

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held both remotely, via Microsoft Teams, and in-person on a proportional basis, on Monday, 4th April, 2022 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire); and
The High Sheriff, (Councillor Hussey);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey,
Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks,
Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins,
Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading,
Howard, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long,
Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCann,
McCullough, McDonough Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin,
McMullan, Mulholland, Murphy, Newton, O'Hara,
Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors McAllister, McCusker and McReynolds.

Declarations of Interest

The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl) declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that she was an employee of Queen's University and she left the meeting for the duration of the item.

The High Sheriff (Councillor Hussey) declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that he taught at the Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS) at Queen's University Belfast and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

Councillor Newton declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that his wife was employed by the Ulster University and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

Councillor Pankhurst declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that he was a PhD student and a teaching assistant at Queen's University Belfast and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

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Councillor Spratt declared an interest in the Motion on University Sector – Industrial Dispute, in that his wife was employed by the Ulster University and that he would therefore leave and not take part in the discussion on the item.

Councillor McMullan advised the Council that he was an individual member of the Belfast City of Sanctuary and that, as it was a non-pecuniary interest in an organisation which was formed for a public interest, he would participate fully in the discussion of the motion with the same name.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the item “Partner Agreements Quarter 3 Update and Rosario Youth Centre request” within the People and Communities minutes, on the basis that his son was a member of Rosario Youth Club and if the issue arose that he would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Hanvey declared an interest in respect of the item “Partner Agreements Quarter 3 Update and Rosario Youth Centre request”, in that he had been working with Rosario Youth Club in respect of funding and that if the issue arose that he would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to the item “Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service” within the Strategic Policy and Resources minutes, in that he was a Board Member of the Ligoniel Improvement Association, and he left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

Councillor Black declared an interest in relation to the item “Community Provision Grant Funding 2022/23” within the People and Communities minutes, in that she was employed by Grosvenor Community Centre and that if the issue arose that she would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Verner declared an interest in relation to the item “Community Provision Grant Funding 2022/23” within the People and Communities minutes, in that she was associated with an organisation which had applied for funding and that if the issue arose that she would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Councillor Corr advised that he worked for Falls Community Council, which was a recipient of Advice Consortium Funding, and that if the issue arose that he would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Minutes of the Council Meetings

Moved by the Lord Mayor,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Monthly meeting of the Council of 1st March and the Special meeting of 14th March be taken as read and signed as correct.

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Official Announcements

Congratulations – Mr. J. Walsh

The Lord Mayor and Members from each Political Party congratulated Mr. J. Walsh on his recent appointment as the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council and wished him well in his new role.

The Chief Executive thanked the Members for their kind words.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor and a number of Councillors expressed their condolences to Mr. R. Cregan, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources, upon the recent death of his father, Daniel.

Condolences were also paid to Councillor Mulholland upon the death of her father, Shane, and to Councillor Magee, on the loss of his father, John.

A Member also paid tribute to Ms. S. Workman, a dedicated and compassionate Community Development worker, who had recently passed away.

Industrial Action

A Member stated that she wished to put on record her congratulations to all those employees who had participated in picket lines across the City the previous week in the fight for better pay and that she hoped that management within the Council would engage in discussion with the unions in respect of an above-inflation pay rise for those staff affected.

Belfast Giants

A Member requested that the Lord Mayor would pass on her congratulations to the Belfast Giants Ice Hockey team for recently winning the Challenge Cup. The Lord Mayor agreed that she would invite the team to attend the City Hall to recognise the achievement.

Blu Hydrangea

A Member requested that the Lord Mayor would pass on her congratulations to Blu Hydrangea for recently winning RuPaul's Drag Race: UK vs the World, and that she had been an important role model. The Lord Mayor stated that she would be delighted to invite her to attend the City Hall in recognition of her win.

Monthly Letter

The Lord Mayor read out a letter from Ms. Esther Oluwalana, aged 9, who had recently moved with her family to live in Belfast. She explained how she had recently

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enrolled in Holy Rosary Primary School, along with her brother, and praised the welcome they had received both from teachers at the school and in Belfast in general.

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Groogan
Seconded by Councillor Walsh

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th March, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Motion - Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service

Moved by Councillor Ferguson
Seconded by Councillor Matt Collins and

Resolved - That the Council agrees to suspend Standing Orders and to award the shortfall in funding of £181,878 to the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service, in principle, noting that it was subject to due diligence and a future report being submitted to the Committee.

Glór na Móna

In response to a Member's request, and with the Chairperson's agreement, the Council agreed that the decision of the Committee was to be amended to read that:

"the Committee agreed to allocate £86,000 to Glór na Móna and also agreed that a meeting between Glór na Móna and the Education Authority was to be arranged."

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 28th March were approved and adopted.

Minutes of the People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain
Seconded by Councillor Bunting

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 8th March, be approved and adopted.

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Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy
Seconded by Councillor McCann

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 9th March be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly
Seconded by Councillor Howard

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 16th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Maskey

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 2nd, 15th and 29th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Baker
Seconded by Councillor Murphy

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 10th March be approved and adopted.

Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McCullough
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 30th March, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Motions to be debated by the Council

University Sector - Industrial Dispute

(The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl), The High Sheriff (Councillor Hussey) and Councillors Newton, Pankhurst and Spratt, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting for the duration.)

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Heading proposed:

“This Council acknowledges the contribution to civic and economic life made by both Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster to the citizens of Belfast City. Belfast City Council also notes the high standard of teaching and research carried out by staff at both universities and the benefits made to the people of Belfast as an employer.

This Council is concerned at the current Industrial dispute taking place throughout the university sector and in particular its detrimental impact upon the international reputation, civic and economic contribution of Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster to the City. This council is further concerned of the failure to resolve this dispute will mean staff will seek employment outside the sector impacting upon quality of teaching and research and the local and international standing as universities of excellence.

Belfast City Council is also concerned at the failure of Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA), of which Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster are members, in addressing the proposed 35% cut in the Universities Superannuation Scheme payable to staff on retirement.

Belfast City Council is further concerned the Universities and Colleges Employer's Association appear to have no resolve in negotiating an amicable solution and is therefore prolonging unnecessarily the industrial dispute.

Belfast City Council therefore calls upon both local University Vice Chancellors to use their influence with the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association to resolve this dispute and if required for call for an allocation from the sector's reserves estimated at £46.8 billion to be used to support the Universities Superannuation Scheme.

This Council asks the Lord Mayor to write to both Vice Chancellors expressing the views of council and in particular the dispute to be resolved fairly and that Belfast City Council supports the principle of adequate pensions for all employees on retirement.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

The motion was put to the meeting and passed.

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City of Sanctuary

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Kyle proposed:

“That this Council supports Belfast City Council becoming a “Council of Sanctuary” and supports the initiative to have Belfast recognised as a “City of Sanctuary”.

As a council we recognise that:

- a) A “Council of Sanctuary” is a place that provides a welcome and safe place for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants and supports the conditions that will allow people from these backgrounds to feel safe, valued and included in Belfast.
- b) We recognise as leaders we have a responsibility to receive and include new residents with care and dignity.
- c) This commitment to become a “Council of Sanctuary” does not seek to provide preferential treatment to one community over another, instead it recognises that during the arrival, settlement and integration journey, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants face many challenges and that as city leaders we will play our part in working to build a culture of welcome, equality and inclusion.
- d) This council will work to implement a “City of Sanctuary” through our actions and policies, through understanding the lived experience of communities that are new to Belfast and through supporting our partners in the community and voluntary sectors.

The Council Resolves to:

- Join a network of cities and towns which promote the inclusion and welfare of people who are fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries and become a recognised “Council of Sanctuary”
- Continue to understand the lived experience of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants living in Belfast
- Continue to work with organisations in the city who support refugees, asylum seekers and migrants
- Challenge anti-refugee and anti-migrant attitudes wherever they are found
- Ensure equality in the provision of our services and facilities and that public spaces can be accessed and enjoyed by everyone
- Develop an internal Race Equality and Diversity Action Plan – that will review how we deliver our services and take action as an employer to create a diverse workforce.”

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The motion was seconded by Councillor McMullan.

The motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson