

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 4th December, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy) (Chairperson); and
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan).

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Beattie declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that the company he worked for was involved in the scheme.

Councillor Canavan declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that she was a committee member of an organisation involved in the scheme.

Councillor Doherty declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that he worked for a charity which was involved in the scheme.

Councillor Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that he worked for a charity which was involved in the scheme, and the item “Update on Physical Programme” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on the basis that he was a board member on the Black Mountain Shared Space Project.

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Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item “Smokefree Generation consultation response and update on Vaping - Notice of Motion” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that he had been involved in the scheme through his employment.

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the Motion “Cost of School Uniforms and P.E. Kits”, in that his wife was employed by Save the Children.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to the item “Update on the MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre)” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, on the basis that it was a client of the company for which he worked.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy),
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st November and the Special meeting of 29th November be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Councillor Carson congratulated St. Oliver Plunket Primary School on having been announced as the gold winner of the Award for Making a Difference - Primary School of the Year in the 2023 Pearson National Teaching Awards and asked the Lord Mayor to host a reception for representatives from the school to recognize the achievement. The Lord Mayor acceded to Councillor Carson’s request.

Councillor McCabe congratulated the Council on its recent success at the Onus NI Awards, where it received a platinum award for being a safe employer and a safe city award, which recognised the Council’s work with city partners.

Councillor Kelly congratulated boxer, Lewis Crocker on winning the WBA Continental Europe welterweight title.

The Lord Mayor commended boxer, Tyrone McKenna who had announced his retirement from the sport and wished him well for the future.

Councillor Bunting congratulated all of the groups which had recently taken part in the Belfast in Bloom awards, and commended Council officer, Ms. L. Murray, for organizing the contest.

Councillor R. Brooks and Councillor Flynn congratulated the Ledley Hall Boys’ and Girls’ Club for being awarded the King’s Award for Voluntary Service and also PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland, St. Vincent de Paul and the Chinese Welfare Society who had also received recognition. The Lord Mayor acceded to a request from Councillor Flynn to offer

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commiserations to Ardcarne Local Residents Group, which was nominated but did not receive an award, to commend the residents group on its invaluable work.

Councillor Murray acknowledged World Aids Day and Homeless Awareness Week and recommended that Members take time to visit some of the city's homeless services to see their invaluable work.

Councillor Smyth commended Mr. Conor McKinney on his work which had successfully returned the starlings to the Albert Bridge and he requested that the Lord Mayor write to Mr. McKinney to acknowledge his achievement. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor McCormick commended Bangor Rugby Club who had been singing in the city centre to raise money for PIPS Suicide Prevention.

Councillor Doherty thanked the Council and the Lord Mayor for hosting the Remembrance Day for Roads Victims event in the City Hall.

Councillor S. Douglas commended the Council and for its Christmas lights switch-on event and remarked that the event's success was in part, due to the traffic restrictions within the city centre.

Councillor de Faoite offered condolences to the family of the late Bishop Tony Farquhar, former Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor and asked the Lord Mayor to write to his sister to express condolences on behalf of the city. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor I. McLaughlin commended the organisers and participants of the Annual Shankill Winterfest.

Councillor Collins congratulated author, Mr. Michael Magee on his success from his novel, Close to Home and requested that the Lord Mayor write to him to congratulate him on his successes. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor McMullan acknowledged the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and paid tribute to Disability Action and Council officers who had organised an event in the City Hall to recognise the day.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

Belfast 2024

At the request of Councillor Nelson, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Belfast 2024" be amended to reflect that the Committee agreed to write to Translink with regard to the use of night busses for evening events in 2024.

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Update on Physical Programme

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Chief Executive agreed that he would provide clarity to the Member, on whether the legal opinion to be sought on the validity of the decision to exclude Northern Ireland from the latest round of Levelling Up funding would be provided by the Council's Legal Services Department.

Consultation on City Centre Byelaws

The Chief Executive acceded to a request from Councillor McCullough, to bring a report back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the Consultation of City Centre Byelaws.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly,

**Smokefree Generation consultation response
and update on Vaping - Notice of Motion**

At the request of Councillor Murray, the Council adopted the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 7th November, subject to the replacement of the word 'vapes' with 'tobacco products' in the minute under the heading "Smoke Free Generation Consultation Response and update on Vaping – Notice of Motion".

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th and 22nd November, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 15th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

Committee Site Visits

At the request of Councillor Carson, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Committee Site Visits" be amended to include a site visit in respect of LA04/2022/2103/F - Proposed change of use and redevelopment of the existing waste management facility and adjoining plant hire business to create a new waste disposal installation for the incineration of healthcare and hazardous waste streams and associated works, 1 and 2 Duncrue Pass, Belfast.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Moved by Councillor Bower,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 13th November be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe,

Update – Belfast Sustainable Food Partnerships

At the request of the Chief Executive, the Council agreed that, due to a typographical error, the minute under the heading "Update – Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership" be amended to reflect that the allocation of £30,000 would be from within the City and Organisational Strategy budget.

Kerbside EV Proposal from BT (Presentation BT Openreach)

At the request of Councillor T. Brooks, the Council agreed to amend the minute under the heading "Kerbside EV Proposal from BT (Presentation BT Openreach)" to reflect that during discussion, the representatives from BT Openreach agreed to undertake to work with The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) with regard to the design and/or evaluation of the technical trial.

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Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 9th November, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor McCormick, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 28th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Motion

Cost of School Uniforms and P.E. Kits

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

"That this Council recognises that the uncapped cost of school uniforms and PE kits is causing financial hardship for many families across the borough. A recent poll from Save the Children NI revealed that a third of parents in Northern Ireland have had to borrow money to pay for their child's uniform and PE items, while 6 in 10 parents were financially challenged trying to cover the cost. In recognition of this ongoing hardship, this Council will write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education expressing concern for children and their parents and request that his department take action as a matter of urgency to address the long-standing problem."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kelly

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Doherty,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the following paragraphs be added to the end of the motion:

"and request that his Department put in place robust and enforceable measures to require schools to provide for affordable uniform options from a range of suppliers.

Furthermore, this Council notes that work to address this issue had commenced before the collapse of the last Executive but has been stalled as a result of the absence of an Education Minister, and regrets that it is families who are being impacted from the resulting lack of progress. This is being compounded by the

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continued unconscionable budget cuts made by Chris Heaton-Harris MP as a tactic in his attempts to negotiate with the Democratic Unionist Party.

Belfast City Council will therefore write to Jeffrey Donaldson MP to express its frustration at the DUP's failure to live up to its responsibilities, and ask that it take up its place in an Executive without further delay so Ministers rather than civil servants can make decisions to tackle the cost of living crisis facing our community."

On a vote, forty-one Members voted for the amendment and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

The Motion, as amended, was thereupon put the Council as follows:

"That this Council recognises that the uncapped cost of school uniforms and PE kits is causing financial hardship for many families across the borough. A recent poll from Save the Children NI revealed that a third of parents in Northern Ireland have had to borrow money to pay for their child's uniform and PE items, while 6 in 10 parents were financially challenged trying to cover the cost. In recognition of this ongoing hardship, this Council will write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education expressing concern for children and their parents and request that his department take action as a matter of urgency to address the long-standing problem and request that his Department put in place robust and enforceable measures to require schools to provide for affordable uniform options from a range of suppliers.

Furthermore, this Council notes that work to address this issue had commenced before the collapse of the last Executive but has been stalled as a result of the absence of an Education Minister, and regrets that it is families who are being impacted from the resulting lack of progress. This is being compounded by the continued unconscionable budget cuts made by Chris Heaton-Harris MP as a tactic in his attempts to negotiate with the Democratic Unionist Party.

Belfast City Council will therefore write to Jeffrey Donaldson MP to express its frustration at the DUP's failure to live up to its responsibilities and ask that it take up its place in an Executive without further delay so Ministers rather than civil servants can make decisions to tackle the cost of living crisis facing our community."

On a vote, forty-one Members voted for the amended Motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson