

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd September, 2023

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite,
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey,
Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Smyth and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 29th June, 5th July and 18th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 4th September, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in respect of item 6c - Update on Area Working Groups in so far as it related to the refurbishment of the Belfast Orange Hall under the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, on the basis that he was a member of Duke of Schomberg LOL 486, which held meetings in the building and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in item 4a - Appointment to Outside Bodies in so far as his wife worked for NILGA and left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

Request for Deputation

The Committee was advised that a request to receive a deputation had been received from West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention in relation to the motion which would be considered later in the meeting.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request and Eilish Craig, Gerard Mallon and Roisin Linden were admitted to the meeting.

The deputation advised that West Wellbeing had been founded in 2021 and provided care and support through counselling and outreach for children with poor mental health. They outlined the services provided such as one to one counselling, befriending, training, crises outreach and suicide prevention and intervention. The deputation stated that their services had now been cut due to lack of funding and the impact this had had on service users. They then outlined the statistics for suicides and how many other people were impacted directly or secondarily.

The deputation then outlined the number of hours of care and support delivered and the number of service users and the need to pause services due to the lack of funding and the cost to continue to deliver service.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the deputation for attending and they left the meeting.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following nine 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 nine 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.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

**Revenue Estimates 2024-25 and
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

The Director of Finance submitted a report which provided an assessment of the key issues which would influence the rate setting process for 2024/25 and the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 and 2026/27.

The Committee noted the challenges to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting and that a further report on progress would be brought to the Committee in October.

Discretionary Payments

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the current framework for the management of discretionary payment requests which did not fall within existing Council funding schemes.

The Committee:

- i. Noted the Discretionary Payments Framework attached at Appendix 1 to the report: and
- ii. Agreed that the criteria be reviewed and revised.

Housing Led Regeneration Programme Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on various housing-led regeneration activities across the city.

The Committee:

- I. Noted the update in respect of the Inner North-West Development Brief, comprising Council and Department for Community owned lands at Little Donegall Street, Library Street and Kent Street and approved the re-issue of a reframed Development Brief to the Housing Associations, in line with the revised wording on the residential mix and the inclusion of a terminal deferred payment approach to the land value, as set out in the report. Noted that the revised wording had been endorsed by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 13 September 2023;
- II. Noted the update on the Regeneration Development Opportunity: Multi-Site Residential Led Regeneration Expressions of Interest process for various Council (and other public sector) lands, as noted by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 13 September 2023. Approved the commencement of the Competitive Dialogue Procurement to seek an Investment / Development Partner as set out in the report and further detailed in the City Growth and Development

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Committee report at Appendix 1. Noted that, following completion of this process, a further report would be brought back to this Committee to seek approval to the recommendation for an investor/development partner;

- III. Noted the update in respect of Phase 2 City Wide Strategic Site Assessments and that a further detailed report and recommendations on the next steps would be brought back in respect of the various Council lands identified through this process and, as appropriate, wider public sector assets identified as part of the ongoing work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group (via Community Planning structures);
- IV. Agreed that a report on the possible options for the vesting of the Tribeca site be submitted to a future meeting; and
- V. Agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee on the process and proposed timelines on the next steps in relation to the city-wide Strategic Site Assessments, with regular reports on these strategic sites being submitted to the Area Working Groups.

**Shared Island Funding – Belfast City
Council Project Updates**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the ongoing work in relation to a number of project proposals which were being developed under the Shared Island Initiative. The report also outlined other projects being developed in partnership between the Council and partner councils in the Republic of Ireland for funding to develop agreed programmes of work.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update provided in relation to work underway to bring forward projects under the Shared Island Initiative;
- ii. noted the update in relation to other partnership work being undertaken with partner councils in the Republic of Ireland to realise funding opportunities; and
- iii. noted that officers were planning engagement with elected members in developing a wider Funding Framework for the Council, which would reflect current projects being developed under the Shared Island Initiative and other available funding streams.

Update on Internal Agency Feasibility Study

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the progress on the work to carry out a feasibility study on the establishment of a Belfast City Council in-house employment agency.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that a report on the split of the costs of agency staff, that is, the amount paid to the agency and the amount paid to staff be submitted to a future meeting.

**Appointment of Director of Communications,
Marketing and External Affairs**

The Committee noted the appointment of Eunan McConville to the post of Director of Communications, Marketing and External Affairs.

**Organisational Reviews - Democratic Services/
Equality and Diversity Units**

The Committee noted that the report would be submitted to the October meeting.

It was agreed also that a report on the processes for conducting service reviews be submitted to a future meeting.

Cost-of-Living and Energy Hardship

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on a recent request which had been received from the National Energy Action (NEA) seeking the support of the Council for an open letter that the NEA, along with a range of partners, would be sending to the Prime Minister. The proposed letter called on the government to issue a consultation on targeted support for energy bills and, in particular, on a social tariff for energy.

The Committee:

- i. approved the request received from the NEA to support the submission of an open letter to the Prime Minister calling on the government to issue a consultation on targeted support for energy bills and, in particular, a social tariff for energy;
- ii. agreed that the Council adds its signature as support to the open letter at organisation level. The NEA has asked that partners confirm their support by Friday 22nd September 2023; and
- iii. agreed that this decision should not be subject to call-in because it would mean that the Council's support could be attached to the open letter given the timescales set.

Use of City Hall - Filming in October

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall were normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the request for the filming of a programme in October fell into that category.

The Committee approved the request from the Hole in the Wall production company to film the Christmas special of Give My Head Peace in the City Hall Courtyard and interior areas.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness

The Committee considered the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor McCusker, and which had been referred to it by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 29th August:

“Since opening its doors in 2021, the West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre has provided 21,000 hours of Counselling and support for people affected by poor mental health.

Its staff and volunteers offer one-to-one therapy, family support, home visits and a wide range of services for people across a range of high risk and complex situations.

The lack of funding for mental health services means this charity is now threatened with closure, and it has been forced to drastically reduce the hours it can provide toward counselling for clients in recent weeks.

West Wellbeing, which normally offers sessions for up to 200 people per week, has had to reduce this number by 60%, due to a lack of financial support. It is also having to reduce its opening hours from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. to 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is leaving many falling through the cracks and going without support at a time when they are struggling.

This Council recognises the urgent need for investment into mental health services in communities. The Council also recognises that working class communities are adversely impacted due to higher levels of poverty and the legacy of trauma caused by conflict.

The Council supports this service and agrees to explore all options to fund the West Well Being Suicide Prevention Centre, including using reserve funds, if necessary, to source up to £50,000 so the organisation can continue to deliver its full range of services for the remainder of 2023.

This Council commits this financial support to ensure West Wellbeing can continue to operate for the remainder of 2023, without having to reduce its services.”

The Committee agreed that the request be considered as part of the Quarter 2 Financial Report.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Motion - Clean Indoor Air

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 29th August, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Maghie and seconded by Councillor Smyth, to this Committee for consideration:

“Having learned lessons of the importance of ventilation and clean indoor air for health and productivity during the Covid pandemic; and seeking to take all reasonable steps to enable use of all Council facilities by all citizens, including the most vulnerable and so further inclusion; and seeking to care for the health and wellbeing of Council employees, this Council will commit to signing and implementing The COVID Safety Pledge; to report on steps already taken to prioritise clean indoor air in Belfast City Hall and other Council owned and occupied premises, and on what further or additional steps could be taken to improve indoor air quality and information about indoor air quality for employees and service users; and to develop and promote advice that can be followed to provide clean indoor air at events supported by Belfast City Council.”

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting outlining how it could be managed, resourced, and facilitated.

Governance

Appointments to Outside Bodies

NILGA Strategic Policy Network

The Committee was advised that a letter has been received from NILGA seeking a nominee to the Strategic Policy Network.

The Committee was reminded that the Council had 10 representatives on NILGA and 1 Member on the NILGA – Elected Member Development Network. It had now formed a new Strategic Policy Network and was seeking the nomination of a Councillor to sit on the group.

NI Assembly All-Party Working Group on Universal Basic Income

Correspondence had also been received from the Chair of the NI Assembly All-Party Working Group on UBI seeking Council representation on the Group.

Officers and Councillors had previously worked informally on the development of the study on UBI through the Anti-Poverty Working Group. However, the working group had now evolved into a NI Assembly All Party Working Group and they had asked the Council to nominate 2 Members to attend the Group.

If the Committee was minded to accept the invitations, then it was suggested that the nominations be added to the Council’s list of appointments to Outside Bodies.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

The Committee was reminded that, in accordance with the decision of the Committee of 26th June, should any other requests be received for Council representation on Outside Bodies during the Council Term, the party or parties who would have had the next available choice(s) under the Sainte Lague table would be asked to nominate a representative(s).

Therefore, the choice to nominate to the NILGA Strategic Policy Network would be offered in the first instance to the DUP, with the positions on the UBI Working Group being offered to the Alliance Party and the SDLP.

**Greater Shankill Partnership Board/
West Belfast Partnership Board**

A Member pointed out the Council still had to make appointments to the Greater Shankill and West Belfast Partnership Boards and suggested the appointments be made based on the Sainte Lague order of choices.

In response, the Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 26th June, it had noted that the overall allocation of 14 Members across the two Boards was: 9 SF, 2 DUP, 1 PBPA, 1 SDLP and 1 Independent. As in previous years, it had been agreed that the Party Leaders concerned meet to reach a compromise position for the allocation of seats on both Partnerships. However, as this had not yet been done, selection using Sainte Lague would be a fair and equitable way of appointing Members. He pointed out also that the selection of places to the Lower Falls and the Lower Shankill and Brown Square Building Successful Communities Forums, that is, 2 DUP, 1 SF and 1 TUV, across the 2 Forums, had also not been agreed and suggested also that the Committee considering use the Sainte Lague method to fill the seats.

The Committee:

- agreed to appoint a Member to the NILGA Strategic Policy Network;
- accepted the invitation to appoint 2 Members to the NI Assembly All-Party Working Group on UBI;
- agreed that they be added to the list of appointments to outside bodies;
- noted the order of choices for appointment in accordance with Committee's decision of 26th June; and
- agreed that the appointments to the West Belfast Partnership Board and the Greater Shankill Partnership; and the to the Lower Shankill and Brown Square and Lower Falls Building Successful Communities Forum be made based on the St. Lague order of choices.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Elected Member Development

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- update elected members on existing processes and resources to support elected member development.
- seek agreement to participate in a reassessment process against the NILGA Elected Member Development Charter and re-establish the Elected Member Development Working Group on a task and finish basis to lead a review of elected member development support, and input into the Charter reassessment process.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- note the contents of this report, agree to the Council’s participation in Charter Plus reassessment and the establishment of the Elected Member Development Working Group on a task and finish basis.

3.0 Main report

Elected Member Development Framework

3.1 The council has in place a Member Development Framework to support member development. Its core elements are as follows:

- a set of bespoke elected member role profiles - these set out the role(s), and responsibilities that elected members undertake as both a local representative and as a civic leader.
- a bespoke Knowledge and Skills Framework - this sets out the knowledge, skills, qualities and behaviours elected members must demonstrate, in order to enact the role(s) of elected member effectively.
- a personal development planning (PDP) process and individual PDP budget currently £730 per member per financial year; and

- an assistance to study scheme
- 3.2 This framework was developed in 2016 by an Elected Member Development Working Group (EMDWG), comprising elected members and officers. The working group was established as a task and finish project group to:
- develop appropriate processes and activities to ensure Members (at individual, party and council level) are supported and equipped to carry out their roles effectively in line with the Council's Corporate Plan and the emerging themes from the Belfast Agenda.
 - ensure that Member development processes and practices continue to reflect best practice in line with the requirements of the Elected Member Development Charter framework.
 - To report to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on the key recommendations of the Working Group.
- 3.3 Following finalisation of a Member Development Framework, the EMDWG was stood down and it was agreed that any member development issue arising thereafter, be considered directly by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee until the framework was due for review.

Elected Member Development Charter

- 3.4 Belfast City Council was the first Council in Northern Ireland to be awarded the Northern Ireland Charter for Elected Member Development in 2011, in recognition of excellence in elected member development. In 2015 the council gained re-accreditation of Charter status (level one) and was reassessed successfully again in 2018 for Charter Plus status.
- 3.5 The Charter and Charter Plus helps councils to support councillor development and recognises councils that have built an effective approach. Intrinsic to gaining this accreditation is the Council demonstrating that members are developed in such a way that they are able to work strategically with partners and stakeholders, engage and lead local communities and deliver tangible, sustainable and beneficial outcomes for the citizens of the city. Charter Plus level requires evidence that the Council has continued with, and improved, its strategies for member development and that this work has clear links to the aims of the Belfast Agenda and outcomes which directly impact and deliver benefits for local communities.

3.6 An interim progress review discussion by NILGA in 2020, was delayed until May 21 because of the Covid pandemic. Following the interim review, it was agreed that, should the council wish to continue to participate in this accreditation, the full Charter Plus reassessment should take place early in 2024, allowing the new 2023 Council mandate to be embedded, and facilitate:

- Delivery of a modular induction programme for new and returning elected members
- Involvement of elected members in Charter Plus reassessment
- The development of a comprehensive elected member development plan
- a review of the Elected Member Development framework
- take up of Personal Development Plans by elected members.

3.7 It is proposed the Council proceeds with the Charter Plus assessment and that work to prepare for the assessment should start as soon as possible. Integral to this work will be a review of the Elected Member Framework to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and meets the needs of elected members.

Proposed arrangements.

3.8 It is imperative that this work is elected member led with support and coordination provided by Corporate Human Resources and Democratic Services. It is therefore proposed that an Elected Member Development Working Group is re- established on a task and finish basis to review the elected member development framework and input into preparation for the Charter Plus reassessment process. The policy agreed by SP&R is that representation on workings groups is a representative from each party with 2 or more members. The working group will be supported by officers from the Corporate HR Development Team and Democratic Services and follow the usual process for working group nominations and electing a chair. Draft terms of reference will be agreed at the first meeting of the working group. Those Members who are nominated to the Working Group would be tasked with championing Member development within their own party and on a Council-wide basis.

Elected Member PDP arrangements for 2023/2024

3.9 All members will be contacted shortly about the PDP process and what they need to do to avail of the personal development

budget, including the completion of a self-assessment against the Councillor roles and responsibilities and knowledge and skills frameworks. There is also the opportunity to undertake a one-to-one PDP meeting with an experienced facilitator to create a development plan. The feedback from these PDPs will inform the development programme with the Corporate HR development team and other officers working to support members to carry out their roles more effectively.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 There are no additional financial or human resource implications in this report.

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

- 3.11 There are no equality, rural needs or good relations implications in this report.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report, agreed to the Council’s participation in Charter Plus reassessment and agreed not to re-constitute the Elected Member Development Working Group but instead that reports on progress and any options on elected member development support be submitted to the Committee on a regular basis.

Belfast Region City Deal – update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the update on project development and delivery across the pillars of investment.
- To approve the pre-contract procurement of the Augment the City connectivity service ahead of the formal receipt of the contract for funding in October 2023.
- Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel

3.0 Main report

- 3.1** As previously reported to the Committee, the BRCD Programme is now well into delivery with significant progress made to date. A total of 13 Outline Business Cases (OBC) are now approved, and 3 more are at advanced stages of the approval process with seven Contracts for Funding signed and the first claims for BRCD funding processed at the end of the 2022/23 financial year.

Progress across BRCD Pillars since previous report

Innovation

- 3.2** As reported at the previous meeting the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) has received planning approval for the Factory of the Future site at Global Point in Newtownabbey and work is significantly underway in relation to its Full Business Case, which includes the detailed development of a commercial operating model. Site acquisition is also expected to be completed in the coming months.
- 3.3** Construction work on Studio Ulster continues but the competitive dialogue process has been concluded with no suitable operators identified. Ulster University and the Project Board have now agreed to initiate a new tender process for the appointment of a supplier for the design, development, supply & installation of equipment for Studio Ulster which will be operated by Ulster University, via Studio Ulster Ltd. The revised approach will result in a short delay in relation to the completion of the Full Business Case.
- 3.4** Following the commitment of additional funding from Queen's University Belfast (QUB) for iREACH Health, the project has continued to progress and is finalising RIBA Stage 3 with plans in place to commence Stage 4, detailed design. QUB are finalising the Invitation to Tender documentation for its works contractor under the Early Contractor Involvement approach. QUB have also submitted its planning application for the Lisburn Road site and are progressing work around site acquisition.
- 3.5** Work also continues on Global Innovation Institute following the commitment of additional funding from QUB and Ulster University's Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology OBC2 has been submitted to Government partners for approval.

Digital

- 3.6 The **Digital Venture Fund** OBC has had its Strategic & Economic Cases reviewed by Government economists, with a Value for Money statement completed. Work will now move to review in detail the Commercial, Financial and Management Cases and this review will inform next steps with partners. Engagement will be scheduled with partners in the coming months to focus on deliverability before the business case is brought for BRCD approvals.
- 3.7 Initial work is also underway to engage with Government and BRCD partners and develop high-level proposals for an **R&D Grants** programme.

Augment the City

- 3.8 In October 2022, Members approved the development of 'Augment the City', an R&D competition, designed by the Council's City Innovation Office, aimed at digital creative SMEs. Support for the development and now delivery of the project is provided by the Office's Smart District Broker, which is funded through the City Deal reserve.
- 3.9 With £928,373 funding from Belfast Region City Deal, Augment the City will provide R&D grant funding to ten companies who will work directly with the city's tourism partners to develop products that will harness cutting-edge immersive technologies such as Virtual and Augmented Reality. The competition will also help tourism partners to better understand the future potential of these technologies for future investments such as Belfast Stories.
- 3.10 The Department for Economy has now approved the business case for Augment the City and are working with Council to finalise the Contract for Funding which is expected in late October. As Members will be aware, a key element of Augment the City is a small-cell wireless environment set up in three locations in City Hall. This will provide the necessary connectivity for the SMEs to develop and trial their immersive experiences.
- 3.11 This is already costed within the approved business case and a price of £174,911.69 has been determined using the Northern Ireland Public Sector Shared Network procurement framework. However, given the delay in receiving the completed contract from DfE, there is a risk that the service may no longer be available at this price by late October. With this risk in mind,

Members are asked to approve the procurement of the connectivity service ahead of the formal receipt of the contract. DfE are aware of this proposal and have confirmed that there will be no divergence in the contract from the approved business case.

Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.12 As reported previously, OBC approvals and Contracts for Funding are in place for all three regeneration projects.
- 3.13 Following introduction of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and subsequent legal advice to the relevant government departments in relation to the need for subsidy assessments to be completed before signing of the Contract for Funding (CfF), significant work has been undertaken on the development of subsidy assessments and engagement has taken place with Subsidy Advice Unit from the Competition and Markets Authority, in parallel with the drafting of contracts for the tourism projects. This has impacted on the timeframes for signing of the contracts for tourism projects.
- 3.14 Progress in relation to procurement continues across all projects with the development of procurement documentation for Integrated Consultancy Teams (ICTs) and Integrated Supply Teams (ISTs):
- Belfast Stories have completed their procurement process for their ICT and Design Assurance teams and subject to no challenges, hope to award both contracts in October.
 - The ITT returns for the Carrickfergus ICT are due on the 18th September and it is hoped that the ICT will be appointed in November.
 - The Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) returns for the Gobbins Phase 2 ICT are currently being assessed, with ITT documentation to be issued in October
 - The IST PQQ returns for the Theatre and Conference for Newry Regen are currently being assessed and the documentation for the Civic Hub is being finalised.
 - Bangor Waterfront published the ICT PQQ documentation for Ballyholme Yacht Club in August, with the ICT PQQ for Pickie Park to follow in September.
 - The Procurement Strategy for Destination Royal Hillsborough is being finalised, which will allow ICT procurement to progress.

- 3.15 Carrickfergus Regeneration have also set up a Working Group and have appointed Excellence in Work to develop the preferred Operating Model. Bangor Waterfront have engaged external support to assist in the procurement of the Operator for the Marina and Pickie Fun Park, so that Operators are in place to input into the design development process for both projects.

Infrastructure

- 3.16 As previously reported feasibility studies are being completed and the OBC is being updated by Department for Infrastructure for Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2. A peer review exercise, similar to a Gateway 2, review has been undertaken for Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge in preparation for procurement of a design and build contractor. Following confirmation from DfI that its preferred option for the bridge on the Newry Southern Relief Road is a non-opening 50m fixed bridge, preparation of statutory orders has commenced.

Employability and Skills (E&S)

- 3.17 Our skills assessment process, now being conducted on a cross-deal basis to understand the labour and skills implications of the city deal investment projects is continuing to progress, but timeframes have been impacted by the vacancy in the E&S Programme Manager post- this issue is currently under consideration by BRCD College partners which fund this post. As reported previously two further skills assessments, aligned to Advanced Manufacturing and Creative Industries sectors, are already now well developed utilising this approach. An Advanced Manufacturing Assessment has been completed with AMIC and will be shared with partners over the coming weeks with a view to submission for approval in the late Autumn. The Creative Industries (Virtual Production) assessment is refining its emerging recommendations, with the aim of a report to the Task and Finish Group this month.
- 3.18 A detailed update was provided on the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund project at the June meeting. In parallel with the final stages of the OBC approval Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, on behalf of the partners, has been making preparations for the launch of the fund, including by working with Council colleagues to ensure alignment with the new Enterprise Support Service, and are now aiming to launch in Oct 23.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.19 Communication and engagement continues to be a priority both at a project and programme level. Now that the programme has moved into delivery stage specialist support has been commissioned to support strategic engagement to include the development of a Strategic Engagement Plan with an initial focus on local businesses and industry. Further plans will also be developed to engage with elected members across the region to update on progress and identify further priorities and areas of future investment.
- 3.20 The first BRCD Annual Report, as considered at the previous meeting of the Committee, was received positively by senior officials from across NI and UK Government Departments and provided the basis for discussions with the BRCD partners on priorities for the year ahead and tackling key challenges that the BRCD partners continue to face.
- 3.21 As previously reported to Members a dedicated website has been developed which provides details of the deal and press releases and articles in relation to project specific announcements, including key appointments, progress and tender opportunities.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.22 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held on 27th September 2023, hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council. Invitations have been sent to all Panel members and given this is the first meeting of the new Panel we have asked, where possible, that members attend in person. At the meeting members will be provided with an overview of the programme, a presentation on the first BRCD annual report, which will be launched following the meeting and an update on Bangor Waterfront Regeneration project. Following the meeting there will be an opportunity to take a tour of Bangor Waterfront.

Financial and Resource Implications

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

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

- 3.24 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.

Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service update

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the new Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth that will be led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the 11 councils.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note that the MoU for the NIESS has now been signed by the Chief Executive, enabling commissioning of service delivery and project mobilisation
- Note the planned go-live date for the new intervention
- Note that further updates on progress will be presented to members in due course.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 At the 17 February meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, members agreed that Belfast City Council should lead on the submission of the application to UKSPF (Shared Prosperity Fund) for the 11-council Enterprise Support Service (ESS) model. They also agreed that the council should lead on the future development and delivery of

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

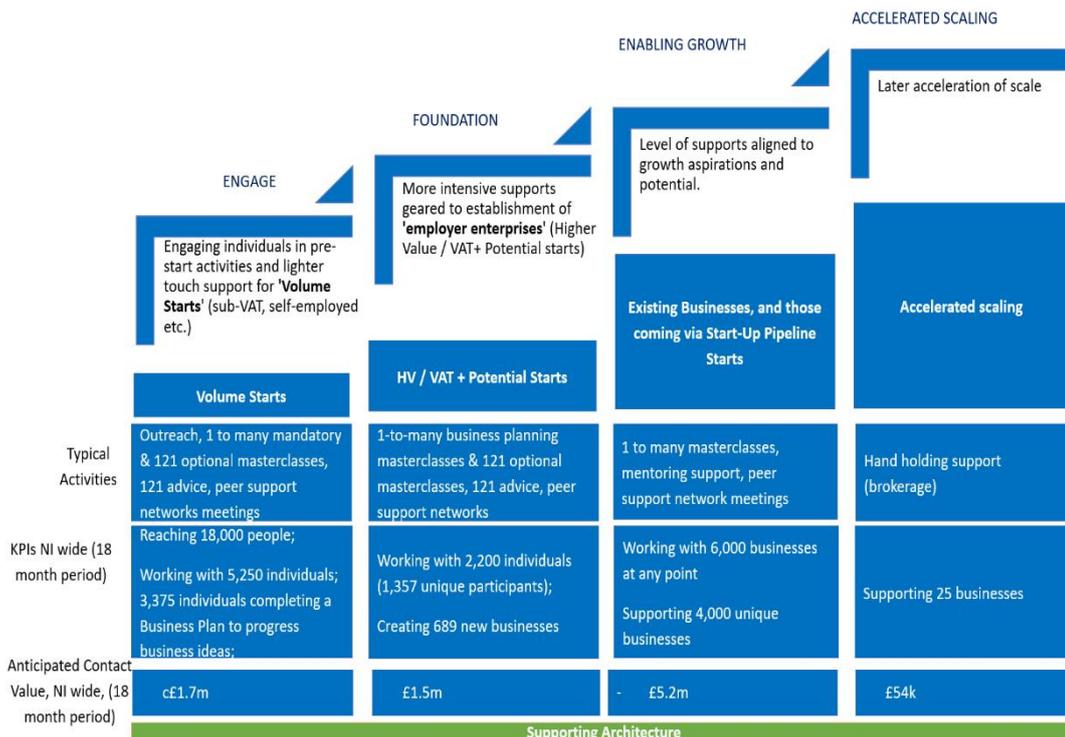
the service, subject to additional due diligence and risk management work being undertaken.

- 3.6** A further update was presented to the August 2023 meeting of the Committee, providing additional detail on progress to date on the procurement process and the funding drawdown and identifying an emerging risk due to delays in issuing the funding agreement/MoU by DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities). In early September 2023, officers received the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) setting out the terms and conditions of the funding offer and this was signed by the Chief Executive.
- 3.3** Having received the MoU, officers were able to proceed with the appointment of the contractors for the delivery of services to businesses, as well as the provision of support services such as marketing and communications and call handling. Following contractual standstill periods, initiation meetings are being scheduled with delivery partners in w/c 25 September 2023. It is expected that the 'go live' date for the service will be 1 October 2023. However, given the necessary preparatory work required to mobilise a new service of this scale, it is likely that the more 'formal' launch will not take place until early November.
- 3.4** As part of the funding application to DLUHC, resources were secured for a number of staff roles in order to support programme delivery and provide appropriate management and oversight for funders and all council partners. Recruitment for these roles is currently under way and staff should be in position for November/December 2023 (subject to notice periods).
- 3.5** In the interim, the development and mobilisation work is being led by existing resources within the Enterprise and Business Growth Team. The team has been supported by colleagues from across the council including Digital Services, Procurement, Finance, Legal Services, Information Governance Unit, Human Resources and Continuous Improvement and Audit, Governance and Risk.
- 3.6** During the early development work, staff from AGRS facilitated a risk workshop involving all support services across the council (as set out above) involved in this phase of the programme. It is our intention to repeat this exercise in the coming weeks as we move towards the mobilisation phase and the risks change. This will provide elected members and senior management with the appropriate levels of assurance around programme delivery. In line with previous commitments, regular progress reports will be brought back to Committee. Wider governance structures are also being

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

established and these will include regular meetings with the contractors as well as quarterly oversight reporting through to the SOLACE Economic Development Group (comprising senior directors across all 11 councils) and to SOLACE as required.

3.7 As a recap, the service is being funded through the new Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This is the DLUHC fund that was established as a replacement for EU funding (ERDF and ESF). One strand of funding focused on 'Supporting Local Business'. The Investment Plan for UKSPF in Northern Ireland was launched in December 2022. At that time, the Plan proposed that a central component of the Supporting Local Business strand would be the 11 council Enterprise Support Service. An indicative financial allocation of £17million - £12 million programme delivery and £5million for small grants – was set aside for the service. UKSPF funding is available to March 2025 so the initial programme period will run from Autumn 2023 to March 2025. The service overview is detailed below:



Business Grants – available for foundation and growth businesses – up to £4k/70% project value

- 3.8 The new service represents the ambition of all local authorities to deliver on our statutory responsibility around business start-up in a way that will make a real change over time, by working to address cultural attitudes towards entrepreneurship and helping more businesses to start, grow and scale across the region. It can directly support our Belfast Agenda targets for job creation and economic growth and can also provide an important engagement mechanism to enhance business interaction with key investments, including those supported through City Deal.
- 3.9 Given delays in issuing the MoU, officers are working with contractors to identify how we can maximise the delivery of the service while acknowledging that not all support services and resources are yet fully functional.

3.10 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Belfast City Council will act as the lead council on behalf of the 11 councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we will establish a delivery and management team which will be fully resourced through the DLUHC funding.

- 3.11 The final budget is subject to completion of the relevant procurement exercises detailed above. The overall indicative SPF budget is in the region of £5million revenue in year 1 and £7million revenue in year 2, with around £5million available across the funding period for grant support.

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

An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Asset Management

(Having received advice from the Chief Executive, Councillors Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey, Maskey, Nic Bhranair and Whyte, who were members of the Planning Committee, left the meeting before the following item had been introduced, on the basis that there could potentially be planning considerations moving forward.)

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

The Committee:

i) C.S Lewis Square – Land swap with EastSide Partnership

- Approved a land swap between the Council and EastSide Partnership in respect of land situated at C.S Lewis Square and noted that the terms of the land swap and the net disposal would be agreed with the Council's Estates and Legal Services.

ii) Deed of Release – Springhill Millennium Park

- Approved the Council entering into a Deed of Release with the Big Lottery Fund which would remove the Council from all restrictive conditions/covenants presently held on the Springhill Millennium Park lands under a Deed of Dedication dated 8th August 1997.

iii) Sunningdale Community Centre – Lease to Sunningdale Community Association

- Approved the terms of a new 50-year lease to Sunningdale Community Association.

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 400 capital projects 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 includes stage movement requests relating to the Capital Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to consider the following items on the Capital Programme:

- **IT Programme – In Cab Technology and Routing System**
- Agree that this project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of

most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

- **Cremated Remains Burial Plots project** – Agree that this project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow an OBC to be developed.
- **Shankill Memorial Garden** – to note the request from the organising committee of the Shankill Bomb Memorial Project and that tree planting will be carried out at Shankill Memorial Garden.

3.0 Main report

Capital Programme

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme which 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 Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), as well as numerous capital programmes that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include National Lottery Heritage Fund, SEUPB Peace IV, the Executive Office, DfC, DfI via the Blue Green Infrastructure Fund and Living with Water Programme, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages, Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and others. When appropriate, the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.
- 3.2 Members agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
IT Programme – In-Cab Technology and Routing System	Replacement of two current systems: Masternaut fleet tracking and Webaspx route optimisation software with one integrated system.	Move to Stage 3 - Committed

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023

Cremated Remains Burial Plots	Development of cremated remains plots at Roselawn.	Move to Stage 2 - Uncommitted
-------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

Proposed stage movement – IT Programme – In Cab Technology and Routing System

- 3.3 Members will recall that in March 2022 this project was moved to ***Stage 2 – Uncommitted*** under the IT Programme which **forms part of the overall Capital Programme**. This project involves the replacement of two current systems Masternaut fleet tracking and Webaspx route optimisation software with one integrated system - a digital system that integrates frontline operations, operational control and the customer hub. The Outline Business Case has now been prepared.

Members are asked to recommend that the In Cab Technology and Routing System project now progresses to Stage 3 – Committed and that it is held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Proposed stage movement – Cremated Remains Burial Plots

- 3.4 Members will recall that in June 2023 this project was added to the Capital Programme as a ***Stage 1 – Emerging*** project to allow the project and costs to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course. The project is for the development of 622 cremated remains burial plots to utilise shallow land within Roselawn cemetery unsuitable for full earth burials. The number of cremated remains burials has more than doubled since 2015. To provide for this increased demand and make efficient use of existing burial land at Roselawn it is proposed to develop a cremated remains only section. With the increase in cremations and the development of the Crematorium at Roselawn, the potential to use a portion of land for the creation of additional cremated remains only burial plots fits with the councils’ objective to adequately meet future needs and demands. A package of necessary survey work is now identified to inform the design

as outlined in the Pre Application Discussion with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

Members are asked to recommend that the Cremated Remains Burial Plots project is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the Capital Programme. An Outline Business Case will now be worked up on the proposal with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

Shankill Memorial Garden

- 3.5 Members are asked to note that further to a request from the organising committee of the Shankill Bomb Memorial Project, tree planting will be carried out at Shankill Memorial Garden to mark the upcoming 30th anniversary on 23 October 2023.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 *Financial* – Shankill Memorial Garden tree planting to be met within existing budgets

Resources – Officer time to deliver as required

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

- 3.7 All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Interim Director of Legal Services advised the Committee that a decision was still required to be taken in relation to the erection of dual language signage at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

She reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 24th March 2023, it had decided that the Beacons, Information Panels and the Directional Finger Post Signs located in the Gaeltacht Quarter area (that is Section 3 – Fall Park, Section 4 – Bog Meadows, Section 5- Westlink to City Centre and Springfield Park/Dam) would all be in English and Irish.

That decision was successfully called in on the basis that it had not been equality screened. It had since been screened and the screening concluded that an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) would be required. This would mean a 12-week consultation process and the Council would be unable to draw down the funding for the signage (circa £160k) before the funding deadline of December 2023.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

There were therefore 3 potential options available to the Committee, which were as follows:

- a) Proceed with an EQIA in respect of the March 2023 decision;
- b) Erect dual language signage in Sections 3,4 and 5 of the Greenway, excluding Springfield Park/Dam which would only have signage in English. This had been screened out so would not require an EQIA;
- c) Erect dual language signage in Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Greenway, excluding Springfield Park/Dam which would be subject to a separate EQIA and associated consultation process in relation to dual language signage.

After a lengthy discussion during which Members expressed concerns in relation to the timeliness of the issuing of the information and the lack of progress in the matter, it was:

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees that:

- I. an equality screening be undertaken by an external organisation with experience in minority languages in relation to the decision to erect dual language signage at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway;
- II. a further legal opinion be obtained on the issues raised from an appropriately qualified person in relation to minority language rights; and
- III. all the information, including the legal opinion, be subject to full disclosure.

On a vote, fifteen Members voted for the proposal and five against and it was declared carried.

The Committee noted that, on the advice of the Chief Executive, the disclosure of the legal opinion would be subject to the agreement of the author of the report.

The Committee agreed further that a special meeting be held to consider all the issues and information in relation to the signage.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the South Area Working Group of 21 August, North Area Working Group of 22 August, West Area Working Group of 24 August and East Area Working Group of 7 September 2023, including the following recommendations:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

South Area Working Group

- Belfast Investment Fund - the South Belfast AWG recommended to the Committee that the Coffee Culture (BIF46) and Arts and Digital Hub (BIF48) projects be moved to BIF Stage 3- Committed.

North Area Working Group

- Belfast Investment Fund - the North Belfast AWG recommended to the Committee that:
 - £900,000 which had previously been allocated to support the Basement Youth Club/Elim Church, be withdrawn and reallocated to the Malgrove project, and
 - Cavehill Tennis Club (BIF49) be moved to BIF Stage 3- Committed.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the decision of the East Area Working Group regarding releasing £8,000 of the agreed funding to expedite the new toilet facilities at the Creagh Wanderers container, the Interim Director of Legal Services advised that she had not yet been able to confirm if there were any legal issues but if the Committee was content then the matter could be progressed, subject to any legal issues.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2022-23

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to present to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Statement of Accounts of the Council, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the period ending 31st March 2023.**
- 1.2 **The Statement of Accounts are an important element of the council's overall corporate governance framework as they provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.**
- 1.3 **The Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023, as attached, have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022/23 based on International Financial Reporting Standards**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 07/23 dated 31st January 2023 and 10th February 2023.

- 1.4 The Chief Executive in his role as Chief Financial Officer can confirm that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department for Communities and in his opinion the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31st March 2023, and
- ii. agree that this paper should not be subject to call-in (as indicated above) because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests given that the statement of accounts must be published by 30th September 2023.

3.0 **Main report**

Key Issues

Normal Approval Process

- 3.1 The Committee will be aware that the normal approval process allows for the Statement of Accounts to be presented to the Audit and Risk Panel to allow them to review the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the council prior to this report going to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.2 The Audit and Risk Panel was presented with the Statement of Accounts at the meeting on 12th September and a verbal update on the status of the audit and the draft Report to those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) for 2022/23 was provided

at this meeting by Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO). The draft RTTCWG will be circulated to the Audit and Risk panel members for consideration when issued by NIAO. NIAO have indicated that there are currently no issues, however the audit is still ongoing.

The Panel reviewed the annual Statement of Accounts and, subject to receipt of the RTTCWG, did not identify any concerns arising from the Statement of Accounts that needed to be brought to the attention of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Audit Opinion

3.2 It is the Local government Auditors' opinion that:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant legal and statutory requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2022-23, of the financial position of Belfast City Council as at 31 March 2023 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the statement of accounts have been properly prepared in accordance with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Department for Communities directions issued thereunder; and
- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities directions made under the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015; and
- the information given in the Narrative Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 is consistent with the financial statements.

Reserves

3.3 General Fund

The credit balance on the General Fund has decreased to £58.8m (of which £44.8m relates to specified reserves). The movement on the reserves balance is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Reserves Position

<u>Opening Balance</u>	£62.2m
In year movement in reserves	<u>£3.4 m</u>
<u>Closing Balance</u>	£58.8m
Specified Reserves at year end	<u>£44.8m</u>
<u>Balance Available</u>	<u>£14 m</u>

3.4 Capital Fund £15,096,990

The Capital Fund is made up of:

- **Belfast Investment Fund (£4,638,532)** -created to support key partnership projects to regenerate Belfast and help lever substantial funds from other sources
- **Local Investment Fund (£579,545)** to fund smaller local regeneration projects
- **City Centre Investment Fund (£8,237,263)** to support the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Plans
- **Social Outcomes Fund (£1,641,650)** to support City Centre projects which might not generate a direct financial return but would enhance the overall City Centre offer and support the attraction of investment.

3.5 Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund £10,000,000

This fund is to support neighbourhood regeneration and tourism projects in local neighbourhoods.

3.6 Leisure Mobilisation Fund £611,877

This fund is to support the Leisure Transformation Programme and will cover programme level costs including communications, engagement and procurement costs.

3.7 Capital Receipts Reserve £642,458

These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets and which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure.

3.8 Other Fund Balances and Reserves £2,620,360

This relates to the Election Reserve (£913,390) which has been set up to smooth the cost of running council elections, the BWUH Subvention Fund (£909,283) to support national and international organisations in bringing their conferences to Belfast and the BWUH Sinking Fund (£797,687) to support planned maintenance and future capital works at the new exhibition centre.

3.9 Debt

The overall level of trade debtors had decreased this year from £7.1m at 31 March 2022 to £4.3m at 31 March 2023, mainly due to resuming debt management activity to pre-pandemic levels. An analysis of trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, for the last two years is shown below:

Table 2: Analysis of Trade Debtors

	<u>31 March 2023</u>	<u>31 March 2022</u>
Less than three months	£3,129,548	£5,450,710
Three to one year	£482,337	£1,070,718
More than one year	£720,939	£553,310
<u>Total</u>	<u>£4,332,824</u>	<u>£7,074,738</u>

3.10 Creditors

The Department for Communities has set councils a target of paying invoices within 30 days. During the year the council paid 86,459 invoices totalling £180,029,594.

The average time taken to pay creditor invoices was 17 days for the year ended 31 March 2023. The Council paid 70,303 invoices within 10 days, 79,378 invoices within 30 days, and 7,081 invoices outside of 30 days. The council endeavours to process invoices as quickly as possible and has an improvement plan to support this process.

3.11 Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

The Statement of Accounts include the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year 2022/23, which has been prepared in line with the Accounts Directive provided by the Department for Communities, NIAO guidance and is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Governance in Local Government'. Specifically the AGS sets out:

- **scope of responsibility**
- **the purpose of the governance framework**
- **the governance framework in place**
- **review of effectiveness**
- **update on the significant governance issues declared last year**
- **significant governance issues for current year**

3.12 The AGS is approved by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources committee and the Chief Executive. It is subject to review by the LGA (NIAO) as part of their annual audit.

3.13 Financial and Resource Implications

None.

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

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1)
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2)
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3)
- Noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4)
- Noted the award of contracts by Arc 21 on behalf the council (Table 5).

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO/ Delegated Officer	Short description of goods / services
Provision of telecommunications equipment to deliver the 5G Innovation Regions bid on behalf of Belfast City Region	Up to 17 months	Up to £3,800,000	M McCann	A successful bid for the DSIT 5G Innovation Regions funding will provide capital funding for BCC to deliver an economic development programme for SMEs in key industries focused on utilising advanced wireless
Provision of telecommunications services to deliver the 5G Innovation Regions bid on behalf of Belfast City Region	Up to 17 months	Up to £3,800,000	M McCann	A successful bid for the DSIT 5G Innovation Regions funding will provide capital funding for BCC to deliver an economic development programme for SMEs in key industries focused on utilising advanced wireless
Supply and installation of summer plants and containers	Up to 3 years	Up to £240,000	D Sales	The provision of summer plants and containers for Belfast in Bloom initiative
Requirement of an Industrial Technical Expert to support the delivery of the Digital Pillar within the BRCD Programme	Up to 2 years	Up to £60,000	M McCann	BCC does not have in-house resources and expertise to provide the right level of governance and assurances to meet the programme board's expectations or a BRCD Programme Audit
Young tree maintenance, tree	Up to 5 years	Up to £2,000,000	S Toland	Tender required to support in house operations in

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

planting and minor horticultural works				delivering grounds maintenance and horticultural work in BCC Parks and Open Spaces.
--	--	--	--	---

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Total Value	SRO/ Delegated Officer	Description	Supplier
Supply, delivery & commissioning of replacement illuminate lighting fittings & ancillary equipment as part of the PPM maintenance programme	Up to 3 years	Up to £60,000	S Grimes	The City Hall Illuminate system is wholly proprietary to Philips lighting. The system is installed throughout the City Hall utilising a specialist technology, that is a closed protocol, and will only operate with the family of Phillips products. Signify (Phillips) do not supply to clients direct, as they use approved wholesalers. Due to our partnership in the 2013 EU project, we have a wholesale account directly with them.	Signify Commercial Ireland Ltd
Replacement of existing flue at Tropical Ravine Botanic Gardens	Up to 1 month	Up to £45,000	S Grimes	In July 2023 the existing boiler house flue fell from its supporting	John J Doyle Ltd

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

				brackets and dropped directly into the tropical ravine building. Specialist contractor John J Doyle have carried out the temporary repairs following the collapse. They have also carried extensive reporting, intrusive surveys, flue tests and flue design calculations.	
--	--	--	--	--	--

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO/ Delegated Officer	Description	Supplier
T1872 - Provision of animal healthcare services at Belfast Zoo	Up to 5 years	Additional 4 months & £55,000	J Greer	Additional time is required to finalise the Specification and associated tender documents. Work is underway to complete this review during Aug 23 and to advertise the tender but an additional 4-months is required to ensure continuity of service whilst	Jubilee Veterinary Centre

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

				tender process is completed	
--	--	--	--	-----------------------------	--

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO/ Delegated Officer	Description	Supplier
Installation of new ACV and associated works in plant room at Kennedy Way Civic Amenity Site	Up to 2 months	Up to £60,000	S Grimes	Failure of the existing boilers. Due to the urgency of the works the Councils Mechanical MTC Contractor has been appointed to carry out the works, consequently this STA is retrospective. Using existing contractor provides assurance that the works will be fairly priced and carried out to a good standard	WJM Building Services Ltd
Installation of new ACV and associated works in plant room at North Queen Street Community Centre	Up to 2 months	Up to £38,000	S Grimes	Failure of the existing boilers. Due to the urgency of the works the Councils Mechanical MTC Contractor has been appointed to carry out the works, consequently this STA is retrospective. Using existing contractor provides assurance that the works will be fairly priced and carried	WJM Building Services Ltd

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

				out to a good standard	
--	--	--	--	------------------------	--

Table 5: Contracts awarded by Arc 21 on behalf of the Council

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO/ Delegated Officer	Description	Supplier
Bring Site Service Contract- Mixed Glass (Lot 1), Textiles (Lot 2) Mixed Paper (Lot 3) and Mixed Cans (Lot 4)	Up to 8 years	Up to £3,034,294	C Matthews	Contract for the collection, transportation, sorting and recycling of material from bring sites.	Contract managed by Arc 21

**Commercial and Procurement Services
Social Value Working Group update**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the delivery of the social value outcomes via the Council's tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Value Procurement Policy,

**Audit and Risk Panel Report and Minutes
of meeting of 12th September 2023**

The Committee noted the key issues arising at the meeting and approved and adopted the minutes of the Audit and Risk Panel of 12th September 2023.

Henry Jones Playing Fields

The Committee was reminded that, in March 2023, it had approved the reconfiguration of the Henry Jones Playing Fields site, which was to retain one soccer pitch and to convert three other soccer pitches into a full-size GAA pitch for use by the East Belfast GAA club.

Since May 2023, there had been three security incidents at the site, including two suspect devices and an incident of criminal damage to goalposts and netting. Those incidents had impacted all users of the site, including East Belfast GAA, Clarawood FC and dog walkers/other leisure users. A nearby Primary School and Nursery had also been impacted.

As a result of those incidents, the PSNI's Crime Prevention Team had been engaged to assess the site and the current range of preventative and protective measures in place. Accordingly, they had recommended an upgrade to the current CCTV system and also the installation of lighting in the car park. In addition, they had commented on the

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

large number of potential access points along the site perimeter which was currently unfenced.

Officers had obtained quotes for the associated works which were as follows:

- Total cost for CCTV upgrade = £12,000
- Total cost for car park lighting = £25,000
- Total cost for perimeter fencing = £120,000

Those costs could not be met from within normal departmental operating budgets and given that it was capital expenditure, it was suggested that, should the Committee wish to proceed with some/all of those works, the Director of Finance would review the capital financing budget at the end of Quarter 2 and realign spend in order to provide the necessary finances.

The Committee approved an upgrade to the current CCTV system and also the installation of lighting in the car park at the Henry Jones Playing Fields, subject to the Director of Finance reviewing the capital financing budget at the end of Quarter 2 and realigning spend in order to provide the necessary finances.

The Committee agreed also to defer consideration of the installation of perimeter fencing to enable further discussions to be held with the key user groups.

Equality and Good Relations

Language Strategy Draft Action Plan 2023-26

The Committee was reminded that, following the agreement of the Language Strategy 2018-2023 in April 2018, an interim action plan which covered the period from December 2018 to March 2020 was agreed by Members.

The Council agreed a strategic approach to progress the Language Strategy in May 2021, including approving the establishment of:

- a cross-party, quarterly Member Language Strategy Working Group;
- a new external Irish Language Forum and a new external Ulster-Scots Forum to add to the existing Council stakeholder fora for the other language communities; and
- an internal Language Strategy officer working group.

The internal Language Strategy Officer working group had developed a detailed, prioritised Language Strategy Action Plan which was agreed by the Committee in November 2022 for the purposes of pre-consultation engagement with stakeholders, following which an updated Plan would be submitted to the Committee for approval to go to public consultation.

The Interim Director of Legal Services reported that pre-consultation engagement had been undertaken with the Irish Language Stakeholder Forum, the Ulster-Scots Stakeholder Forum, a sub-group of the Migrant Forum and the Sign Language Forum.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Following on from feedback from those various stakeholders, the Action Plan had been updated. The external Irish and Ulster-Scots Foras have been meeting on a monthly basis since March this year. She pointed out that the actions were not the same in respect of all languages and this was reflective of the feedback from stakeholders in terms of the issues they raised in terms of accessing Council services, visibility etc.

Accordingly, the Committee was now being asked to agree that the Draft Language Strategy Action Plan be issued for a 12-week public consultation exercise via an online survey and online public meetings.

Following the consultation, an updated Action Plan would be brought back to the Language Strategy Working Group and the Committee in due course. Officers were hopeful that the Action Plan would be formally adopted by April 2024.

The Committee:

- Approved the Action Plan for the purposes of formal public consultation; and
- Noted that the draft Language Strategy Action Plan would be issued for public consultation in October 2023.

**Review of Hate Crime Legislation – Response from
Permanent Secretary Department of Justice**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider a response from the Permanent Secretary, Department of Justice, to the Committee’s request for an update on the independent review of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the response.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The Committee will recall that, at the meeting on 26th June, it granted approval for the new draft amenity bye laws governing the City Centre to be issued for formal public consultation. The Committee agreed also, at the request of Councillor de Faoite, to request an update from the Department of Justice on the independent review of hate crime legislation in Northern Ireland.

- 3.2 A response to that request has since been received from Mr. R. Pengelly, the Permanent Secretary in the Department of Justice, a copy of which is attached.
- 3.3 The Permanent Secretary begins by stating that, following the publication of Judge Marrinan's Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation Report in December 2020, the Department of Justice has been progressing work to implement recommendations aimed at improving the criminal justice system's response to addressing hate crime and providing redress to victims. Where relevant, a number of recommendations from the Review will be implemented through the provision of a Hate Crime Bill and work on policy development and public consultation, in preparation for a Bill, is ongoing. This work, in the legislative sphere, will complement and strengthen non-legislative work also being taken forward to address hate crime, including working collaboratively with partners in relation to tackling the enabling factors of hate crime such as intolerance, prejudice and hate.
- 3.4 He points out that, in response to the complexity of some issues and the desire to advance public engagement in the Department's consultation process, it was agreed to approach the public consultation on hate crime legislation in two phases. The first of two planned public consultations has now been completed and a summary report on the consultation findings and (then) Ministerial approved way forward was published in March 2023 and is available here : www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/phase-one-summary-responses-hate-crime-review-legislation
- 3.5 The Permanent Secretary then explains that work on developing policies to be included in the phase two public consultation process has now commenced, with the intention of publishing a public consultation on these issues in 2024, subject to the return of Ministers. The remaining policy aspects relate to consideration of the following three strategic themes:
- adding age and sex/ gender/ variations in sex characteristics as protected characteristics within hate crime legislation (Recommendations 9-11);
 - range of issues relating to stirring up offences (Recommendation 14); and
 - a statutory duty for named public authorities to remove hate expressions from their buildings and public

spaces where they carry out their functions
(Recommendation 15).

3.6 He concludes by stating that, whilst it remains the intention to introduce a Hate Crime Bill in the current 2022-2027 mandate, the timing will be subject to any impact on the Department of Justice's wider legislation programme due to delays in the formation of an Executive and an incoming Minister will wish to review the current programme, taking account of the time available for delivery.

3.7 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None associated with this report.

3.8 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**

None associated with this report.”

The Committee noted the response.

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting on 11th September 2023**

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 11th September 2023, including:

Belfast Stories

- That Members note the contents of this report and agree to extend an invitation to the Belfast Stories team to attend the October meeting of the Partnership.

Shared City Partnership Membership (Verbal Update)

- That members note the verbal update provided by the Good Relations Manager detailed in the minutes attached in Appendix 1.

PEACE IV (Verbal Update)

- That members note the verbal update provided by the Good Relations Manager detailed in the minutes attached in Appendix 1.

TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding Update and Project Request

- Members are asked to note the contents of the report and to and agree the approach for reprofiling costs in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and funding available through the Belfast Health Development Unit, to support the

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

commissioning of a drop-in good relations and health and well-being winter programme for asylum seekers.

Peace Plus Workshop

- That members note the Peace Plus presentation to Shared City Partnership attached in Appendix 2 to the report.

Operational Issues

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 14th September.

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 8th September, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2023 EVENTS						
European Federation of Living (network of housing associations)	9 November 2023	EFL Conference Lunch Reception for guests attending a 2-day conference. Numbers attending - 70	A & B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
West Belfast Partnership Board	28 November 2023	Celebration of Word Millionaires from across Belfast primary schools - reception and presentations to children who have become Word Millionaires through participation in the Accelerated Reader programme, which WBPB purchased for all schools in west Belfast through our DE funded Sharing the Learning Education Programme	C & D	No Charge as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for reception</i>

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

		to raise literacy standards at Primary school level. Numbers attending – 200				
Conway Education Centre	14 December 2023	Launch of 'Meet the New Neighbours' project and promotional material showing the contribution, skills and talents of refugees and asylum seekers in Belfast. Numbers attending – 80	C & D	No Charge as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for reception</i>
2024 EVENTS						
The Bar of Northern Ireland	15 May 2024	Welcome to World Bar Conference Evening Reception for guests attending a 2 day conference. Numbers attending - 150	A & B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Belfast One BID	19 May 2024	Belfast One-Way Edit Fashion Show - Reception and showcase of 50 city centre retailers Numbers attending 350	B	Yes £300	No hospitality	Approve Charge £300 No hospitality
Ulster University / Irish Accounting & Finance Association	13 June 2024	Irish Accounting & Finance Association Gala Dinner for guests attending their 3 day conference taking place in UUJ. Numbers attending – 120	A & B	No Charity	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry	21 June 2024	Annual President's Lunch – annual lunch for the NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry to mark economic benefits to the City. Numbers attending – 400	B	Charge £300	No Hospitality	Approve Charge £300 No hospitality
---	--------------	--	---	-------------	----------------	--

Request for the Use of the City Hall Grounds

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall and its Grounds were normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the request set out below fell into this category.

The Interim Director of Legal Services advised that Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) had approached the Council seeking permission for up to 100 PWC staff to sleep out in the grounds of City Hall on Friday 20th October 2023.

A similar event had taken place in June 2014 to raise awareness of homelessness in the city centre, on that occasion participants had slept outside City Hall grounds along the cobbled area and footpaths.

This proposed sleep would take place along the West façade of City Hall, with participants sleeping overnight on the pathways, ensuring a safe distance from the intruder alarms situated along façade. Their preference was concrete rather than the grass lawns. City Hall building and grounds would be closed to the public as normal at that time.

The only Infrastructure onsite would be portaloos, no catering provision was planned, and participants would bring their own sleeping materials. A wet weather alternative was not available inside City Hall.

PWC staff would fundraise in advance of this event and monies raised would be donated to charities helping with homelessness. PWC would provide all stewarding/marshalling staff and would have first aiders present. PWC would risk assess the event and participants should complete medical checks in advance. PWC would have to comply with the usual conditions, including indemnities for damage and submission of a formal event-management plan and insurance.

The Committee approved the request from Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) seeking permission for up to 100 PWC staff to sleep out in the grounds of City Hall on Friday 20th October 2023 to raise awareness of homelessness.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

Attendance at CIPR PRide NI Awards 2023

The Committee was advised that the Council's Marketing and Communications team have been shortlisted for three categories at this year's CIPR PRide NI Awards, which recognised best practice in private and public sector communications across the region.

The shortlisted categories included:

- Best In-House PR Team – for our proactive and reactive media and social media activity
- Best Use of Content – for our #BeSoundBelfast social media campaign, calling out abuse on our online platforms
- Best Integrated Campaign – for our #YourDogYourJob campaign, using multiple channels to highlight the impact of dog fouling

The awards were being delivered in-person in Belfast for the first time since 2019 and cost for attendance was £99 per person.

The Committee:

- Agreed to the council's attendance at the CIPR PRide NI Awards on 13th October 2023; and
- Approved the attendance of the Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, or her nominee, and five Council officers.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 5th September; and approved also the Council's response to Part 2 Consultation on draft regulations to implement the Procurement Bill.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Language Strategy Working Group of 1st September.

**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 8th September.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 22nd September, 2023**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Cost of Living Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group of 15th September.

Chairperson