

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th November, 2022

## MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McDonough-Brown (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor M. Kelly);  
Aldermen Dorrian and Haire; and Councillors  
Beattie, Bradley, Bunting, Ferguson, Garrett,  
Groogan, Heading, Long, Lyons, McLaughlin,  
McMullan, Murphy, Spratt, Verner and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor Michael Collins.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;  
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and  
Civic Services;  
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;  
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;  
Ms. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;  
Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;  
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and  
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

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

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st October 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 November, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in respect of agenda items 2d – Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund and 8a – Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership, in that she had recently accepted an offer of employment from an organisation referred to within each report and left the meeting whilst they were under consideration.

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**Restricted Items**

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following eight 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 the following eight items as, due to 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.

**Financial Reporting – Quarter 2 2022/23**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided information on the financial position for Quarter 2 2022/23, based upon the five step Finance Strategy which had been formulated to protect the financial sustainability of the Council, in what was a difficult period of unbudgeted pressures.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 2, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £4.4m (5.6%), which included absorbing Covid-19 expenditure and income losses of £2.1m. The underspend could be attributed to the under occupancy of office buildings, underspends in employee budgets and the additional expenditure controls which continued to offset income losses. The Quarter 2 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £3.3m (2.1%) and there was also a forecast underspend of £1.2m in the Covid-19 reserve fund and an unallocated balance of £2.3m from the 2021/22 underspend.

He stressed that the Quarter 2 forecast did not include the significant pressures caused by the current rate of inflation and made specific reference to the 2022/23 pay award, cost of living support and a community centre utility overspend.

The Director went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves position, rates finalisation and the overall Investment Programme.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2023-24**

The Director of Finance drew the Committee's attention to a report which provided an update on the development of the Revenue Estimates and the setting of the District Rate for 2023/24.

The report outlined the six key elements involved in the annual setting of the District Rate and provided an update on uncontrollable cost pressures and on ongoing considerations, such as inflation and the Estimated Penny Product.

He went on to confirm that each Political Party would, during November, be briefed on the rate setting process and recommended that representatives of Land and Property

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Services be invited to attend the Committee meeting in January to provide a presentation on the outcome of the non-domestic revaluation exercise.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and adopted the recommendation.

**Update on NI Council Strategic  
Waste Management Arrangements**

The Committee agreed to defer until its meeting in December a report providing an update on joint working between councils on Waste Management issues to enable Party briefings to be held.

**Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st October, it had adopted a motion calling for the establishment of a Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund of £500k for households in most need in Belfast, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor Ferguson, on behalf of Councillor Flynn.

The Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to its meeting in November on the funding, design and delivery of the scheme.

Accordingly, the Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which proposed that, given the scale and complexity of the challenges being faced by households across the City, the Council adopt a phased approach to delivery. Phase 1 would focus upon the urgent distribution of £100 fuel vouchers to households in most need, with Phase 2 being developed in tandem, in order to provide a broader range of support over a longer-term period, in collaboration with key voluntary, community and social enterprise and city partners and would be dependent on additional resources becoming available.

The Director then drew the Committee's attention to an initial set of draft design principles, eligibility criteria and delivery and funding allocation models to be considered, following which it was

Moved by Councillor Murphy,  
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees, in terms of the delivery model, to adopt Option 2 within the report, to use the Local Strategic Partners, and agrees also that the Ashton Centre replace Intercomm as a Strategic Partner in North Belfast.

The proposal was subsequently amended to include Alderman Dorrian's proposal that the Greater Shankill Community Council replace the Greater Shankill Partnership as a Strategic Partner in West Belfast.

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**Amendment**

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,  
Seconded by Councillor Long,

That the Committee agrees to adopt Option 5, to use Advice Services to deliver the scheme.

On a vote, seven Members voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was declared lost.

On a recorded vote, twelve Members voted for the original proposal, as amended, and six against and it was declared carried.

<b><u>For 12</u></b>	<b><u>Against 6</u></b>
Aldermen Dorrian and Haire; and Councillors Beattie, Bradley, Bunting, Ferguson, Garrett, McLaughlin, Murphy, Spratt, Verner and Walsh.	Councillor McDonough-Brown (Chairperson); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor M. Kelly); and Councillors Heading, Long, Lyons and McMullan.

The Committee agreed further:

- i. to increase the Hardship fund to £1m, with this allocation to be met, in the first instance, from Departmental underspends and from the realignment of specified reserves, if required;
- ii. that the Scheme should, if possible, be implemented before Christmas;
- iii. to endorse the Design Principles set out within paragraph 3.7 of the report;
- iv. to endorse the recommendation to establish a Cost-of-Living Task Group, with membership to be confirmed but to include, as a minimum, representatives from the Council, the Department for Communities, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Belfast Area Partnerships, to ensure that effective referral pathways are created to support the most vulnerable within the City;
- v. to endorse the eligibility criteria set out within paragraph 3.11 of the report, with the proposal to increase the gross annual household income eligibility threshold from £40k to £60k to be referred to the Cost-of-Living Task Group for consideration, to ensure that those most in need, including the working poor, were targeted;

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- vi. that there be sufficient flexibility in the scheme to ensure that householders using forms of heating other than oil and payment methods other than vouchers are included and that this be referred to the Cost-of-Living Task Group to work out the detail;
- vii. to note that correspondence had been forwarded to the Department of Communities requesting that consideration be given to potential match funding for the Fuel Hardship Scheme, as requested within the motion;
- viii. to note that the design and delivery of the scheme would have implications internally, particularly for those staff leading on community planning and on community capacity/neighbourhood integration and that assistance would also be required from the Finance and Audit Sections, in terms of ensuring that all necessary requirements and regulations were met;
- ix. to note that, in anticipation of any additional funding becoming available, including through Government departments, Council officers were currently developing a funding framework, details of which would be provided at the Committee meeting in December; and
- x. agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee within the next two months providing an update on the work being undertaken to review the strategic and thematic partners.

**Inquiry into Funding for Levelling Up**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reminded the Committee that the Levelling Up Fund had been launched early in 2022 as a means of investing in infrastructure across the United Kingdom to support local transport projects, town and high street regeneration and cultural and heritage assets.

He reported that the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee had, on 20th October, launched an inquiry into Funding for Levelling-Up, in order to review the funds available for levelling-up and how effectively resources had been directed to those areas most in need. The inquiry was examining questions around the allocation of levelling-up resources and the aim, size and focus of the many different funds available, as well as exploring how far the Government's approach to funding for levelling up and proposed initiatives, such as Investment Zones, contributed to its objective of levelling up across the United Kingdom, including devolved administrations. The Committee was also seeking to understand how the Government was ensuring that such funds strengthened communities and boosted local economies.

He explained that the Council had been invited to contribute to the inquiry and presented for the Committee's approval a draft response for submission to the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee.

The Committee approved the draft response.

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**Update on Special Meetings of the Area Working Groups  
– Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund Stage 1 Applications**

The minute for this item has been restricted on the basis of commercial sensitivity and an ongoing competitive process. The minute will be published in due course.

**Special Meeting**

It was agreed that, in future, a special meeting of the Committee would be held to enable Members to be fully briefed on those projects which were being recommended by the Area Working Groups to proceed to the next stage in the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund process.

**Update on Research into the Lived Experiences  
of Minority Ethnic Communities in Belfast**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency had jointly commissioned research in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the range of experiences of minority ethnic populations in Belfast and help inform policy making and service provision.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reviewed the methodology which had been used in the research and pointed out that the interviews and focus groups which had been held over the past six months had examined how minority ethnic populations in Belfast experienced everyday issues, such as employment, accessing housing, healthcare, education, leisure services, civic engagement, community safety and cultural integration.

That research had now been completed and a draft report, entitled “Inequalities experienced by Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and Traveller People residing in Belfast” had been produced, which set out a number of recommendations for the commissioning organisations. The draft findings had been presented to the Shared City Partnership on 10th October and the report was due to be launched on 1st December. It was envisaged that the findings would be disseminated to ensure that relevant strategies and programmes, including the Belfast Agenda Refresh, the Good Relations Action Plan and the PEACE PLUS Action Plan, would take into account the lived experience of ethnic minority groups within the City.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the  
Language Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group of 11th November, including the recommendation to approve the Language Strategy Action Plan for pre-consultation engagement with the newly established Irish and Ulster-Scots stakeholder forums and existing Council language engagement forums. The Committee would receive an update on the outcome of that engagement in advance of the launch of a public consultation.

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**Matters referred back from Council / Motions**

**Motion - Rates Freeze**

The Committee was reminded that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 25th October, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 1st November:

“This Council recognises the impact the rising cost of living crisis will have on Council expenditure, and the pressure this will put on our existing budgets to deliver the same high-quality services.

The Council also recognises the crisis we face will demand a heightened and increases response from local government.

At a time when many people are struggling to heat their homes, or put food on the table, the Council and its partner organisations must be adequately equipped to help navigate this crisis and provide the increased support that is needed for those struggling.

During the Covid pandemic, local Councils were allocated a financial package to help them manage the additional pressures the pandemic presented.

The cost-of-living crisis is a crisis on a similar magnitude and will require additional support to be provided to local Councils, to ensure they are adequately equipped to help mitigate the impact of this crisis on communities.

*The Council views any effort to increase rates as a response to these financial pressures as counter intuitive. Any move to increase rates during a cost-of-living crisis will only exacerbate problems for working class communities. It would lead to a further hike in already mounting household bills and could force more people into poverty.*

*The Council acknowledges the need to avoid another rates increase during the cost-of-living crisis.*

As a first step toward avoiding this, the Council will write to Stormont Ministers, the Secretary of State, and the Treasury, urging them to support a financial package of additional funding to be allocated to local Councils to help them manage the cost-of-living crisis.

The Council also commits to writing to all other councils across the north, asking them to adopt a similar position of calling for an increase of government support.

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This will help to ensure that all Councils are adequately equipped to provide support to communities, to pay fair wages to its employees, and deliver high quality services during the cost-of-living crisis.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Michael Collins and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

The Interim City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services had advised the Standards and Business Committee that those parts of the motion in italics, relating to a Council rates freeze, were not competent, as setting the rate was a legal obligation and must go through a process.

Accordingly, the Committee had agreed that those paragraphs of the motion, deemed competent, in relation to writing to Stormont Ministers, the Secretary of State and the Treasury, urging them to support a financial package of additional funding to local councils and writing to all other councils asking them to adopt a similar position, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Councillor Michael Collins referred, amongst other things, to the pressures being faced by local councils during the current cost of living crisis and highlighted the need for the Government to provide significant financial support, similar to that which had been allocated during the Covid-19 pandemic, to maintain service delivery. Accordingly, he urged the Committee to support his motion.

After discussion, the Committee adopted those parts of the aforementioned motion which were deemed to be competent and agreed that copies of correspondence between NILGA, SOLACE and others and Government and Northern Ireland Executive Departments around the provision of additional financial support for councils, be circulated to all Members.

**Governance**

**Schedule of Meetings 2023**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2023, with all meetings to commence at 9.30 a.m.:

- Friday 13th January (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday 20th January
- Friday 17th February
- Friday 24th March
- Friday 14th April
- (No meeting in May - Local Government Elections)



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- Friday 16th June
- Friday 18th August
- Friday 22nd September
- Friday 20th October
- Friday 24th November
- Friday 15th December

**Change of Date of Council Meeting**

The Committee approved the change of date of the Council meeting in January from Tuesday, 3rd to Monday, 9th, with proceedings to commence at the usual time of 6.00 p.m.

**Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation for Planning**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The Council must prepare a Scheme of Delegation for planning which sets out which decisions on Local and minor planning applications are delegated to officers. The current Scheme of Delegation was implemented in January 2020. In accordance with legislation, the Council is required to review the current Scheme of Delegation no more than every 3 years, i.e. it is next due to be reviewed by January, 2023.**

**1.2 This report essentially proposes to renew the existing Scheme of Delegation, subject to two minor changes, with a view to a more in-depth review at some point in the future.**

**1.3 The proposed amendments to Scheme of Delegation were noted by the Planning Committee on 18th October with no specific comments made. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is asked to agree the amendments to the Scheme as set out in this report. Under the legislation, the Scheme of Delegation must be agreed by the Department for Infrastructure.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the two minor changes to the current Scheme of Delegation for Planning, with a view to it being sent to the Department for Infrastructure for approval.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.0 Background**

**3.1 Section 31 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires a council to prepare a Scheme of Delegation which enables a person appointed by the Council to determine applications for Local development, consents, agreements or approvals required by condition. All Major applications must by law be considered by the Planning Committee.**

**3.2 Article 9 of the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 states that a council must not adopt a Scheme of Delegation until it has been approved by the Department for Infrastructure. Article 11 states that a council must prepare a Scheme of Delegation at intervals of no greater than three years.**

**3.3 *Development Management Practice Note 15: Councils Schemes of Delegation* provides Departmental guidance. It advises that the main benefits of delegation are:**

- to enable the Planning Committee to devote its finite time to determining applications that present issues that the Committee are best served to determine; and
- delegation of planning applications to officers is critical to affecting the overall performance of the development management process as it helps to ensure that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, costs are minimised and members have more time to concentrate on the most complex cases.

**3.4 The Council first published a Scheme of Delegation in March 2015 ahead of transfer of most planning powers to councils. It was then amended in June 2017 following a review (and updated in March 2019 to take account of the Council's new departmental structure). Further amendments were made in January 2020.**

**3.5 The Scheme of Delegation sets out a range of planning functions which are delegated to officers. These include:**

- Decisions on certain types of Local application;
- Decisions on other forms of consent and approval;
- Preservation of trees;
- Determinations under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations;

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- Enforcing planning regulations;
- Temporary listing of buildings;
- Responding to LDP and planning application consultations from neighbouring Planning Authorities;
- Conducting of appeals and public examinations;
- Responding to planning related consultations from other agencies;
- Negotiating developer contributions in which the contribution exceeds £30k.

**Renewal of the Scheme of Delegation**

- 3.6 The Scheme of Delegation was last amended in January 2020 and was essentially a refinement of the Scheme adopted in 2017.
- 3.7 The current Scheme is considered to be working well and it is not proposed to make any significant changes to it at this stage. Instead, it is proposed that there is a fuller review, potentially next year, to tie in with the lean systems experimentation work that the Planning Service is undertaking in respect of processing of planning applications.
- 3.8 Delegation rates since 2018/19 are set out in Table 1 below. It will be noted that the rate of delegated decisions in Belfast is slightly higher than the regional average, which is a positive indicator of an efficient Scheme of Delegation.

**Table 1**

% delegated decisions by year

\* Unverified

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22*	2022/23
BCC Delegation Rate (%)	93.4%	92.5%	93.2%	94.5%	N/A
NI Delegation Rate (%)	91.5%	91.2%	92.8%	N/A	N/A

- 3.9 The proportion of officer recommendations overturned by the Planning Committee is also substantially lower than the regional average as shown in Table 2, below. This is positive indicator of Elected Member confidence in officer decisions in Belfast.

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**Table 2**

**% officer recommendations overturned by Committee**

Year	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22*	2022/23**
BCC Delegation Rate (%)	2.5%	2.2%	3.8%	N/A	N/A
NI Delegation Rate (%)	11.9%	11.6%	13.9%	N/A	N/A

**Proposed Adjustments to the Scheme of Delegation**

**3.10** It is recommended that the current Scheme of Delegation is renewed subject to two minor modifications set out below:

- 1. Paragraph 3.8.1 – Procedure for Elected Members referring applications to the Committee.** It is recommended that the window for members requesting that an application is referred to the Committee is extended from 21 days to 28 days. Furthermore, that the 28-day period runs not only from the date that the application is advertised in the newspaper but also from the date of Neighbour Notification, whichever is the later.
- 2. Paragraph 3.8.2 – Applications for demolition in a Conservation Area or Area of Townscape Character.** It is recommended that this is amended so that only applications for full demolition that are recommended for approval are required to be referred to the Committee. This will allow officers to refuse applications for full demolition under delegated powers.

**3.11** These changes are shown in the proposed modified Scheme of Delegation attached in Appendix 1 accompanying this report. The current adopted Scheme of Delegation is shown in Appendix 2 accompanying this report.

**Other Matters**

**3.12** When the Planning Committee previously considered the Scheme of Delegation in December 2019, it sought a comparison of the then proposed changes with the 2015 and 2017 Schemes of Delegated. This is provided again in Appendix 3 accompanying this report. The proposed modifications to the current Scheme of Delegation (labelled

2019 in Appendix 3) are summarised at paragraph 3.10 of this report.

- 3.13 The Planning Committee also previously requested examples of other Schemes of Delegation. Hyperlinks to other examples are provided again below.

Derry and Strabane Council (bottom of webpage):  
<https://www.derrystrabane.com/planning>

Newry, Mourne and Down Council:  
[https://www.newrymouredown.org/media/uploads/planning\\_scheme\\_of\\_delegation.pdf](https://www.newrymouredown.org/media/uploads/planning_scheme_of_delegation.pdf)

Horsham District Council (pages 37 and 38 of the Council's Constitution):  
[Horsham District Council : Document Constitution of Horsham District Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/horsham-district-council/document-constitution-of-horsham-district-council)

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.14 The renewal of the current Scheme of Delegation, subject to minor modifications, will enable the Council to continue to determine planning matters in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

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

- 3.15 No adverse impacts have been identified.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

#### **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

#### **Update on City Region Growth Deal**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 **Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

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- (i) note the update on progress being made now that the Deal is in the delivery phase, including in relation to:
- agreeing the Contracts for Funding which are required for each of the capital projects delivered through the Deal; and
  - project development and delivery across the pillars of investment; and
- (ii) note the update on the BRCD Council Panel.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Deal Delivery**

**Contracts for Funding**

- 3.1 Before funding can flow to projects for which Outline Business Cases (OBCs) have been approved, Contracts for Funding need to be agreed between departments and the Accountable Body and Funding Agreements agreed between the Accountable Body and Project Sponsors.
- 3.2 Since the last update to the Committee and following the signing of the first individual Contract for Studio Ulster in July, progress has continued to prepare and agree a number of contracts. As previously noted by Members, the Framework Contract was agreed by the BRCD Executive Board and it was agreed that subsequent agreements would be made between the relevant parties without needing specific individual Board approvals. It was also noted that the Committee would be advised of progress to agree the funding agreements for each project.
- 3.3 The Contract for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) is nearing completion with the Contract now finalised and agreed with the relevant department and partners and is expected to be signed during December following University approvals. Draft Contracts for the Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (iREACH) and Momentum One Zero (formerly the Global Innovation Institute) have been shared by the Department for Economy and are being considered.
- 3.4 Following agreement of the Contract with the Department for Communities, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council received approval to sign the Carrickfergus Contract for Funding at its Council meeting on 7th November and this will be signed by the middle of November. Three of the Contracts for projects

within the Tourism and Regenerations pillar, namely Newry City Centre Regeneration, Bangor Waterfront and Mourne Mountain Gateway, are also now being actively progressed.

**Progress across BRCD Pillars**

**3.5 Innovation**

Following signing of the Contract for Funding for Studio Ulster in July, construction at the site in Belfast Harbour commenced on 3rd October, following a media launch. When complete in July 2024 it will include world-class commercial Virtual Production stages, fully supported by an integrated R and D and Innovation Centre of Excellence in real-time and virtual production. In the coming months Ulster University are due to complete the Pre-Qualification stage for the Studio Ulster Operator and Delivery Partner.

3.6 The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) has been advanced by Queen's University through to the detailed design stage and it was recently announced that Sam Turner, Chief Technology Officer at the High Value Manufacturing Catapult would be seconded into the position of CEO for AMIC to drive forward plans for delivery, which include the construction of the 'Factory for the Future' at Global Point. AMIC also recently launched its NI Technology Roadmap and the Invitation to Tender for its construction contractor is expected to issue in late 2022 or early 2023.

3.7 Momentum One Zero (formerly known as the Global Innovation Institute) is reaching the end of RIBA Stage 2 (concept design) with approval to proceed to detailed design being sought in the coming months. The iREACH project also continues to move through RIBA Stage 2, is considering in further detail its commercial model and has been undertaking significant stakeholder engagement.

3.8 The Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology project has undertaken a feasibility study to consider an alternative to the proposed demolition and rebuild option, driven by the net zero carbon agenda and by cost. Early procurement of equipment is being considered in relation to the Royal Victoria Hospital Living Lab.

3.9 The Committee is asked to note that, as part of plans to utilise the BRCD funding to leverage additional investment in support of our growth ambitions, a letter of support has been provided for a bid by the Health Innovation Research Alliance (HIRANI), supported by local industry, Invest NI, Universities and other

partner Councils, to become one of 10 regions to partner with Innovate UK to define launchpad support to grow the economic value of established clusters- in this case life and health sciences. This is not direct funding but unlocks £7.5M in-kind and commercial Innovate UK grants for revenue funding to overcome barriers to commercialisation and support local business-led innovation, collaboration and growth, over 2 years (2023-25). This will build from existing and emerging local clusters such as homes for health ageing and precision diagnostics and help support the long-term investments in innovation in life and health sciences planned in each of the City and Growth deals. The bid does not involve any direct financial or resource ask from Belfast City Council.

**3.10 Digital**

Members will be considering at this meeting a separate report on the Smart Belfast Urban Innovation Framework, which reflects the importance of the BRCD investments to delivering the City's and the indeed the Region's digital innovation ambitions. However, a brief update is provided below on key developments in the digital pillar since the previous report.

- 3.11** Following Executive Board approval in October, the OBC for the Digital twin project led by Digital Catapult UK, which will see a digital twin hub for the UK being established in Belfast, attended Casework Committee on 19th October 2022 and received Ministerial approval on 28th October 2022.
- 3.12** Since the last update to the Committee, consultants have been appointed to commence the development of the OBC for the Venture Fund element of the Innovation Challenge Fund and a Case for Change workshop took place on 9th November.
- 3.13** The i4c Innovation Centre project, led by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council received approval from the Economy Minister in Spring 2022 and the Council have been working intensively with the Department for the Economy to address challenges such as construction inflation and will now be proceeding to seek Department of Finance supply approval.
- 3.14** In relation to the Advanced Wireless business case, engagement has now taken place with key officials in the Department for the Economy in order to discuss options for the project following feedback on the draft OBC. The next steps are now being considered and these will be presented to the Digital Advisory Board for consideration.



**3.15 Tourism and Regeneration**

The OBC for Destination Royal Hillsborough was considered at Casework Committee on 25th October 2022 with a recommendation for Ministerial approval, which was then secured on 28th October 2022 from the Economy Minister. The project will now proceed for Department of Finance supply approval.

- 3.16** Members will be aware that Belfast Stories is the Council's flagship project and is due to open in 2028 and that the Committee approved the extension of the Project Director for 5 years in line with this timescale. Progress against the agreed programme is ongoing with procurement of professional services now in place to progress design to RIBA 2 and enable a full OBC to be developed. The casework review is anticipated to be held in 2023. A Public consultation exercise has also been ongoing which includes elements of the Stories Collection Framework and will in turn inform the design brief for the project. The key findings of the consultation exercise will be presented to Members at a future meeting along with recommendations and next steps for the project.

**3.17 Employability and Skills (E&S)**

Further to the update to Members in September, all Councils have approved their contribution to the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund and pre-development work has commenced. This will enable the key resources that supported the Full-Fibre Network to be retained by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to support the OBC and establish the necessary arrangements to operate the fund from 1 April 2023 (subject to business case approval).

- 3.18** To better understand the labour market and skills implications resulting from the jobs created through the city deal investment a significant piece of work is underway through a process of skills assessments. Delivered through a task and finish approach, with input from projects, city deal partners (as deliverers of employability and skills interventions), industry and wider stakeholders are undertaking a deep dive to understand the nature of jobs likely to be created and to identify if and where there is a need to evolve the existing skills offer in response. To date a construction skills assessment is nearing completion, a further assessment is underway focusing upon advanced manufacturing linked to AMIC and additional assessments expected to commence in the forthcoming months will focus upon the digital and creative industries.

3.19 Experience to date suggests that the outcomes of skills assessments are likely to result in recommendations that could have implications for BRCD, (particularly partners as deliverers of employability and skills interventions) industry and government departments. The output from this work will inform plans developed through Labour Market Partnerships and the NI Skills Council. The absence of revenue funding to support the E&S priorities of city and growth deals will require consideration as to how partners could '*bend the spend*', i.e. realign existing resources to the needs identified.

3.20 Infrastructure

The Infrastructure Minister published the consultation report on Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 in October and announced the preferred routes. Departmental officials have appointed consultants to deliver the procurement phase of the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge to facilitate the detailed design and construction. It is expected that it will take approximately three and a half years to deliver the procurement, detailed design and construction phases of the project. Design of the Newry Southern Relief Road continues and preparation of the draft Statutory Orders, along with an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), in advance of statutory public consultation is ongoing.

3.21 BRCD Council Panel

A hybrid meeting of the BRCD Council Panel was held on 28th September, hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. Panel Members considered a detailed programme update and received a presentation on the work that is being undertaken to ensure that social value criteria are being integrated into future BRCD procurements and that social value benefits are then realised.

3.22 As part of the update, the Panel also discussed in detail some of the key challenges currently facing the programme, including in particular in relation to construction inflation and the impact of the complexity of governance and approvals processes, which can result in delays to project progression and increased costs. In recent weeks senior level engagement has been taking place with government departments and across City and Growth deals with the aim of developing collaborative solutions to these significant and ongoing challenges, which arise at a time of significant economic and financial uncertainty.

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**3.23** The minutes of the previous Panel meeting hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council were approved by the Panel and are attached. The next meeting will be hosted as a hybrid meeting by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council on 25th January 2023.

**3.24** **Financial and Resource Implications**

All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

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

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.

**Leisure Management Contract Governance  
and Performance Reporting**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0** **Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1** To present proposals for the future governance of the leisure management contract, including contract compliance and performance reporting.

**2.0** **Recommendations**

**2.1** The Committee is requested to consider:

- (i) the recommendation that the People and Communities Committee is the most appropriate route for future Council reports; and

- (ii) the proposed contract compliance and performance report schedules presented below in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6.

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

The Committee is reminded that, in November 2020, it agreed to review the tri-partite leisure model and the ABL Board, including its membership and governance arrangements. Terms of Reference were approved in June 2021 and First Point Management and Consultancy Limited was appointed to conduct the review.

The final review report was presented to this Committee on 25th March 2022. After consideration, the Committee approved Option 3 as the preferred way forward, namely, to bring Contract Compliance and Performance Monitoring of GLL back into the Council and commence the winding up of ABL. That decision was subsequently ratified by the Council on 4th April.

ABL has been dormant since 6th June and will remain so until formally dissolved.

Contract compliance, performance management and financial transactions have been managed through the City and Neighbourhood Services Department (CNS) since 6th June. This will continue until new mechanisms for direct Council governance are agreed.

Proposals for Committee consideration include general oversight arrangements, periodic reports, key performance indicators, budgets and financial transactions and audit/risk assurances.

**3.2 Outcomes and Proposals**

This report sets out options and proposals for the future governance of the leisure management contract. CNS will continue to gather and collate contract compliance evidence and performance data as previously required for reporting through Active Belfast Limited.

**3.3 Committee Reporting and Governance Overview**

Following the decision to bring management of the GLL leisure contract back under direct Council control, an agreed reporting

mechanism is now required. It is recommended that CNS prepares contract compliance and performance monitoring papers to:

- a) Report directly into Committee. People and Communities is recommended as the most appropriate Committee.

It is anticipated that, within the first Committee report, report formats and frequencies, together with specific performance measures, will be presented for consideration.

### **3.4 Contract Compliance**

Contract compliance assurances are already well established. CNS takes a central role in collating information and works with Corporate H and S, Corporate finance, Audit, Governance and Risk Services and Legal Services to review and present assurances.

Contract compliance requirements are set out within the legally binding contract with GLL. As these contractual requirements will remain unchanged, it is proposed that the same suite of check mechanisms and assurance reports be retained as part of direct Council governance procedures. For example, existing mechanisms include:

- b) Assurances on key BCC/GLL policy alignments
- c) Health and Safety (including Safeguarding) reporting
- d) Timelines for submission of key annual proposals around, pricing, programming, marketing and promotion, sports development, community engagement, etc.

### **3.5 Performance Reporting**

Periodic performance report measures and formats have evolved since contract commencement in January 2015. The current scorecard format has provided consistent and comparable management information for the last four years. Nine key performance indicators (KPI's) are presented under the following three themes:

- a) **Business (financial)**
  - Labour cost recovery
  - Expenditure recovery
  - Cost per visit

b) Membership

- Pre-Paid monthly membership net gain
- Pay and Play membership net gain
- Swim School membership net gain

c) Occupancy

- Main hall occupancy to capacity ratio
- Studio occupancy to capacity ratio
- Synthetic Pitch occupancy to capacity ratio

The above KPI's present a solid overview of contract performance. All three themes are accepted within the wider leisure industry as key drivers of overall performance.

To provide the above, CNS would continue to collate more detailed data, beyond the nine listed KPI's, which would be retained on file should additional or more specific ad-hoc performance analysis be requested.

- 3.6 It is recommended that contract compliance and performance reports be presented to the Committee on a six-monthly basis in November and May. This would allow for sufficient time to collate and verify management information data related to the preceding six-month periods of April to September and October to March.

CNS would continue to collate monthly management information data on a centre-by-centre level. Unless otherwise requested, six monthly committee reports would be presented at a strategic overall service level supported by centre specific performance examples where appropriate.

3.7 Summary

The Committee is requested to consider the governance proposals/recommendations set out above.

Key decisions required relate to overall governance mechanisms at 3.4, contract compliance assurances at 3.5 and performance reports at 3.6.

3.8 Communications and Public Relations

None.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

None.

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

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Belfast City Council Safeguarding  
All Ages Policy 2022**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted for the Committee’s approval the Council’s revised Safeguarding All Ages Policy. The revised Policy had been designed to improve the safety and minimise the risk of harm of people of all ages living in Belfast, including staff, with whom the Council might come into contact and was aligned with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety’s 2016 “Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People” framework document and with the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership’s 2016 Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures.

The Committee approved the Policy, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#), and noted that a launch was planned for 15th February, 2023.

**Smart Belfast Urban Innovation  
Framework 2022 – 2026**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 To present the refreshed *Smart Belfast: Urban Innovation framework*, which sets out the objectives and programme of work from 2022 to 2026. This report outlines the purpose of the refreshed framework; the wider conditions necessary to support urban innovation in Belfast; and details of the Smart District and the associated programme of work being led by the Council.**

**1.2 In addition, the report seeks the Committee’s approval for a number of the programme’s first initiatives.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- 1. approve the Smart Belfast urban innovation framework 2023 to 2026;**
- 2. approve (subject to a successful award) the Council’s active participation in the Ulster University-led E-Huub bid to EPSRC;**

3. note the work under way with Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University on Belfast City Council's partnership on a potential £5m bid to EPSRC's Place-based Innovation Impact award programme in the Smart District;
4. note Nesta's engagement with communities and institutions on proposals for the Citizen Opportunity for Digital Innovation (CODI) programme;
5. note that a Hub-IN project roadmap is due to be published in December, which include proposals for a £100,000 Challenge Fund and the project's contribution of £10,000 to the city's Waterfront Task Group; and
6. approve the appointment of a member of the City Innovation Office to be part of the advisory board to the new Northern Ireland Public Data panel.

### **3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 The Smart Belfast urban innovation framework (final draft attached) is designed to stimulate collaborative innovation between the industry, innovative SMEs, academia, government and communities to help grow our economy and achieve our shared ambitions. It is based on the understanding that many of Belfast's complex urban challenges are not readily amenable to traditional public policy interventions but require novel solutions involving the co-operation of many innovation actors. In achieving these goals, the framework seeks to maximise investment opportunities, particularly those represented by the Belfast Region City Deal innovation and digital pillars.
- 3.2 Following approval by the Committee in December 2021, the City Innovation Team consulted widely on a draft of the framework from January to March 2022. The findings and recommendations from this consultation, and from further engagement with Members and city partners, have now been incorporated into this final draft.
- 3.3 The final framework is structured around three main elements:
- 3.4
  - (i) The first is the Urban Innovation ecosystem. The eight 'pillars' of the ecosystem represent the conditions necessary for innovation to flourish. Belfast already has strengths in many of these pillars, but some are at a comparatively formative



stage. Responsibility for growing the urban innovation ecosystem is an ongoing and collective effort among many city partners and does not rest exclusively with Belfast City Council. Our analysis of the ecosystem, its pillars, and our recommendations for action, are the basis upon which Belfast City Council will continue to engage with other innovation partners. As such the analysis will inform the Council's position regarding its urban innovation priorities with the likes of Innovation City Belfast, BCRD partners, NI Government Depts and industry.

3.5

- (ii) The second element is the specific programme of work that Belfast City Council will lead on over the next four years. We have engaged extensively within council, and externally with city partners, in developing this programme. It is heavily weighted in favour those city strategies to which we believe urban innovation offers significant added value. We have selected initiatives that are important to our innovation partners, particularly in the private sector and our universities and colleges; and that likely to attract funding and co-investment.

3.6

- (iii) The last major element of the framework is the Belfast Smart District. What differentiates the new framework from the 2017 edition, is a much greater emphasis on the importance of 'place-making' for urban innovation. The Smart District is very much about grounding urban innovation concepts and initiatives in a 'real-world' environment in which they can be developed, tested, stress-tested, and scaled to success across the wider city. Evidence from most other places (including Dublin, Barcelona, Helsinki, Paris, Copenhagen) has shown that an urban innovation programme that is built within a specific, managed, urban environment can offer significant dividends to both the programme and directly to the city. Belfast city centre offers a rich environment for innovation both in terms of leveraging existing planned investments, and as a place where many of the wider urban challenges are manifest at a more intimate and tractable scale. As such it is a good fit to be the location for Belfast's Smart District.

- 3.7 The framework describes the geography of the Belfast Smart District, and the tasks that the City Innovation Office needs to accomplish in order to make it a success.
- 3.8 Finally, for sake of clarity, we have structured the framework around these three separate elements. In practice of course there is no discreet separation – activities will interconnect and reinforce each other. So, for example, the delivery of any one of the programme initiatives will both strengthen the operation of the District while also contributing to the wider ecosystem pillars.

#### Resourcing the Programme

- 3.9 It is expected that individual programme initiatives will be funded through a mix of co-investment by industry, third-party funding and ‘in-kind’ contributions. An important factor in selecting initiatives is that they can attract funding either directly or through partner co-investment. Indeed, a key objective of the framework is to be a net attractor of innovation investment to Belfast.
- 3.10 A key resource in this regard will be the Belfast Region City Deal. The new framework is designed to maximise opportunities for Belfast to leverage the key investments from the Digital pillar in particular (ie, the £34 million Innovation for Societal Challenge fund programme and £39 million Infrastructure Enabling Fund). An initial example of this approach in action is the £1 million ‘Augment the City’ immersive challenge call which will seek to draw down funding from the Digital Pillar to support digital innovation in relation to the visitor experience in the city centre (while also supporting other city deal partners in developing their own visitor experiences).

#### Early Smart Belfast projects

- 3.11 A number of opportunities have already emerged as a result of early engagement on the framework:

#### Health E-HUUB project

- 3.12 The Council has been asked to become a partner in a proposal being developed by Ulster University and University College London. The project, which is seeking funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSCRC), will focus on the discovery, translation & commercialisation of digital health technologies. ‘E-HUUB’ will include a network of partners spanning large industry, digital

health SMEs, healthcare providers, charities. The long-term vision is to harness data and digital solutions to provide a 'digital front door' that will empower individuals across communities in Belfast to manage their personal health and wellbeing.

- 3.13 If the EPSRC bid is successful, the Council has been asked to provide access to the Smart District environment for trialling and to provide other in-kind support such as facilitating access to communities. The Committee is asked to approve, subject to a successful EPSRC application, Belfast City Council's active participation in the programme.

**Place-based Impact Acceleration Account (PBIAA)**

- 3.14 The City Innovation Office been engaging with both Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University on a potential Smart District-focused bid to the EPSRC's £25 million Place-based Impact Acceleration Account programme (PBIAA). The PBIAA is a strategic award that provides flexible funding to universities to enable them to drive local impacts from their research. The award is encouraging a focused place-based approach that encourages collaboration on impact between the universities, the local authority and business. It offers an exciting opportunity to drive one or more of the initiatives identified in the Smart Belfast framework.
- 3.15 Applications of up to £5 million must be led by a university, with the closing date of 25 April 2023. The Committee is asked to note that, as part of the Smart Belfast programme, the City Innovation Office will seek agreement with the universities over the coming months on areas of focus that can contribute to the city's policy objectives. If agreed, details on a Belfast focused bid will be brought to Members for approval prior to submission.

**Citizen Opportunities for Digital Innovation (CODI)**

- 3.16 Work has begun on the 'Citizen Opportunities for Digital Innovation' (CODI) programme. The motivating idea behind CODI is that public and city institutions need to do much more to engage with people and communities on what it means to live in a 'digitally enabled city'. It has implications for personal privacy, decision-making, planning, services, and for the future of work. City institutions also need to better support citizen participation in digital innovation initiatives. Evidence for elsewhere demonstrates that digital projects are much more likely to be successful if people are involved in their co-

design. CODI also has potential as an 'on-ramp' for some people to move into more formal skills and training.

- 3.17 The Committee is asked to note that the City Innovation Office has commissioned Nesta's renowned Centre for Collective Intelligence Design to work with us on a seven-month pilot. With Nesta, we are talking to stakeholders who are already involved in elements of this work (eg) Queen's Community and Place programme, Global Innovation Institute, Markets Development Association, Farset Labs, etc. There are also plans to trial some of the CODI concepts with communities early in 2023. Further details of the work and the proposals for scaling the CODI concept will be shared with Members following this work.

#### Hub of Innovation on the Maritime Mile

- 3.18 Members will be aware that the City Innovation Office is managing the four-year Horizon 2020 funded Hub of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HUB IN) project in partnership with the Maritime Belfast Trust. The project, which has attracted over €600,000 to Belfast, aims to transform and regenerate Historic Urban Areas while preserving their unique cultural and social identity. Belfast is one of eight city pilots working on this project and is co-developing new community-focused business models and innovative solutions that will bring together sustainability and cultural heritage.
- 3.19 The Committee is asked to note that a Hub-IN project roadmap is due to be published in December and will include proposals for a £100,000 Challenge Fund to be launched in early Spring 2023. The project is also contributing £10,000 to the city's Waterfront Task Group to support prototypes that will enhance and preserve heritage and animate the mile.

#### 3.20 Northern Ireland Public Data Panel

The City Innovation Office has been working with the Administrative Data Research Centre NI and Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment to help determine the need for a 'public data panel' that would work with citizens to explore the potential for the re-use of health and other data. Recommendations from this work have now been accepted and a Northern Ireland Public Data Panel will now be established by ADRC with funding from SESRC/UKRI.

- 3.21 The new panel will provide a forum to engage with people on the socially acceptable re-use of public data in research, policymaking, and service provision. This will include the

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secondary use of health data to enhance diagnostics, therapeutic, medical research and SME growth. The work has informed our approach to the Citizen Opportunities for Digital Innovation (CODI) pilot which has just commenced.

- 3.22** The Committee is asked to approve the appointment of a staff member from the City Innovation Office to be part of the advisory board for the new Northern Ireland panel.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.23** Programme development and delivery costs have been identified in the existing City Innovation team budget. As noted in the body of the report individual initiatives will proceed based on a mix of funding and co-investment from partners.
- 3.24** Resources for activities associated with the Belfast Region City Deal have already been identified within the existing Council City Deal budget.

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

- 3.25** A public consultation and Equality Screening was carried out as part of the consultation programme on the draft framework. The framework was screened out; however, any significant projects that emerge during the life of the framework will be subject to individual equality screenings.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Response to Consultation on Every Child: Department  
of Education’s Draft Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028**

The Committee was informed that the Department of Education had, on 20th September, published for consultation its draft Every Child: Corporate Plan for 2023 – 2028. The Plan proposed a new vision of “every child and young person being happy, learning and ready to succeed”, with the vision to be underpinned by the following five Strategic Priorities:

- championing all children and young people and the positive impact of education on all aspects of life;
- helping all children and young people where they need support for their learning and wellbeing;
- inspiring all children and young people to make a positive contribution to society;

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- meeting the learning needs of children and young people and developing their knowledge and skills, enabling them to fulfil their potential; and
- delivering an effective, child-focused, collaborative, high-quality education system.

These Strategic Priorities would, in turn, be supported by the following enablers, which described how the Department would achieve the desired outcomes:

- COLLABORATING – partnering with stakeholders to support co-production and the achievement of shared outcomes;
- OPTIMISING – prioritising, modernising and making most efficient use of resources to achieve the greatest impact, including stopping or changing activities which do not make the desired difference;
- RESPONDING – addressing the long-term impacts of the pandemic and other emerging challenges and needs faced by children and young people and the education workforce; and
- ENGAGING – communicating and consulting with stakeholders to help shape future services.

Council officers had forwarded a draft response to the Department of Education by the closing date of 15th November, with the proviso that it would be subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and ratification by the Council.

The Committee approved the draft response, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#).

**Physical Programme and Asset Management**

**Alleygating Programme: Phase 5 Funding –  
Response from Department of Justice**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd September, it had approved a list of streets to be taken forward under Phase 5 of the Council's alleygating programme, with £500k to be allocated under the Capital Programme for delivery. The Council, at its meeting on 3rd October, in ratifying that decision, had agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Justice Minister requesting that the Department of Justice match the Council's allocation.

The Director of Physical Programmes informed the Committee that a response had been received from Mr. R. Pengelly, Permanent Secretary in the Department of Justice.

The Permanent Secretary had begun by acknowledging the important work being undertaken by the Council around alleygating and the significant level of its investment.

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In terms of the Council's request for match funding, he had confirmed that, given the ongoing priorities within the remit of the Department of Justice and the extraordinary constraints on its budget, the Department was not, at this time, in a position to provide funding. The Department had, in the past, used its powers to assist the Council when alley gates had been sought by residents to prevent access due to anti-social behaviour. However, this had usually been limited to interface areas and had preceded adoption of the gates by the Council. On a small number of occasions, it had agreed to fund such measures, albeit that this had usually been on the recommendation of Policing colleagues for express and pressing community protection needs.

He had gone on to state that the Department of Justice fully recognised the negative impact which antisocial behaviour could have on communities and that it was currently leading on a review of the legislation to ensure that the relevant authorities, such as councils, had effective and proportionate enforcement powers in place to tackle the issue.

The Department of Justice, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Policing Board, provided £826,516 annually to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, which led on the Department's response to community safety issues at a local level. That funding was, he had pointed out, used by the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships across Belfast's districts to fund a range of projects and initiatives to address antisocial behaviour, including supporting the important work being delivered via the Holyland Intervention Project.

The Permanent Secretary had concluded by again stating that the Department of Justice was not in a position to providing funding on this occasion and by wishing the Council every success with the Programme.

The Committee noted the response.

### **Update on Physical Programme**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes 170 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report requests a movement on the Capital Programme for the Carson Tile project which is part of the City Hall programme. This report also provides an overview of recently completed capital projects, funding secured and contracts awarded.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Capital Programme - agree that the *City Hall Statues City Hall Grounds - Carson Tile* project is moved to delivery stage i.e. *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme;**
- **Physical Programme Update - note the update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently in construction; and**
- **Contracts Awarded in Q2 and Q3 2022/23 – note the update in relation to contracts awarded.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as BIF, LIF and SOF, as well as numerous capital programmes that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include NHLF, SEUPB Peace IV, the Executive Office via Social Investment Fund and Urban Villages, DfC, DfI, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages and others. When appropriate, the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.**

**3.2 Proposed Movement – Capital Programme**

**Members have previously agreed that all capital projects must go through a Three Stage process where decisions on which projects progress are taken by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee. This provides assurance on the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project.**

**The Committee is asked to agree to the following movements on the Capital Programme:**



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<b>Project</b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>Stage movement</b>
<b>City Hall - Carson Tile</b>	Installation of Carson Tile	Move to Stage 3 - Committed

**Carson Tile**

- 3.3 In November 2012, the Council received an independent Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) relating to the City Hall and City Hall grounds. This EQIA was carried out in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Council's Equality Scheme. This EQIA underpinned the decision to relocate memorabilia into the exhibition, allowing it to be seen and understood in a different way. Whilst the relocation of the artefacts and memorabilia from various parts of the City Hall into the exhibition space addressed the issue of the City Hall itself, in terms of the EQIA, the EQIA also applied to the City Hall grounds, in respect of which no steps have been taken to address the report's findings that there is a need to provide a contemporary image of the City, reflective of its vibrancy and diversity.

At the time when the relocation of memorabilia to the exhibition was agreed, there was, as part of that arrangement, a commemorative tile to be installed marking the place at which Sir Edward Carson stood when he signed the Ulster Covenant. HED approval is required for this and following ongoing discussions with HED it has been agreed that this will take the format of a tile within the Rotunda area. The SP&R Committee was updated on this in May 2021 and approved the installation of a plaque with the final design to be agreed. At Committee on 23 September 2022, Members agreed the design for the Carson Tile to be installed in the Rotunda in City Hall. It was further agreed in October 2022 that the material be specified as black granite.

In January 2020, the SP and R Committee agreed to add *City Hall Statues – City Hall Grounds* as a *Stage 1 – Emerging* project on the Capital Programme. The Carson Tile project falls within this programme of work and has progressed to business case stage. It is therefore recommended that the Carson Tile project be moved to *Stage 3 - Committed*.

3.4 **Physical Programme – Projects Completed and Underway**

Members are aware of the scale of the Council's Physical Programme via a range of internal and external funding streams. Below is a brief summary of projects completed over

the last few months, as well as a sample of projects currently underway.

**Recently completed projects:**

- **Major schemes:**
  - **St Comgall's - £7m restoration of former school to create a multi-use community hub BIF project with Executive Office's SIF Programme; and**
  - **Páirc Nua Chollan – £5.6m - Belfast's new city park funded by Urban Villages and DfC**
- **Capital Programme schemes: Boodles Dam works to the Dam and environmental improvements, Clarawood Playground, Cavehill Adventurous Playground, Ormeau Park (Park Road) Playground, Waterfront / ICC Escalators, Waste Transfer Station Weighbridges, Covered cycle stands (Belmont Park, Inverary Community Centre, Belvoir Activity Centre), Ballysillan and Whiterock 3G pitches with DfC, Balmoral Bowling Club, Sea lion and lion enclosure works at Belfast Zoo.**
- ***BIF Programme:* Lisnasharragh Community Schools Project, Davitt's GAC, H&W Welders FC/Blanchflower Playing Fields, TAGIT Boxing Club**
- ***LIF Programme:* St John Bosco Boxing Club, Wishing Well Family Centre play space**
- ***Living with Water Programme - Belfast Castle SUDS pilot project***
- ***Other externally funded projects:* Mornington Community Project with Executive Office – SIF Programme on behalf of Executive Office. VOYPIC/Include youth on behalf of DfC, ProKick Gym on behalf of Urban Villages, Expansion of Belfast Bikes network via DfI Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund, Revitalisation on behalf of DfI and DfC – Adelaide St upgrade, Electric bike trial e-cargo project and the Entries Phase 1.**

**3.5 Projects Underway:**

- **Laqan Gateway Greenway Phase 2 – major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections.**
- **City Cemetery Heritage Project - £2.3m scheme to protect, enhance and promote the cemetery's rich heritage. The new service yard is completed. The restoration of the Mortuary Tower & exterior of**

Foxes Lodge is completed. Visitor centre is completed and work is ongoing in preparation for opening. In tandem with this the restoration works on several of the site's key assets such as the Centre Steps and Victorian Fountains is well underway. Design and procurement works are underway with regards to Dual Language signage throughout the site.

- LTP Templemore Baths – £17m restoration of Templemore Baths with a focus on heritage and spa provision, nearing completion
- Forth Meadow Community Greenway – an ambitious and transformational £5m scheme which will see the development of a new 12km urban greenway in West Belfast. Section 1 – Glencairn – Works complete. Works underway: Section 2 – Forth River/ Springfield Road, Section 3- Falls Park/Whiterock, Section 4 – Bog Meadows. Section 5 – Westlink to City Centre - at detailed design stage.
- Peace IV projects - Shankill Women's Centre – underway, Black Mountain Shared Space Centre – mobilisation stage
- Urban Villages projects – major schemes at Marrowbone Millennium Park and Ballysillan Playing Fields and Pitt Park, acting as delivery agent for Colin Valley FC, ABC Trust Health and Leisure Trust and Colin HLC.

Projects in development:

- *Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, City Hall Statues – Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken, Alleygating Phase 5*
- Corporate projects – range of IT projects to ensure business continuity and ongoing Fleet replacement programme

- 3.6 This overview is a sample of the projects currently well underway and does not include a number of additional projects either in early stages of development, Planning or procurement, neither does it include all of the activity on maintenance projects or all the legacy projects which still require resource. Photos of the projects recently completed have been circulated. When appropriate, the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

**3.7 Externally Funded Projects 2022/23 - 2023/24**

Members will be aware that the Council is the delivery agent of choice for a range of funding partners and that external funding is an increasingly important component for securing funding for projects. Committee is asked to note that letters of offer and amended letters of offer have been received for a range of projects where the Council is acting as the delivery agent. Amended letters of offer are commonly received to reflect minor adjustments required following tender returns. Several of these projects are match funded by the Council, either under the various funding streams i.e. LIF, BIF and SOF or through close alignment with ongoing Council initiatives. The details are attached at Appendix 2, accompanying this report, and the Committee is asked to note the summary provided. The Committee is also asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects including externally funded projects in 2023/24 as required, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

**Contracts Awarded – Q2 and Q3 2022/23**

- 3.8** The Committee is asked to note the award of tenders for capital works, including services related to works at Appendix 3.

**Financial and Resources Implications**

- 3.9** *Financial* – Costs for the Carson Tile are approx. £6k and will be met from non-recurrent monies.

*Resources* – Officer time to deliver as required

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

- 3.10** All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process. Installation of Carson Tile contributes to meeting the recommendations of the EQIA City Hall and City Hall Grounds in ensuring Council achieves a greater balance in terms of the persons who are depicted or represented within the grounds.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that a request from a Member for dual-language signage to be erected in the Marrowbone Millennium Park would be considered in the lead up to the project being completed.

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**Asset Management**

The Committee:

**Lands adjacent to Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre**

- agreed to extend, until 11th September, 2023, the tri-partite licence between the Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Piperhill Construction Limited for a portion of Council land adjacent to Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre to be used as a contractor's compound, with the Council to receive a fee of £100 (plus VAT) per week;

**Corporation Square Car Park, Girdwood Hub, Grove Playing Fields, Kent Street Car Park, Loughside Recreation Centre and Northumberland Street Car Park**

- granted approval to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Ireland Water to enable it, in the event of a major incident, to be granted licences to use the six sites for community water provision;

**Picardy Avenue**

- approved the disposal of a strip of land adjoining number 1 Picardy Avenue to the occupier, with the Council to receive a single premium payment of £4,000;

**Ormeau Park**

- granted approval to extend for a further nine months, from 1st April, 2023, the existing licence agreement with GEDA Construction for the use of contractor's compound at Ormeau Park in connection with the Flood Alleviation Project works currently being undertaken on the Ravenhill Road and surrounding areas, with the Council to receive a further licence fee of £7,575; and

**Duncrue Estate**

- approved the extension of the current term of the ground lease at Plot 27 and 41 Duncrue Estate to 125 years, from 2022, with the Council to receive a premium of £5,000.

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Update on Contracts**

The Committee:

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- 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;
- approved the modification of the contract, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 3 below;
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 4 below; and
- noted the award of contracts by arc 21, on behalf the Council, as detailed in Table 5 below.

**Table 1 - Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Short description of goods / services</b>
Dynamic purchasing system 'DPS' framework to supply a range of food products for Belfast Zoo and other Council catering operations	Up to 5 years	£1,530,000	J Greer	The DPS will provide a flexible, compliant and quicker solution to source a wide range of food products to support Belfast Zoo and internal catering team(s).
The appointment of delivery agent for Gateway to Choices service as part of Belfast Labour Market partnership *Previously approved Oct 21 for 4y&6m at £800k. Now reviewed due to £1.45m funding from DFC and DFE.	Up to 3 years and 3 months	£2,000,000	J Greer	The purpose of the partnership is to make employability and skills interventions more effective and support an inclusive approach to growth in the city.
Procurement of a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for Enterprise and Business Growth Framework	Up to 6 years	£6,000,000	J Greer	The DPS will be developed to complement and enhance the Enterprise and Business Growth 'EBG' Framework by providing additional, specialist support for businesses. The EBG

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				framework has already been approved.
Supply, delivery and off-loading of rubber crumb for 3G and 4G pitches	Up to 3 years	£120,000	D Sales	To ensure 3G/4G pitches continue to meet all required H and S legislative requirements.
Consultancy for City Centre Residential Development	Up to 2 years	£160,000	C Reynolds	The continuation of consultancy services which was initially required to progress the Strategic Sites Assessment and Belfast Destination Hub work-streams and aligned with the Covid-19 Recovery Plan. The Strategic Sites Assessment has now progressed to real estate consultancy advice in relation to procuring an investment/development partner through a Competitive Dialogue Process.
West Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Network Support Project	Up to 3 years and 6 months	£135,000	S Toland	West DPCSP has articulated that they want the contractor in place for 3 years, but the funding is in year so needs to be subject to annual approval.
To appoint an Integrated Design Team (IDT) to provide design development services to support The Business Cluster and Community Grant Programme	Up to 10 months	£60,000	C Reynolds	It is proposed to commission an IDT will work with grant recipients to develop concept designs, provide advice regarding statutory approvals (Pavement Café Licence, Planning, utility connections) procurement and pricing schedules.
Insurance reinstatement valuations for council buildings	Up to 5 years	£150,000	T Wallace	Council buildings have not been revalued for insurance purposes for some time so current valuation are now out of date due to inflation,

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				capital additions and other building alterations.
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**Table 2 - Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Total Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
SAP annual licence support	Up to 1 year	£53,000	T Wallace	Licenses are obtained directly from SAP	SAP UK Limited
Maintenance and support for SAP, SRM & VIM	Up to 1 year	£74,000	T Wallace	Continued maintenance and support from the incumbent SAP service provider is critical for the successful implementation of the new financial system.	HCL Technologies

**Table 3 - Modification to Contract**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Modification</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
T2136 Development of a Residential Strategy *Please note this request is retrospective	Up to 8 months	Additional 10 months	J Greer	This extension is to complete the works to provide a city centre living vision which will include an analysis on city centre residential development that would provide analysis of the latent demand in terms of quantum and product requirement. The value of the contract remains as per the original contract.	Savills



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<p>T2056 - Peace IV - Delivery of TechConnects – a cross community peace building programme for children &amp; young people using digital technology Lot 3 - Young People (aged 17-24 years) *Please note this request is retrospective</p>	<p>Up to 2 years</p>	<p>Additional 4 months</p>	<p>S Toland</p>	<p>An extension is requested to 31 January 2023 to allow the project to complete deliverables. The contract extension has been approved by Shared City Partnership and PEACE IV Programme Board in October 2022</p>	<p>Belfast Metropolitan College</p>
<p>T1948 – Hire of grounds maintenance machinery, complete with operator, for use at various Council properties and locations *Please note this request is retrospective</p>	<p>Up to 3 years</p>	<p>Additional 4 months and £6,000</p>	<p>D Sales</p>	<p>An extension to allow for a new procurement exercise. An increase in value of £6K – 8% will be needed to allow work to continue. The original view was the contract would not be required during winter months and could be re-tendered later in the year ahead of the next spring/summer, but service continuity is now required over the winter months.</p>	<p>Clive Richardson Ltd</p>
<p>T2012 - West Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership Network Support Project</p>	<p>Up to 3 years</p>	<p>Additional 3 months and £8,000</p>	<p>S Toland</p>	<p>West Belfast DPCSP Members had agreed for this project to be retendered to ensure no gap in service, with the new contractor expected to be in</p>	<p>Falls Community Council</p>

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				<p>place from 1 January 2023. It was included in the 2022/2023 Belfast PCSP Action Plan that was submitted to the Joint Committee (external funders). Funders decided that they were not content to approve that the Network Support Project be retendered without an evaluation which has delayed the project.</p>	
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**Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
Appointment of company to support the delivery of a creative digital capacity building programme	Up to 6 months	£50,000	J Greer	Digital Catapult NI are the only organization in NI with their own Immersive Lab, based in Belfast and have access to a wide range of specialist mentors and industry to address the specific nature of the project. Digital Catapult NI are also working with the innovation team in relation to larger City Deal and Challenge funding projects	Digital Catapult NI
Requirement for a PEACE IV Finance & Systems Officer	Up to 9 months	£40,000	D Sales	The existing contracted provider for T1792 Provision	Honeycomb Recruitment

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				of Temporary Agency Resources: Matrix SCM have confirmed they are unable to fulfil the required role of PEACE IV Finance & Systems Officer within the contractually agreed time period to find a suitable candidate.	
2x Environmental Health Officers and 1x Technical Support Officer required for 24hr shift rota cover for essential service delivery within the Port Health service (Fully funded)	Up to 6 months	Up to £100,000	S Toland	The existing contracted provider for T1792 Provision of Temporary Agency Resources: Matrix SCM have confirmed they are unable to fulfil the required role of 2x Environmental Health Officers and 1x Technical Support Officer within the contractually agreed time period to find a suitable candidate.	MCS Group
Requirement for PEACE IV Project Support Officer	Up to 9 months	£36,000	D Sales	The existing contracted provider for T1792 Provision of Temporary Agency Resources: Matrix SCM have confirmed they are unable to fulfil the required role of PEACE IV Project Support Assistant within the contractually agreed time period to find a suitable candidate.	Hays Recruitment

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**Table 5 - Contracts awarded by arc 21 on behalf of the Council**

<b>Contract Title</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>SRO</b>
Municipal Waste Disposal Contract – Lot 2	Extend until 31st March, 2023	Cathy Matthews

**Equality and Good Relations**

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 7th November, including the recommendations:

**PEACE IV**

**Secretariat**

- that any further programme underspends be redirected into the SSS theme to cover increased costs of construction for Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

**CYP1 Tech Connects**

- to approve the approach to redistribute the project equipment (Lego We Do kits, Laptops and iPads) via EOI to community organisations.

**CYP 5 NIHE**

- to extend NIHE projects (CYP5 and BPR1) to 31st March 2023, to allow additional time to meet revised targets; and
- to formally note the alternative training option to OCN and online delivery for the Foster Carers Network.

**BPR 1 – NIHE**

- to approve, in principle, the request for procurement of quantity surveyors for four CCANS place shaping plans, subject to further information and clarification being provided to support the viability of the plans.

**BPR 4 - Corrymeela Facilitation**

- to note that the final study visit was not viable, due to levels of participation.

**BPR 5 – FSP – Roma**

- to note a further request to modify the English language classes delivery and to amend Intercultural Navigator Advocacy Project (INAP) targets, noting that four participants of a proposed ten completed, subject to approval by SEUPB.

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**BPR6 – St. Comgall’s**

- to approve an extension to 28th February 2023, to allow for changes to materials to be implemented; and
- to note the exhibition materials (oral histories) and educational resources (worksheets for schools) were being reviewed via an Equality Screening.

**SSS Theme**

- to approve, in principle, an extension of the Youth Civic Education project to 28th February 2023, subject to the submission of an implementation plan.

**GOOD RELATIONS**

- to note the award, under the delegated authority of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, of £700 to Shankill Women’s Centre for its Christmas Market at Lanark Way on 1st December;
- to approve the use of the additional funding of £7,050 from The Executive Office for programming and animation at the new Urban Villages Colin Park, Páirc Nua Chollann;
- to note that a draft report on the Good Relations Audit and its draft findings would be discussed at its meeting in December, with Mr. Peter Osborne, who was developing the Audit, to be invited to the meeting, to enable Members to feed into the report prior to it being finalised in advance of the January meeting; and
- to note forthcoming events in which the Good Relations Team was involved.

**Peace Plus**

- to note that the Partnership:
  - agreed the proposed methodology for completing Stage 1 of the co-design process;
  - provided feedback on the process for the residents’ survey to inform Stage 1 and agreed that SCP members would become involved in designing the survey; and
  - noted that, given the current resource needs, an exercise to recruit a PEACE Programme Manager had commenced, in accordance with Council procedures, with the associated costs

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being able to be claimed retrospectively from SEUPB, as part of the Action Plan submission.

**Seachtain na Gaeilge/Irish Language Week 2023**

The Committee agreed to defer until its meeting in December a report providing details of the events being planned to mark Seachtain na Gaeilge/Irish Language Week in March 2023, to enable consultation to take place with Irish Language groups.

**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 10th November and agreed that further discussions take place with the Knockagh Monument Joint Committee on how the Council could contribute, at no cost, to the work of the Joint Committee.

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations in respect of those applications received up to 4th November, as set out below:

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<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION</b>	<b>FUNCTION DATE</b>	<b>FUNCTION DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CRITERIA MET</b>	<b>ROOM CHARGE</b>	<b>HOSPITALITY OFFERED</b>	<b>CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND</b>
<b>2023 EVENTS</b>						
City Site Seeing Tours and City Tours	11th February 2023	<b>City Site Seeing Tours and City Tours Celebration</b> – Reception and Dinner to thank and celebrate staff over recent years  Numbers attending – 250 – 300	B and C	Charge £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality
Institute of Irish Studies, Queen's University Belfast	24th August 2023	<b>European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies (EFACIS) Conference Welcome Reception</b> for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place in Queens.  Numbers attending – 200	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast and Charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Ulster Journals Ltd.	14th September 2023	<b>Ulster Tatler Awards 2023</b> Drinks Reception, Awards, Dinner and entertainment.  Numbers attending - 350 - 400	B & C	Charge £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality
Political Studies Association of Ireland, QUB	21st October 2023	<b>Political Studies Association of Ireland Annual Conference 2023 Dinner</b> for guests attending their 3-day conference	A & B	No (Waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality



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		taking place in QUB.  Numbers attending – 90				
UK Space Agency	22nd November 2023	<b>UK Space Agency Conference Dinner</b> for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place in ICC  Numbers attending – 400	A &B	No (Waivered as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
<b>2024 EVENTS</b>						
British Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society	7 March 2024	<b>BOFAS Annual Scientific Meeting Conference Gala Dinner</b> for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place in ICC Belfast.  Numbers attending – 250	A &B	No (Waivered as linked to Visit Belfast and Charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
British Thoracic Oncology Group	18 April 2024	<b>BTOG Conference Gala Dinner</b> for guests attending their 4-day conference taking place in ICC Belfast.  Numbers attending – 300	A &B	No (Waivered as linked to Visit Belfast and Charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 26th October.

**Building Regulation Fees for Applications involving Insulation**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

1.1 At the People and Communities Committee meeting on 22nd September, it was requested that a report be brought back regarding the potential to waive Building Regulation inspection fees for applications which included the provision of insulation. A report was taken to that Committee on 8th November and was deferred for consideration by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and the potential to waive fees.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Key Issues**

3.1 The installation of loft insulation under the Northern Ireland Building Regulations is considered a controlled element and, therefore, requires a Building Regulations application. As such, there is typically a £60 chargeable fee for each application.

3.2 Cavity wall insulation is also a controlled element and requires a Building Regulations application but is specifically exempt from fees under the Building Regulations fees legislation. These are statutory fees set by the Department of Finance and collected by local councils to cover the cost of administration and facilitating the enforcement of Building Regulations

3.3 The processes involved in the administration and enforcement of Building Regulations involves processing applications and also the carrying out of Inspections to ascertain compliance with regulations. In reality fees collected for these types of works do not currently cover the costs involved in these processes.

3.4 In relation to both loft and cavity wall insulation, inspections are carried out by the Building Control Service to ascertain compliance with the regulations. For example, to ensure that there is adequate ventilation to the roof void to prevent condensation issues.

3.5 The Service has carried out some general analysis of the applications received over a four-year period (01/04/2018 - 31/03/2022) to include those which are solely for or include loft insulation as part of a range of measures. Over this period, it

is estimated that on average approximately 1350 applications have been received per year which have included works and fees for loft insulation. Based upon the £60 fee due for these applications, this would equate to an annual fee income of £81,000.

- 3.6 Much of the works being carried out to insulate properties is done as part of government funded schemes. For example, the Department for Communities (DfC) Affordable Warmth Scheme involves BCC working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) to provide efficiency measures based upon referral criteria. For this scheme, the Building Regulation fees are covered within the grant funding provided, so the homeowner or tenant is not out of pocket. The same would apply to other schemes and where maintenance contracts are in place.
- 3.7 Having analysed the applications received over the four-year period, it is estimated that over 90% of the applications relating to loft insulation are carried out within funded schemes or contracts.
- 3.8 As such, it is understood that in these circumstances the burden of paying the Building Regulations fees is not borne by the homeowner and they would not benefit from waiving the fee. Rather, they would be retained within the scheme or contract. Given that these operate across the 11 council areas, there would be no guarantee that fees that are waived would be ringfenced for additional applications and measures to be installed in properties within Belfast.
- 3.9 The Service has discussed the waiving of Building Regulation fees with Legal Services who have advised that fees can be waived, but one of the conditions would be that any exemption from fees agreed should be time bound.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 Based upon the analysis carried out for the four-year period it is estimated that on average £81,000 of fees have been paid per year in relation to loft insulation. If fees were to be waived for a determined period, the loss in fee income could be assumed to be a pro rata value of this annual estimate.
- 3.11 Any reduction in income has not been factored into the current year-end projections or the 2023-2024 revenue estimates and rates setting process.

- 3.12 **Administering applications and carrying out Inspections of the works will still be required to fulfil the statutory duties outlined. The Service are currently experiencing difficulty in recruitment and retention of Building Control Surveyors with competition from private and public sector and reducing income for areas of work not considered rate borne activity may impact on Service delivery.**

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

- 3.13 **There are no direct Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications.”**

After discussion, the Committee agreed to waive Building Regulation inspection fees for those applications involving loft insulation which were not part of funded schemes or maintenance contracts.

**A Future Network For All - NIE Networks  
RP7 Price Control Consultation**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted for the Committee’s approval a draft response to the consultation on NIE Network’s RP7 Price Controls. NIE had stated that the RP7 period, covering 2025 to 2031, would be critical in enabling the changes in the electricity network necessary to achieve the goals set out in the Department for Economy’s Energy Strategy and the recently enacted Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and had set out a series of proposals for consultation, which would be submitted to the Utility Regulator in March 2023 to inform the budget setting process.

The Committee approved the draft response, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#).

**Minutes of the Meeting of the All-Party  
Working Group on the City Centre**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 2nd November.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Memorial to Baroness May Blood**

The Committee agreed to refer to the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group a request from Councillor Murray for the creation of a permanent memorial to the late Baroness May Blood.

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**Use of the Ceremony Room, City Hall**

The Committee agreed, at the request of the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor M. Kelly, that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the potential for the Ceremony Room in the City Hall, which was being used to accommodate staff, as part of the Covid-19 arrangements, to be reinstated for marriage and civil partnership ceremonies.

Chairperson