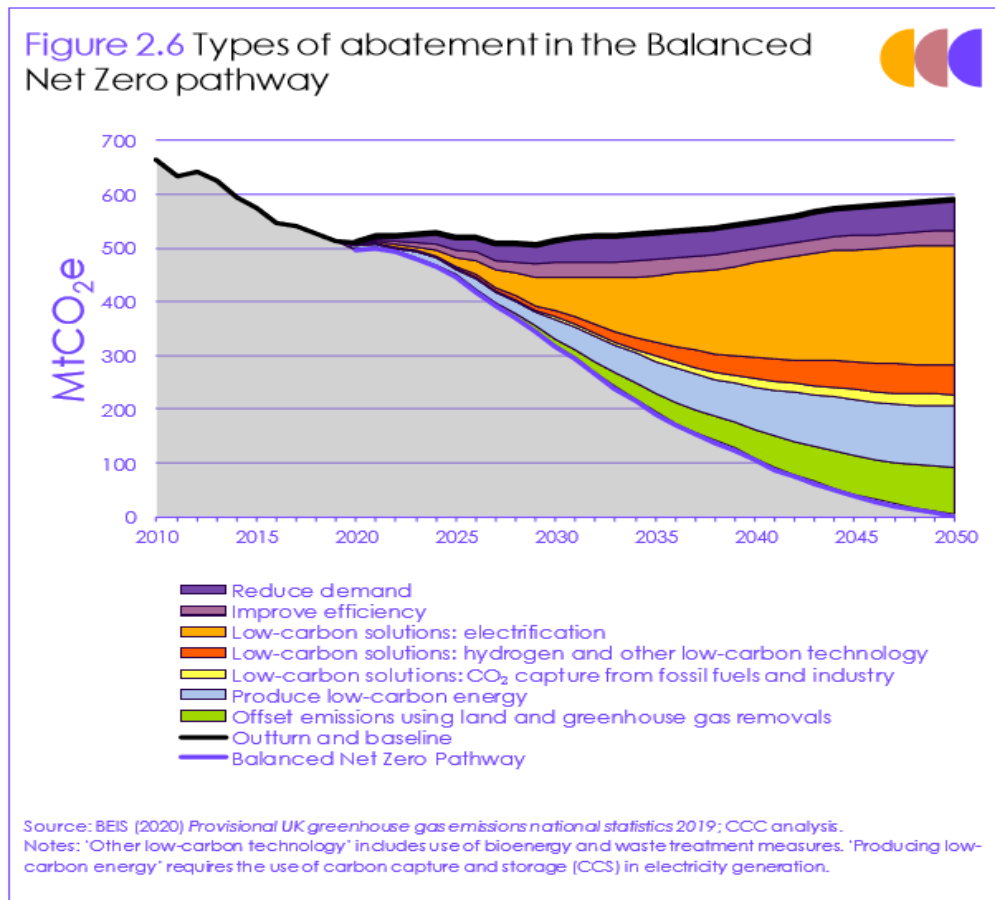
Council Response

Belfast City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Transmission Plan from SONI. This Council welcomes SONI's positive and proactive approach in planning ahead to meet the electricity transmission needs in Belfast and the wider region during this decade and beyond given the critical climate change challenge ahead.

Investment in this important infrastructure is key to meeting the governments net zero carbon targets by 2050 and realising the stated ambition of the NI Economy Minister to have at least 70% electricity from renewable sources by 2030. It is also critical for the achievement of the priorities set out in Belfast Agenda, the city's Community Plan, for our wider economic ambitions in this decade, and our goal to transition to an inclusive, climate resilient, zero emissions economy in a generation.

The importance of a smart and efficient grid network is crucial in realising the UK Climate Change Committee pathway goals, as outlined in its 6th Carbon Budget Report. The report highlights the key role that electrification of heating and transport systems will play as key pillars of decarbonisation.

The diagram below from the UK Climate Change Committees 6th Carbon Budget report illustrates the dominant role that electrification will have in future.



This predictable increase in demand for electricity to power clean heating and transport systems from 2020 as illustrated in the graph above, will inevitably place pressure on the existing electricity grid. It is therefore imperative that we have modern, efficient grid which can meet this demand.

Belfast Resilience Strategy

The opportunity to respond comes at an important time as Belfast City Council puts plans in place to address climate adaptation and mitigation issues in the city. In March 2019 Belfast declared a Climate emergency, and in December 2020, Belfast Council and partners in the Resilience and Sustainability Board launched its first City Resilience strategy. The strategy's central goal is to transition Belfast to an inclusive, climate resilient, zero emissions economy in a generation.

The Resilience Strategy examines shocks and stresses which weaken our economy in the long run. The threat from climate change is seen as the biggest single economic and environmental issue to affect the city for a generation. The City must plan a clear pathway for decarbonisation if it is to reduce this threat and benefit from the inevitable economic prosperity of a low carbon transition. Central to the city decarbonisation

plan is the work of SONI in the decarbonisation of the grid in Belfast, by providing the capacity to absorb more renewables onto the grid and to manage the system efficiently to provide increase in electricity demand through the rise in electric vehicle use, heat pumps etc. It is clear that strategic energy planning in cities will become an important economic factor in planning for sustainable city growth as well as a key enabler in reaching the UK Governments net zero carbon emissions target by 2050.

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

An efficient and modern grid is particularly important in a city which must provide the capacity to charge a new generation of electric vehicles, if we are to deliver a modal shift away from petrol and diesel vehicles in this decade. The capacity to charge EV's must be available both off- street for those in detached/semi-detached dwellings, and on - street for those living in terraced houses or apartments.

Belfast City Council is currently working with Virgin Media and Liberty Global on a £9.2m Innovate UK funded project, VPACH 2. This project will bring the first generation of commercial, smart, easily accessible EV charging to residential areas in seven UK cities. In the project Virgin Media's existing communications, internet and data management services will be repurposed for EV charging use .The success of the project will partially rely on the capacity of the grid in these areas to provide that electricity, especially during the night.

In this respect, we particularly welcome the plan to modernise parts of the grid in the Belfast Metropolitan area, so there is adequate electricity supply. We also welcome the capacity to manage the supply of more renewable energy onto the grid in the city region which is necessary for the long-term sustainable economic growth in the city.

Belfast Mini – Stern Report

In parallel with Resilience Strategy, the Council in partnership with the PCAN (Place Based Climate Action Network) has produced a Mini – Stern report on the economics of decarbonisation in the city. This report, which examines the pathway to decarbonisation dovetails with the SONI objectives in its Corporate Plan and this Draft Transmission Development report. We would welcome further collaboration with SONI as we prepare for subsequent 'Readiness Assessments' on the preparedness of the city to move to cleaner transport technology and address the retrofit of homes to an advanced low carbon standard.

Planning Implications

The Local Development Plan (LDP) for Belfast is currently at the Draft Plan Strategy (dPS) stage and this Council welcomes that SONI broadly supports the LDP's policy approach with regard to essential electricity infrastructure that will support sustainable economic growth within the

city. Similarly, from an LDP perspective it can be seen how the strategic objectives and the associated investment drivers set out in the draft TDP will help facilitate the delivery of the LDP's vision, aims and objectives whilst the policies set out in the dPS seek to support the development of sustainable electricity infrastructure and renewable energy development. The LDP team looks forward to building on the early, positive engagement with SONI as we progress towards the development of the Local Policies Plan.

Generally, this necessary electricity transmission infrastructure is very much to be welcomed to support the ongoing growth of this region, but strong environmental safeguards, including Planning, do need to be in place and respected at all stages of the decision-making processes. We welcome the detail given in the report on adherence to relevant environmental regulations e.g. SEA, Habitats directive etc.

The role of digital technology and data management

Although there is little reference to the role of data management and digital analytics within the report, we assume that these techniques are used extensively to predict electricity demand and supply. Given the role of 'big data' in determining accurate electricity demand and supply the BCC City Innovation team would be keen to share their experience of working with the Citizen Office of Data Analytics, a Belfast City Region Deal programme, which may offer opportunities for collaboration.

Furthermore, we would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our work to develop a Smart District, which aims to identify opportunities to innovate using a regulatory sandbox. It is our intention that this work will accelerate the city's transition to a zero emissions economy.

There are a range of opportunities for collaboration across both our organisations. I trust this response will lead to further discussions to find opportunity for partnership."

Belfast City Council and Fair Trade

The Chief Executive informed the Members that the Council, at its meeting on 1st March, 2000, had agreed to adopt a policy in relation to the procurement of Fair Trade products, in response to a Fair Trade Campaign being promoted at that time by the War on Want charity. That policy had been limited to:

- specifying the use of tea and coffee products with the Fair Trade mark for Council meetings and civic events;
- encouraging the use of Fair Trade tea and coffee by the Council's catering contractors;
- encouraging the use of Fair Trade tea and coffee by organisations hosting events in the City Hall;

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- integrating the issue of fair trade into the Council's Local Agenda 21 programme through future sustainable development strategies; and
- actively promoting awareness of fair trade amongst its employees and the citizens of Belfast through the adoption and promotion of this policy.

She reported that, following the receipt of correspondence from the Northern Ireland Assembly's All Party Working Group on Fairtrade, a report had, on 5th February, been presented to SOLACE NI on the potential for developing a more co-ordinated approach to Fairtrade in councils across Northern Ireland. SOLACE NI had agreed:

- to discuss this issue further at a future meeting, to determine a SOLACE NI view for consideration by each of the eleven councils and to support a more consistent level of council participation with the Fairtrade initiative; and
- to share information for their councils, in terms of participation with the Fairtrade initiative, through the SOLACE NI Policy Officer for collation, to provide an overview of current relationships between local councils and Fairtrade initiatives.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and that it would, at a future meeting, receive a report on recommendations and next steps.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Asset Management

The Committee:

i. Whitla Street Car Park – Options Agreement

- approved the entering into an options agreement with Translink for the 0.36 acre portion of Whitla Street Car Park, which has been approved for disposal to Translink to facilitate the development of Yorkgate Train Station;

ii. Finvoy Street Community Centre – Contractor Compounds

- approved the entering into a licence and a side letter to vary the terms of an existing lease, to allow two sites to be used for storage and welfare facilities by the contractor appointed to construct the new Finvoy Street Community Centre;

iii. Knocknagoney Linear Park – Electricity Substation

- approved the disposal of a 21sqm site at Knocknagoney Linear Park to Northern Ireland Electricity to facilitate the installation of a new electricity substation;

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iv. Beechvale Farm – Conacre Agreements

- approved the renewal of three conacre licences for the growing of crops, grazing and grass cutting on agricultural lands at Beechvale Farm for a licence period from and including 1st April, 2021 to 31st March, 2022;

v. Whiterock Leisure and Community Centre – Licence to Sustrans

- approved the grant of a licence to Sustrans for an initial period of 2 years;

vi. Monagh Wood - Easement to Phoenix Natural Gas Limited

- approved the grant of an easement regarding the siting of gas mains pipework/ equipment at Monagh Wood between the Council and Phoenix Natural Gas Limited; and

vii. Orangefield Park- Lease to the Department for Infrastructure

- approved the entering into a lease agreement with the Department for Infrastructure regarding the siting of a water level alert station and its associated pipework on Council lands at Orangefield Park.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 4th February.

Finance, Resources and Procurement

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below;
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 3 below; and
- noted the modification to contracts, in line with the Scheme of Delegation, as detailed in Table 4 below.

Equality and Good Relations

**Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021
and 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an update on progress concerning the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021/22, in light of the recent Council decision regarding live events and the need to revise the format of agreed events from February – June 2021 to meet requirements of Covid-19 restrictions; and
- outline proposals on how Council can mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021, in the context of Covid-19 restrictions.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i. note the update on the Decade of Centenaries Programme and provide feedback on the approach to the revised format of events occurring between February – June 2021; and
- ii. approve the proposals contained in the report to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021 and contribute £1,000 towards the Northern Ireland War Memorial Programme.

3.0 Main Report

Decade of Centenaries Programme

- 3.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd October 2020, Members agreed the programme for the remainder of the Decade of Centenaries until March 2022.
- 3.2 Officers have progressed a number of actions in relation to the programme as agreed including a submission of an application requesting £87,700 to the Shared History Fund which is being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This application is seeking funding for four of the projects listed in Appendix I, a copy of which has been circulated, namely:

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- Drama and animation programme in mid June 2021
 - The restoration of the chairs in the Council Chamber, used by the King and Queen on the occasion of the inauguration of the NI Parliament in 1921
 - A digitised artefacts and stories project related to 1921 and;
 - A time capsule project
- 3.3** It is anticipated that notification of the outcome will be given at the end of February, 2021.
- 3.4** Further to a query from officers, the HLF has advised in writing, without prejudice, that there is no issue should the Council commence a procurement process for these 4 projects prior to being notified of the outcome of the application. Therefore, Officers intend to start the process in mid February but will not appoint until Council has received formal written confirmation from HLF as to the result. The specifications have already been drawn up and BCC will advise organisations wishing to bid, that any award will be dependent upon funding. This will allow a maximised timeframe for successful delivery agents to develop quality programmes in advance of May and June as well as minimising the financial risk to the Council.
- 3.5** In parallel with this process, as a result of the ongoing restrictions set by The NI Executive, the Council at its meeting on 1st February, agreed to suspend live events from January 2021 until August 2021. In addition, the Council also agreed to develop an alternative option to deliver an event or exhibition to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland, to include the use of online platforms, and noted that other more public events were being planned for the second half of the year, Covid-19 restrictions permitting.
- 3.6** To this end, Members may wish to note the proposed revised format of activities at Appendix I, which can take place as part of the Centenary Programme during February – June 2021 while allowing for the decision of Council regarding live events and taking the Covid-19 restrictions into account.
- 3.7** Members have previously asked that the labour movement and the development of the women's movement be covered as part of the programme and may wish to note the following:
- Event on 26 March: Panel Discussion on Northern Ireland 100 Years – How has it Gone? – a balanced panel and the issues of the development of the women's movement and

labour issues are specific elements that will be covered by panelists;

- Drama: this has been designed to include the key themes of the whole of the final phase of the Decade, particularly on the women's movement between 1918 – 1922;
- The digital trail of artefacts, stories and personalities from 1921 will include the stories of local women and trade union issues; and
- These issues will also form the cornerstone of the final Decade of Centenaries conference in March 2022

Launch of NIO Programme – 14th December, 2020

- 3.8 The Secretary of State launched the NIO plans for the Centenary along with the branding programme – 'Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100'. He advised there will be a programme of events that seek to showcase Northern Ireland on the world stage as an attractive place to live, visit and do business, and to celebrate Northern Ireland's people, businesses, culture, arts, and young talent, reflecting on our past while looking forward to a positive future. A commitment of £3m has been made from the NIO for this purpose though further details are still to be made public.

Further information can be found at
<https://ourstoryinthemaking.com/>

External Engagement

- 3.9 Officers will continue to engage with NIO regarding the development of the programme. Officers have also met with officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to discuss respective plans.

80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz

Background

- 3.10 In 2016, the Council supported a number of events to mark the 75th anniversary of the Blitz, many of which were undertaken in partnership with the Northern Ireland War Memorial Museum given their expertise and contacts in this area. As part of the Council programme, a talk by the historian Brian Barton was arranged in the Bobbin, and on the same night the names of those who died were scrolled on the big screen in City Hall grounds along with an air siren sounding. A number of plaques marking significant sites impacted by the Blitz were also erected across the City.

Key Issues

- 3.11 Given the Council decision to suspend live events from January 2021 until August 2021, in light of ongoing restrictions due to the pandemic, the Council will not be able to arrange a suitable live event to mark the anniversary.
- 3.12 In light of the above approach, officers have sought to explore how the Council could support online engagement and have discussed the possibilities with the NI War Memorial given its expertise, resources and we partnered with the group in 2016.
- 3.13 The NI War Memorial has advised that it will be undertaking the majority of engagement through virtual means and only if restrictions permit, will the wreath laying at City and Milltown Cemeteries take place with a small number of people in attendance to maintain social distancing.
- 3.14 It is organising a significant programme for the 80th anniversary year including:
- Laying of wreath at NIWM and on mass graves in Milltown and City Cemeteries. Commemorations recorded on video on 15th April and released on Social Media on 16th April;
 - Launch of new memorial page on new NIWM website which will include updated list of casualties based on recent research and photographs of victims;
 - Online lecture series throughout April;
 - Promotion of *The War and Me* oral history project to encourage air raid memories; and
 - Blitz 80 reminiscence pack for care homes

Further contents of the Programme can be found at Appendix 2, a copy of which has been circulated.

Council Support

- 3.15 Given that the NIWM are organising such a range of creative activities including online lectures, work with schools, reminiscence projects which will reach a wider audience, the Council could take the approach of supporting and promoting the programme in the following ways:
- Pending restrictions, there will be a laying of wreaths at City Cemetery and Milltown Cemeteries on 15th April which is organised by the NI War Museum annually. The

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Lord Mayor could take part in this ceremony on behalf of Council if small gatherings are permitted;

- **The Lord Mayor could launch and/or promote the activities being planned around the anniversary;**
- **The Council's Communications Team could liaise with the NIWM to ensure we promote the events and Lord Mayor could record an appropriate message as part of this promotion;**
- **The NI War Memorial is planning to deliver reminiscence resource packs to care homes to mark the 80th anniversary. The Council could liaise with the Museum to publicise the activity packs and the Lord Mayor could be involved in some capacity to be determined; and**
- **Officers will explore the possibility of including an air raid siren/searchlight within the programme with the NIWM.**

Finance

- 3.16 The NIWM has indicated that it would be content for the Council to be associated/ involved with the relevant activities. It has advised that it is able to cover the costs of the outlined programme. However, it did indicate that as the organisation is printing all of the resources internally such as the packs for schools and care homes, the costs are significant. Officers would, therefore, suggest that the Council may wish to consider contributing up to £1,000 towards these costs to assist with this as part of the anniversary commemorations which can be covered through existing budgets.**

Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.17 The proposed programme of events are open to all and as such have the potential to promote good relations and equality by bringing together people from a wide range of backgrounds. The Decade of Centenary Programme has been considered as part of the District Council Good Relations Action Plan screening process.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.18 An application has been made to the HLF Shared History Fund for £87,700 and other elements of the programme are being funded through existing budgets. This includes £31k from the Decade of Centenaries specified Reserve, approx. £40k from the Events budget and £40,500 from the Good Relations Action Plan budget, 75% of which is funded through The Executive Office."**

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The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed, in terms of the 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz, that a report be submitted to a future meeting examining how additional suggestions, including the use of searchlights and an air raid siren, could be accommodated.

Request from Northern Ireland Office

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a request had been received from the Northern Ireland Office to use an image of the City Hall for a promotional video, as part of its Year '21 Centenary Programme.

The Committee agreed that the City Solicitor would circulate further details of the proposal to Members and that it be considered initially by the Party Group Leaders.

**Northern Ireland Centenary Programme –
Repositioning of Chairs**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1

- To seek approval to relocate the Town Hall Mayoral Chair in the Council chamber to improve the display of this artefact and the newly conserved Royal Chairs; and
- To seek approval to commission a new brass plaque marking the successful conservation of the chairs and marking their use in historic royal visits and the events of June 1921 at the City Hall. Both requests are linked into the council's NI Centenary Programme 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is recommended to;

- i. approve the request to relocate the Town Hall Mayoral chair to its own feature area and update the area for the two royal chairs; and
- ii. approve the request to commission a new brass plaque for the royal chairs.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 At present within the Council Chamber, a wooden platform against the back wall of the chamber showcases the two royal chairs and Town Hall Mayoral chair. The Mayoral Chair is believed**

to have been commissioned for the opening of the Town Hall on Victoria Street in 1871 and is a rare example of the Irish arts and craft style.

- 3.2 The royal chairs were formerly the property of former Lord Mayor Sir Crawford McCullagh and were used at the City Hall by King George V and Queen Mary in 1921 at the official state opening of the new Northern Ireland Parliament and by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth during their coronation tour of 1937. The Council purchased the chairs at auction from the late Sir Crawford's estate in 1950.
- 3.3 As part of the NI Centenary Programme, specialist conservators have been appointed to stabilise and conserve the condition of these two important artefacts. The cost of the conservation of the two Royal chairs is part of the NI Centenary Programme presented to the Committee in November 2020 and within a funding application to the Shared History Fund.
- 3.4 At present, City Hall Tour Guides have reported that international visitors to the City Hall are often confused by the current layout and display of these three chairs and it is hoped by separating the Mayoral Chair and pair of Royal Chairs, their respective historical significance and context will be better explained and illustrated to visitors.

Key Issues

- 3.5 The City Hall Collections team, once the conservation of the two royal chairs is completed, request permission to move the Town Hall Mayoral chair from its current location against the back wall of the chamber to the left of its current position, creating a separate small plinth on the north side of the chamber below the window; locating the artefact where Members may remember the Covenant table was on display for many years. All artefacts would continue to be cordoned with rope and stanchions, as they are, now to protect the artefacts from damage.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 A budget for conservation of the two Royal chairs has already been already approved as part of the NI Centenary Programme presented to committee in November 2020 and within a funding application to the Shared History Fund.
- 3.7 There would be a cost to the Council in approving the request for the procurement of a brass plaque to update the existing plaques. The cost is approximately £1,000 and would be financed from existing operational budgets.

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Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

3.8 There are no direct good relations or equality implications arising from this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership held on 8th February, including the recommendations:

- i. to seek nominees from the Interfaith Forum and The Executive Office to replace the positions which had recently become vacant;
- ii. to agree that a letter be forwarded, on behalf of the Shared City Partnership, to the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association, condemning the arson attack which had occurred on 15th January;

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- iii. to agree a further extension to mid-March 2021 to allow for Ligoniel and Ballynaveigh groups to complete;
- iv. that the 26 contact hours be made up of 13 online delivery and 13 hours of self-directed learning using the course materials provided.

Good Relations Action Plan 2020/21

- v. that a follow up event be organised with Professor Waller to explore further the themes discussed at the online seminar on 26th January;
- vi. to note the potential for underspend within the Good Relations Action Plan 2020/21, due to the current pandemic and subsequent restrictions, and that the Chief Executive has written to The Executive Office to ask for an extension to the funding to allow end of year flexibility;

Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22

- vii. to agree that that the draft Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22, as attached at Appendix 2 of the report, be submitted to The Executive Office, subject to the total cost for Strategic Intervention Programme BCC10 being amended to read £68,000;

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- viii. to note that, in order to meet the deadline set by The Executive Office, that the plan will be submitted in draft, subject to approval by the Council at the beginning of March; and
- ix. to note that this Action Plan submission is subject to amendment during the assessing and scoring process that will be undertaken by The Executive Office. The Council will be notified of any changes in the final approved Action Plans.

**Equality and Diversity: Quarter 3 Equality
Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for Quarter 3 (October to December, 2020).

**Equality and Diversity: Audit of Inequalities
and Equality Action Plan 2021-24**

The Committee approved the [Draft Audit of Inequalities](#) and the [Equality Action Plan](#) which had, over the past six months, been developed in collaboration with Council Departments and were aligned with the timescale of the Corporate Plan 2020-24.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Party
Group Leaders' Consultative Forum**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 11th February.

**Requests for Use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Committee considered the following applications for the use of the City Hall which had been received up to 5th February:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	November 2021 <i>Dependent on City Hall recovery and COVID guidelines</i>	Belfast Trust Chairman's Awards 2019 – Awards ceremony to recognise the contributions and achievements of the staff in the Belfast Trust.	C	Yes - £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality

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		<p>Numbers attending – 300</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>				
County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast	<p>On Date to be agreed within 2021</p> <p><i>Dependent on City Hall recovery and COVID guidelines</i></p>	<p>Celebration Dinner of Centenary of Northern Ireland– A dinner to celebrate the 100 years since the creation of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 300</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	C	Yes - £825	Yes, Wine Reception	<p>Approve</p> <p>No charge</p> <p>Wine Reception</p>

After discussion, the Committee approved the use of the City Hall by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the County Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland on the dates set out above. The Committee noted that the City Solicitor would, at its next meeting, provide clarification on whether the provision of a wine reception at the County Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland event, as recommended within the report, was permitted under the current criteria governing the provision of hospitality.

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**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Social Value Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Value Working Group of 29th January.

Chairperson