

Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 25th October, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin and Nelson.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr J. Girvan, Director of neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st October, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in items 2g – Ending Violence against Women and Girls; and 3a – Council response to the NI Executive’s draft Programme for Government in that his partner was a Minister in The Executive Office and he left the meeting whilst these items were under discussion.

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Councillor Groogan declared an interest in item 2e – Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25 in that she was employed by the Forward South Partnership, and she left the meeting during discussion of the matter.

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in item 2e – Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25 in that his partner was employed by Save the Children, and he left the meeting during discussion of the matter.

Councillor Long declared an interest in item 3a – Council response to the NI Executive’s draft Programme for Government in that his wife was the Justice Minister and he left the meeting whilst the item was under discussion.

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in item 2f Asset Management, and he left the meeting while the item was being discussed.

Councillor Black declared an interest in item 6a Physical Programme in that she was employed at the Grosvenor Recreation Centre, and she left the meeting during consideration of the item.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following seven 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 items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

The Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Revenue Estimates 2025-26
Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report which provided an update on the key issues which influenced the rate setting process for 2025/26 and the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 till 2028/29. He advised that there were six key elements to the annual setting of the district rate which, under the requirements of the Local Government Finance act, must be struck by 15th February, 2025. He then reviewed each of the areas which were Business as usual Revenue Estimates, the Efficiency Programme, Growth Proposals/Priority Areas, the Capital Finance Budget, the Estimated Penny Product and General Reserves.

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The Committee agreed:

- to note the challenges since the last update to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting;
- to receive monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2025; and
- that £1million of VAT receipts be ringfenced towards the Hardship Fund.

**Housing Led Regeneration Programme –
Appointment of a Private Sector Partner**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable Party Group briefings to be held.

Update on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts and agency assignees engaged by the Council and outlining the steps being taken to reduce the Council's reliance on those two categories.

She reported that, as at 30th September, 2024, 237 staff had been filling posts on a temporary basis, 138 of whom had substantive Council posts to return to when no longer required. The other 99 were fixed term contract employees who did not have a substantive post to return to. Between 1st July and 30th September, 34 staff had joined the Council on a temporary contract, with 19 having a substantive post and 15 being on fixed term contracts.

She reported further that 239 agency assignees had been engaged by the Council as at 30th September, 33 of whom were seasonal workers. She outlined the cost of employing agency assignees for the three-month period ending on 30th September.

From 1st July 2024 to 30th September 2024 there were 105 appointments made. As of 30th September 2024, there were an additional 67 posts in transition (at public advertisement / internal trawl stage; shortlisting and/or interview stage; pre-employment checking stage, etc.

The Director then stated that the Corporate Contract Manage held monthly compliance and challenge meetings across Departments, with a view to driving down long-term agency usage and that data was being reviewed to assess the potential for creating some permanent flexible roles.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

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Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee:

- noted the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change portfolio and timescales going forward; and
- approved an Increase in the establishment within Place and Economy by one Grade 8 (P03) post to enable initial support for the Fleadh Cheoil.

Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25

The Committee considered a report which provide an update on the current position in regard to the development and implementation of a 2024-25 Hardship Programme to support those vulnerable people impacted by the cost-of-living crisis across the city.

The Committee:

- i. noted the current budget position available (£100,773) in relation to the development and delivery of a hardship programme in 2024/25;
- ii. noted the request from full Council, at its meeting in September, for the Committee to provide further consideration of a Hardship Programme for 2024/25.
- iii. agreed that the current budget available be allocated on the basis as set out at section 3.5 of the report;
- iv. agreed that the current Funding Agreement in place with National Energy Action (NEA) be extended to 31 March 2025 to enable the delivery of £30,000 support through the Belfast Warm and Well initiative;
- v. agreed that the allocation of any future funding that might become available in-year be subject to the allocation model as set out at section 3.9 of the report and subject to discussion and consensus of the Members' Cost-of-Living Working Group and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- vi. noted the new 'Cost-of-Living Support Guide' and that a digital and hard copies would be made available to the Members.

Assets Management

The Committee is asked to:

- i) Access to the Hills Ballygomartin Road South – Acquisition of Land**
 - Approved the acquisition of approx. 0.12 acres of land at Ballygomartin Road South to facilitate one of the agreed Access to the Hills projects.
- ii) Ladas Drive – Disposal of Land**
 - Approved the disposal of land at Ladas Drive to the Henderson Group.

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iii) Duncrue Estate – Deed of Variation

- Approved the lease extension of Plot 20 Duncrue Estate to an unexpired term of 125 years from 2024 and approve a variation to the rent review clause to facilitate 5 yearly rent reviews.

iv) Clonduff Community Centre – Licence Agreement

- Approved the grant of a licence to Clonduff Football Club for the siting of a container at Clonduff Community Centre.

v) Carnamore Park – Wayleave Agreement

- Approved a wayleave agreement to the Education Authority for the installation of a foul water drainpipe at Carnamore Park.

vi) Dromara Street – Licence Agreement

- Approved a retrospective licence agreement with Phoenix Natural Gas.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted a report which provided details on the emerging proposals being brought forward by The Executive Office (TEO) in terms of the role of the Council in supporting the implementation of the recently published Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and associated two-year delivery plan.

The Committee noted:

- i. the intention of The Executive Office to bring forward proposals to provide funding to councils to support the implementation of the recently published Strategic Framework to end Violence Against Women and Girls;
- ii. the related council resource requirements in terms of putting in place the necessary grant funding processes;
- iii. agreed to TEO proposal that the Council adopt a lead role for the allocation of Strand 1 funding to support Belfast wide programme activities in-year and over 25/26 year; and
- iv. agreed to TEO proposal that the Council adopt a lead role for the allocation of Strand 2 funding to support a regionally wide programme of activities in-year.

Living With Water Programme Update

The Committee:

- noted the correspondence which had been received from Living with Water (LWW) on the outcome of the affordability review of the LWW in Belfast Plan; and
- noted that officers were arranging a meeting with the LWW Team and that further information would be brought back to Members.

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**Update on programme of support for the
business owners impacted by the August attacks**

(Ms. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy, attended in connection with this item.)

The Strategic Director, Place and Economy, submitted a report which provided the Members of the Committee with an update on the support which had been provided to date for businesses by the riots on 3rd August and requesting the Committee to consider the next steps.

The Committee:

- noted the update on the businesses affected by the 3rd August riots;
- agreed that officers should continue to engage with the individuals to help them re-establish or develop their business, including accessing all appropriate support mechanisms;
- agreed that consideration be given to introducing additional security measures, such as CCTV, for those businesses; and
- that a report be submitted to a future meeting regarding the possibility of providing bridging funding to support the businesses which had been affected.

Requests to Present

**Request to address the Committee –
Cathedral Quarter Trust**

The Members were advised that a request had been received by Mr. B. Mulgrew, on behalf of the Cathedral Quarter Trust, to address the Committee in respect of the wider regeneration of the Cathedral Quarter area.

The Cathedral Quarter Trust represented a range of businesses, sectors and groups which had expressed concerns regarding dereliction and the current condition of buildings in the area. The correspondence indicated that the Trust had held two recent public meetings, together with a summer school, to examine a range of alternative regeneration plans for the wider Cathedral Quarter, given the delays encountered with the Tribeca development. The purpose of the presentation would be to outline such plans and to encourage dialogue amongst key stakeholders in the future development of the area.

Move by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the Committees to accede to the request from the Cathedral Quarter Trust to make a presentation to the Committee.

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On a vote, two Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the presentation be made to the City Regeneration Members' Working Group, given that that group had been established for that purpose.

**Request to address the Committee –
Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) –
Belfast Housing Investment Plan 2024-25**

The Committee was asked to consider a request to receive a presentation from Grania Long, Chief Executive of the NIHE, in respect of the Belfast Housing Investment Plan 2023/26.

The members were advised that the NIHE published Housing Investment Plans (HIPs) for each Council area, which sets out the organisation's targets and ambitions over a three-year period. In addition, the HIPs inform Councils on the various programmes and initiatives that the Housing Executive and Housing Associations were developing to meet local housing needs.

The Committee was reminded that the People and Communities Committee received representatives of NIHE on a yearly basis for a presentation in this regard, the last meeting took place on 3rd September. Ms. Long had indicated in her request that a presentation to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would provide an opportunity to provide further detail on NIHE's new build programme for the Belfast area as part of its programme.

The Committee agreed not to receive the presentation but that it instead be received by the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum.

**Request to address the Committee – NILGA re Leadership
Programme for Elected Member Development**

The Committee was informed that correspondence had been received from the Chief Executive of NILGA requesting that the Committee agree to receive a presentation in respect of its Leadership Programme for Elected Member Development.

The correspondence explained that the Leadership Programme had been designed to provide Elected Members with a 'co-ordinated toolkit of learning' in accordance with the NILGA Political Skills Framework. It aimed also to develop the practical skills which were necessary to enable Members to improve their civic leadership skills in a local political environment. The latest programme would commence in January 2025.

The Committee agreed not to receive the presentation and noted that it had previously been made to the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Quarterly Update on Motions

The Committee noted that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

**Belfast City Council response to NI Executive's
draft Programme for Government**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a proposed draft Belfast City Council response (Appendix 1) to the NI Executive - Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most - Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027, which is provided at (Appendix 2) for your consideration.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The committee is requested to note and agree:

- i. the draft Belfast City Council response to the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government and agree to submit this response subject to any amendments of additional comments that the committee wish to provide.
- ii. to share this corporate response with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, to inform their response which is being submitted on behalf of the wider local government sector.
- iii. to note that alongside providing this response to the Programme for Government unit in the Executive Office, officers are continuing to develop approaches to maximise the strategic positioning of the city within the context of the emerging Programme for Government and other strategies.
- iv. that a letter is sent to the TEO to accompany the response from Council to the PFG.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 On 5 September 2024, the Executive agreed a draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'. Subsequently the Executive launched an 8-week public consultation on this draft Programme for Government, with the deadline for submissions 4 November 2024.

3.2 The content of the draft Programme for Government 2024 – 2027 is set out below for the committee's information. The programme's priorities and commitments are divided into three core sections:

- **Doing What Matters Most** - Focuses on the Executive's immediate priorities aimed at taking care of you, supporting our businesses, and improving the lives of our workers, families and communities.
- **Building New Foundations** - Commits to upgrading infrastructure and improving services to better connect our communities, meeting your needs today and supporting your ambitions for tomorrow with the high-quality public services you deserve.
- **Shaping a Better Tomorrow** - Focuses on three main missions: People, Planet, and Prosperity, all rooted in a commitment to Peace. These missions are dedicated to improving life for you, your families, and our communities.

3.3

1. Doing What Matters Most Today

This part of the draft Programme for Government sets out the NI Executive's immediate priorities, which include:

- Immediate priorities for this year and throughout our mandate will be achieved by providing better support for our children and young people, enabling affordable childcare, growing our economy, increasing housing supply and tackling homelessness, taking care of everyone by improving Health and Social Care services, protecting our environment and cleaning up our water, and making our communities safer, including a particular focus on women and girls.
- Continue to grow a globally competitive, sustainable, and inclusive economy which benefits everyone.
- Focus on high-potential sectors, where there are established strengths, and the potential to be globally competitive. In areas such as outstanding sectors like cyber security, net zero, screen, financial technology, regulatory technology and health and life sciences already thriving, the NI Executive aim to build on this success, upgrade our infrastructure, grow our economy, and protect our environment.
- £150 million will be invested in the new *Enhanced Investment Zone* and we will continue to progress UK Shared Prosperity projects.

- Make sure everyone has the best possible opportunities regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, who they are, or where they live, and to enable people to live with dignity in safe communities.
- Opening doors through proposed initiatives to deliver more affordable childcare, new skills funds, and apprenticeship programmes.
- Support the delivery of high-quality education for all children and champions better support for children and young people, especially those with special educational needs, so that all children are happy, learning and succeeding.
- Public services need urgent reform. Rapid growth in both the cost and demand for public services is placing a huge pressure on public finances and is undermining service provision. Reform and Transformation programme underpinned by new structures, external expertise, and a £235 million Transformation Fund to make our public services better, more easily accessed, and more efficient.

3.4

2. Building New Foundations

In this draft Programme for Government the NI Executive also recognised that to achieve their outcomes they need to build the right foundations and have the right infrastructure in place; therefore, they plan to:

- Upgrade our public sector infrastructure to strengthen our communities and create opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, communities, and innovators.
- Deliver upgrades to our sports stadia and increase opportunities for local sports.
- Improve our transport infrastructure for safer, more active and sustainable travel, connected communities and inclusive economic growth.
- Deliver an ambitious programme decarbonising all housing stock in NI.
- Reducing carbon emissions in existing and new homes, engaging with consumers throughout the transition, while supporting various initiatives for energy efficiency and affordability.
- Fresh thinking and new ideas that deliver the high-quality public services you deserve and pursue opportunities to improve and grow our public infrastructure, such as water services and planning.

3.5 Shaping a Better Tomorrow

The Northern Ireland Executive also recognise the importance of shaping a better tomorrow by building a foundation for the longer-term. This will be focused on three main missions: People, Planet, and Prosperity, all rooted in a commitment to Peace.

3.6 Programme for Government Missions

1. **People: Working to support everyone at all stages of their life to ensure they have the chance to succeed by improving life opportunities.**
2. **Planet: Harnessing the potential of a green growth economy while ensuring we provide an equitable transition to a sustainable and affordable society as we take responsibility for decarbonising our economy and society.**
3. **Prosperity: Improving our economic productivity while making sure that we have an economy that works for everyone, and our story continues to be an inspiration to others.**

3.7 In addition to these three Missions, the NI Executive also have a cross-cutting commitment to a fourth underpinning mission of Peace which is intended to make sure that everyone feels the benefit of a growing economy, improved environment, and a fairer society.

3.8 Doing What Matters Most Today

The NI Executive have also set out nine immediate priorities which they will work to this year and throughout the duration of this mandate, these are:

1. **Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy**
2. **Deliver More Affordable Childcare**
3. **Cut Health Waiting Times**
4. **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls**
5. **Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs**
6. **Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing**
7. **Safer Communities**
8. **Protecting Lough Neagh and the Environment**
9. **Reform and Transformation of Public Services**

3.9 Strategic Positioning

The Committee is invited to note that as officers considered the corporate response to the NI Executive's draft Programme for Government and other emerging strategies such as the recently published Sub-Regional Economic Plan, they recognised the need to maximise opportunities so that both the regional priorities and the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda can be realised. A further report on this work will be presented to the Committee in due course.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.10** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.11** There are no equality or rural needs implications arising directly from this report. However, the Committee is invited to note that alongside the public consultation on the draft Programme for Government.

- 3.12** The NI Executive are also undertaking associated consultations in relation to the Equality, Childs Rights and Rural needs. These are open for twelve weeks and officers are currently considering these and will bring a further report to this Committee on the impact assessments next month."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Community Recovery Fund

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

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** To report to committee on the recently launched Community Recovery Fund (CRF), which the Deputy Prime Minister is making available to support communities impacted by the public disorder that took place between July and August 2024, including Belfast. In England this will be issued under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003, and in Northern Ireland funds will be released to the Department of Finance, to support those communities most affected.

2.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to agree that Officers Develop and Submit an Action Plan on 28th October under the following 4 Themes: -

- Theme 1 Good Relations Inclusion and Integration
- Theme 2 Wider University and Lower Ormeau
- Theme 3 Area Based Initiatives and Programmes
- Theme 4 Resource Recoupment

Main Report

3.1 The CRF is allocative and offers a flat rate of £600,000 to each eligible local authority, to be spent before the end of the Financial Year 2024-25.

Expenditure is eligible under this scheme if it is in response to the violent disorder that took place between July and August 2024 and is on, or in connection with:

- a. Immediate action to safeguard life or property.
- b. To prevent suffering or severe inconvenience.
- c. To reduce the risk of further disorder in the future.
- d. To rebuild social trust and promote cohesion between communities.

3.2 The Fund has deliberately sought to provide local areas with flexibility to design a package that responds to their circumstances. The following are examples of expenditure which may be covered by the grant, though this list is not exhaustive.

3.3 Community and voluntary activity:

- Projects which build connections between communities. For example, by bringing people together from different groups, including those of different faiths, around a shared goal/objective, such as through volunteering, befriending or mentoring schemes.
- Events, workshops, or campaign activities to educate on what constitutes a hate crime and supporting victims of hate crime.
- Projects in schools and universities which help address tensions/unrests, linked to hatred and intolerance, for example guidance for teachers on how to de-escalate tensions and respond neutrally to concerns.
- Initiatives which help counter or strengthen resilience to mis/disinformation and prevent false and harmful

narratives spreading. For example, social media focused 'critical thinking' lessons in school.

- Temporarily increasing safety patrols.
- Measures to prevent anti-social behavior, crime and reduce reoffending including youth diversionary activities.
- Destination marketing and funding for the development and promotion of campaigns which encourage people to visit the local area.
- Campaigns to encourage local pride and to bring people back into the high streets.
- Campaigns to promote community cohesion and educate on hate crime.

3.4 Immediate clean-up and repair:

- Repairs to highways, public buildings, street lighting, bus shelters and other street furniture, including fences and railings or removal where repair is insufficient.
- The costs of works to clear debris which are or may be the cause of danger to the public and the cost of clean-up affected areas, including removal of graffiti.
- Hire of additional vehicles, plant and machinery that are not those already in use by the authority, and incidental expenses.

3.5 Associated costs with the above activity:

- Legal, clerical and other charges incurred on any of the above work.
- Additional temporary employees or contractors, to work on the emergency or replace permanent employees diverted from normal work.
- Special overtime for employees, either during the emergency for overtime worked on the emergency itself, or afterwards to catch up on work from which they were diverted by the incident.

3.6 The above programmes will be additional to the departments core work, and an Action Plan for the said has to be submitted to the department by 28th October 2024, with delivery by the 31st March 2025, that said this is a considerable investment for Belfast City. Officers have been in discussions with the relevant department in Westminster and providing programmes are committed Council will have the ability to deliver into the Financial Year 25/26.

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3.7 Officers have initially reviewed the fund criteria above and have concluded that there are four main themes an action plan for delivery could be developed: -

- **Theme 1 Good Relations Inclusion and Integration**
- **Theme 2 Wider University and Lower Ormeau**
- **Theme 3 Area Based Initiatives and Programmes**
- **Theme 4 Resource Recoupment**

3.8 Officers will submit the draft action plan for 28th October and inform the funder the plan is subject to Belfast Full Council meeting ratification.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.9 All the budget detailed within the report is at 100%, the biggest implication is that of resource to design, implement, manage and monitor the programmes, however Council will be able to recoup this under Theme 4.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.10 All the above aligns with Council's Good Relations Strategic Framework, which seeks to improve Good Relations between people from different political, religious, and racial backgrounds."

The Committee agreed that officers develop and submit an Action Plan on 28th October under the following 4 Themes:

- Theme 1 Good Relations Inclusion and Integration;
- Theme 2 Wider University and Lower Ormeau;
- Theme 3 Area Based Initiatives and Programmes; and
- Theme 4 Resource Recoupment.

NI 30U30 Change Makers Programme

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

To update members about an approach to Belfast City Council for funding (£8,750 plus VAT) to support the 30U30 (30 under 30) Northern Ireland Climate Change-Maker's programme. The programme is coordinated by the leading charity, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and their partner Podiem. This programme is an exemplary example of cross sectoral partnership with support from DAERA, Belfast City Council,

Invest NI, Queens University Belfast with broad ranging corporate support including Pinsent Masons, Coca Cola, Danske Bank, Northstone and ARUP. This is a request for continued local authority involvement and support for the programme from Belfast City Council.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- **Agree the contribution of £8,750 plus VAT to the overall programme costs.**

2.2 Whilst Belfast City Council's support represents a modest proportion of the overall budget (circa £100,000 in total) it will be crucial in making the initiative (the themes of which complement and supplement the Council's climate programme) a reality.

2.3 The Council's support will resource the launch along with 6 modules/events featuring world-class speakers/experts taking place from December 2024-May 2025.

2.4 In supporting this initiative Council will:

- **Empower the next generation of climate change makers, equipping young leaders with the tools to enact meaningful climate action and developing a talent pool for Belfast and the wider region;**
- **Foster innovation and leadership: In supporting this programme, Belfast City Council will go beyond its own carbon footprint; proactively inspiring and equipping those who have the ambition to transform industries. This programme will help build an ecosystem that promotes the collaboration between government, companies and individuals that is needed to address the magnitude of the crises facing us and it is an opportunity to align with Belfast City Council's Resilience Strategy.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 The programme supports a network of young people from a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures, industries & specialisms with the common goal of becoming planet positive Climate Change Makers. This growing network of aspiring young leaders is equipped to drive meaningful change within

their spheres of influence across Northern Ireland, influencing governments, institutions, networks, employers, colleagues and peers to drive carbon reduction and spearhead the transition to a more sustainable, just future. Similar to the pilot year in 2023, the second 30U30 programme which concluded in June 2024, was again oversubscribed with a wider range of sectors involved including environmental conservation, government & policy, construction, energy, academia, transport, agriculture & food production, technology & research and culture & communications.

- 3.2 Under this cycle of this initiative, 30 young people are competitively selected annually to embark on an impact leadership and capacity building programme that builds literacy across a range of themes to underpin future behaviours, decision-making and help foster collaboration and innovation in leadership. Common knowledge gaps including Finance/Economy/Business, Policy/Politics, Communications/Media & The Art of Persuasion, Purpose and Social Impact, Sustainability Literacy, Leadership/Resilience and Health, Wellbeing & Performance are addressed underpinned by the strategic themes of Inspiring & Informing Action; Cultivating Change-Makers; Sharing Stories & Alternatives and Enabling the Future. Most of the 30U30 modules are being delivered in Belfast City Centre and the vast majority of the participants will either reside or work within the Belfast City Council footprint. The cohort will be diverse with a broad range of backgrounds, sectors and interest/expertise areas represented. Within the current alumni of 60 emerging young leaders, 78% are female and thus the programme is making a tangible contribution to championing the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda in Belfast.
- 3.3 Within the modular programme participants will learn from globally renowned thought leaders and exemplars across a range of relevant topics. These topics have been carefully crafted to create a cohort of leaders who will return to their fields of expertise with the tools to become planet positive change-makers in the short/long term. Speakers and facilitators from the previous cohorts included globally-renowned individuals such as:
- Alice Thompson, an international speaker and social business leader who co-founded Social Bite in Edinburgh and helped to establish 'The Worlds Big Sleepout' which took place in 52 cities around the world.
 - Gerry Hussey, Ireland's leading health, wellbeing and performance coach, who has worked with many leading

sports people and teams, and author of 'Awaken Your Power Within'.

- Philip Hesketh, an international authority on influence and persuasion, who has worked with clients such as the BBC, Nestle, Walt Disney, Nike, Microsoft and Bank of America among others.
- René Carayol MBE who has worked with leaders such as Mikael Gorbachev, Nelson Mandela, Sir Richard Branson, Bill Clinton, and Kofi Annan, and authored the book 'SPIKE'. He has been Chairman, CEO and MD of businesses and served on the boards of Marks and Spencer's and Pepsi. He is an authority on inclusivity and leadership.
- Participants in the 3rd cycle of the programme (November 2024 - May 2025) will also have the opportunity to have an audience with Mary Robinson. The first female president of Ireland and formerly the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary is a lawyer, politician and diplomat and is the President of the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice.

- 3.4 The programme also includes an international element which will encourage and enable the NI climate change-makers to build relationships and collaborations with climate change - makers from other parts of the world through the 30 under 30 programme currently run by the North American Association for Environmental Education. The Northern Irish programme is the only programme operating in the UK presently.

Potential benefits to Belfast City Council

- 3.5 The programme coordinators will ensure that Belfast City Council will be positioned as championing (along with the other partners) the creation and development of the next generation of local leaders who will lead work to address climate change in Northern Ireland. This will support the cities ambition, articulated in the Belfast Resilience Strategy, to 'transition to an inclusive, net zero emissions economy in a generation.' It provides a tangible programmatic offering to engage young people, one of the areas of focus in the plan, ensuring they are active participants in co-designing a future proofed city and have every opportunity to participate in delivery. With 35% of Belfast's population under the age of 25, engagement of young people is considered so important in the strategy, it is one of three areas of focus, or multiple problem solvers to restructure the economy and society as climate change advances. This programme also nurtures wider

collaborative efforts to create a circular economy and contributes to the green skills/green growth agenda here with scope to connect to wider BCC initiatives including Belfast's Line Quarter 'Sustainable District' and other work underway with the Council's Climate Unit. In supporting this programme, Belfast City Council will be going well beyond its own carbon footprint and direct activity, it is proactively inspiring and equipping those who have the ambition to transform industries (similar to Artemis and Responsible, both from Belfast) and create global solutions (for example Catagen, also from Belfast) to our most pressing climate and environmental challenges.

- 3.6 Connections with Belfast City Council are already strong following the Council's previous support of the programme. In September 2024, we took the opportunity to connect the 30Under30 alumni with the Lord Mayor of Belfast to hear how they are planning to create meaningful impact as a direct consequence of the programme.
- 3.7 In terms of profile, the Belfast City Council brand will be prominent on all of the initiative marketing material which will be launched to ensure mass awareness. The Council brand will also be highly visible at all of the modules (including the finale event) and a Council representative will be invited to participate in the press photos launching the event and at the finale event.
- 3.8 There is also an opportunity for a member of the Belfast City Council Climate team to present on how a city is playing its part in helping to avert a climate crisis. The cohort will feature some of NI's finest future leadership talent (including those from the local government sector), so this content will be very useful and relevant to the participants together with an opportunity to host one of the modules at Belfast City Hall and secure the press coverage associated with that. This would be the ideal follow up event for the Lord Mayor to greet and listen to the incoming group of 30U30 climate change makers and the positive planet impact they plan to create.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.9 £8,750 plus VAT which will be allocated from existing City and Organisational Strategy budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

- 3.10 None."

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The Committee agreed to a contribution of £8,750 plus VAT to the overall programme costs.

Modern Slavery Act 2015: updated Modern Slavery Statement and update on corporate action plan

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement to meet the obligations of the Modern Slavery Act, 2015 and an update on the related corporate action plan.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- Note the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement (the ‘Transparency Statement’).
- Approve the addition of the Transparency Statement to the UK Government’s online registry.
- Note the progress made on the action plan.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the ‘Act’) aims to address slavery and trafficking by enhancing support and protection for victims, giving law enforcement the tools needed to target today’s slave drivers and ensuring perpetrators can be severely punished. It also includes a provision in Section 54 to encourage organisations to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free, known as the Transparency in Supply Chains arrangements (‘TISC’).

3.2 Key Issues

The Council has voluntarily published an annual Transparency Statement on its website since 2015. This sets out what the Council has done to ensure there is no modern slavery in its supply chains or any part of its business.

This year, the annual Transparency Statement has been reviewed by Commercial and Procurement Services, the Council's Safeguarding Officer, the Council's Registrar for Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships and the Equality and Diversity Officer and has been refreshed to reflect current guidance on its content. An updated version for 2023-24 is set out in Appendix 1 which following Council ratification will be published on the Council's website.

3.3 Recent changes to the Transparency Statement requirements

The TISC provisions currently apply to commercial organisations, however, in recent years both the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice have reviewed and consulted on these provisions and their potential application to the public sector:

- In July 2018, the Home Secretary undertook an independent review of the Act and made recommendations, one of which was to strengthen Section 54 by extending the requirement to publish Modern Slavery Statements to government and the public sector.
- In July 2019 the UK Government launched a consultation on measures to strengthen the TISC arrangements and published its proposals on how it planned to take this work forward. Many of the proposed changes will require legislative change which has not happened to date. The proposed changes would see a strengthening of the TISC arrangements for commercial businesses, and would, for the first time, extend them so they apply to the public sector.
- In January 2022, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice ('DOJ') published its report, summary of responses and next steps in response to its consultation on TISC. It found that overall, there is widespread support for the strengthening of TISC arrangements.

3.4 Approach to Modern Slavery in Northern Ireland

In October 2022, the DOJ launched a public consultation on a new three-year draft Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy. The public consultation closed in January 2023. On 10 July 2024, the Department of Justice launched a three-year Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy 2024 – 2027. The strategy was developed under Section 12 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

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The Strategy groups actions and commitments under the strands of:

- Pursue - enhance operational responses to pursue and disrupt offenders;
- Protect - providing victims with necessary levels of protection and support and
- Prevent - engagement, awareness raising and training.

The Strategy includes a measure under the 'Protect' strand to deliver training and awareness sessions to key sectors and professional disciplines, including district councils. Members will be aware that an initial awareness session for relevant Belfast City Council managers on recognising Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking was held by the Department of Justice on 17 November 2022.

The Strategy notes that the UK Government plan to make additional changes to the TISC provisions in the Act when Parliamentary time allows. The additional changes include:

1. Reporting on specific topics;
2. Publishing the MS statement on a public registry;
3. Setting a deadline for submitting a statement annually;
4. Extending the requirement to publish a statement to public sector organisations with a turnover of over £36million; and
5. The introduction of financial penalties for those that do not publish a slavery statement.

In October 2022 the DOJ published a progress report on the commitments laid out in the 2021-22 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Progress Report states in part that the DOJ 'will engage further with public sector procurement leads once the additional measures to strengthen TISC are progressed in legislation and will become mandatory for all businesses with an annual turnover of over £36million.'

3.5 It should be noted that the Legislative Consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be required to extend any UK Government changes to Northern Ireland.

3.6 Online TISC Registry

In March 2021, the UK Government launched an online modern slavery statement registry. Since its launch, over 7,000

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statements have been submitted covering over 23,350 organisations on a voluntary basis.

Members asked to approve the addition of the Belfast City Council Transparency Statement to this registry.

3.7 Action Plan

In October 2021, Council approved an action plan to tackle modern slavery to be taken forward by various departments. This was based on guidance from NILGA. An updated version is set forth in Appendix 2.

3.8 Reporting

The Policy, Research & Compliance Officer co-ordinates an annual report on progress to be brought to CMT and the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

The implementation of the action plan will involve staff from City and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, Governance & Compliance Services, Commercial and Procurement Services, Corporate HR and Marketing and Corporate Communications.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Any equality, good relations or rural needs implications will be identified using the council's usual screening process."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Planning Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

Public Consultation on Validation Checklist

The Director of Planning and Building Control submitted the undernoted report in relation to public consultation on a Validation Checklist:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 On 1st October 2024, the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) made legislation which enables a council to publish a Validation Checklist. The purpose of a Validation Checklist is to extend the minimum level of information for an application to be legally valid so as to improve the quality of applications on submission. This should contribute to the Planning Service being able to process applications in a more efficient and effective manner, and in turn help to improve performance against statutory KPIs.
- 1.2 The legislation comes into operation from 1st April 2025, which gives councils time to prepare and consult on their proposed Validation Checklist ahead of the operation date.
- 1.3 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is asked to agree the preparation and consultation on the Council’s Validation Checklist.
- 1.4 This matter was also considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on 15th October 2024. The Planning Committee noted the proposal and agreed that a Planning Committee Workshop should be arranged on the Validation Checklist.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- Agree to the preparation and consultation on the draft Validation Checklist.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 At its meeting on [19 December 2022](#) (item 25), the Planning Committee considered public consultation undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure (Dfi) on ‘Improving the Quality of Planning Applications’. Dfi’s proposal was to enable councils to publish a ‘Validation Checklist’ that stipulates the minimum level of information needed with applications on submission above the basic requirements set out in legislation.
- 3.2 The report to the 19 December 2022 Committee set out the background to the consultation, why Validation Checklists are considered to be of fundamental importance to improving the quality of planning applications on submission and how this

would have a significant impact on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the NI planning system, and in turn performance against statutory Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

- 3.3 The Planning Committee resolved to *‘fully support the introduction of Planning Application Validation Checklists and granted delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the consultation response.’* The Council provided its formal response to the consultation on 21 December 2022.
- 3.4 DfI subsequently confirmed to councils its intention to legislate for Validation Checklists, as referenced in the report to the [23 August 2024](#) Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (item 5h) on Planning Performance.

Current information requirements

- 3.5 The bar for submission of a planning application in NI is currently especially low and this is the root cause of many of the system’s problems from a Development Management perspective.
- 3.6 Article 3 of the [Planning \(General Permitted Development\) Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) sets out the minimum level of information needed with an application for it to be ‘valid’ and processed. The information that is required only includes:
- Written description of the proposal
 - Address of the application site
 - Name and address of the applicant (and agent where applicable)
 - A plan identifying the application site showing its relationship with other land (‘red line’)
 - A plan identifying neighbouring land owned by the applicant (‘blue line’)
 - Such other plans that describe the proposal
 - Ownership certificate
 - Planning fee

There is also a requirement for Major applications to be accompanied by a Pre-Application Community Consultation

Report and certain applications to be supported by a Design and Access Statement¹.

3.7 There are specific additional requirements for applications for outline planning permission, approval of reserved matters and renewal of planning permission.

3.8 However, there is currently no legal requirement for applicants to provide other essential information, despite many of them being a planning policy requirement. For example, there is currently no legal requirement for an application to be accompanied by the following:

- Contextual design information such as streetscapes, 3D modelling or CGIs
- Heritage statement
- Archaeological investigation report
- Demolition justification statement
- Transport Assessment
- Parking survey
- Contaminated land report
- Noise and odour assessments
- Air quality assessment
- Lighting assessment
- Drainage Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Ecological report
- Viability appraisal
- Planning Statement

3.9 Belfast City Council contacted the Department as far back as 2016, raising the importance of statutory Planning Application Validation Checklists. Both the Public Accounts Committee and NI Audit Office reports on the NI planning system² include recommendations on improving the quality of applications on submission.

3.10 The inability for councils to mandate the minimum level of information supplied with applications has a seriously detrimental impact on the whole process. It significantly adds to processing times, places additional burdens on staff and

¹ Required for applications for Major development, Listed Building Consent and for one or more dwellinghouses, and proposals that are equal a greater than 1,000sqm and are in a Conservation Area, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site or Area of Townscape Character.

² See Planning Committee reports of [15 February](#) and [14 April](#) 2022 on the NIAO and Public Accounts Committee reports respectively.

consultees, wastes time assessing proposals without the key information, sets up conflict with customers, frustrates communities, residents and third parties and creates system failure.

Belfast City Council Application Checklist:

- 3.11 Recognising the crucial importance of this issue, the Council first published its [Application Checklist](#) in November 2018. This provides non-mandatory guidance to customers on the information they need to provide with their application at the start of the process, depending on the nature of the proposal, its scale and whether the site is subject to any particular constraints.
- 3.12 The *Application Checklist* has had a positive impact on the quality of planning applications on submission and has now been culturally embedded in the process, particularly for larger scale and more complex applications. However, the *Application Checklist* has limitations because it is advisory and does not have statutory weight. In effect, it has been a ‘work-around’ of the previous legislation. Ultimately, the Council is unable to compel applicants to provide the information. Whereas in England and Wales, Planning Authorities have been able to publish Validation Checklists for many years, mandating the information that must be provided with applications for them to be processed.
- 3.13 Councils are measured on the average time for processing Major and Local applications with ‘Day 1’ being the date when the bare minimum level of information is provided. The clock does not stop to allow for the submission of the necessary additional information to properly assess and process the application. This significantly lengthens application processing times and makes it difficult for Planning Authorities to achieve statutory targets.

New Legislation

- 3.14 On 03 October 2024, DfI wrote to councils to announce the publication of legislation which empowers councils to publish a Validation Checklist that expands on the level of information required with planning applications on submission. A copy of this letter is provided at Appendix 1.
- 3.15 The Planning (General Development Procedure) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024 was made on 1st October 2024. A copy of the legislation is provided at Appendix 2.

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- 3.16** The legislation comes into operation from 1st April 2025, which gives councils time to prepare and consult on their proposed Validation Checklist ahead of the operation date.
- 3.17** The legislation enables a council to specify additional information requirements for applications for full planning permission, outline planning permission and approval of reserved matters, according to the 'nature, scale and location' of the proposed development. The information requirements must be 'reasonable' and proportionate and be 'material' to the consideration of the application.
- 3.18** The Validation Checklist must be reviewed and re-published by the council at no more than 3-year intervals.
- 3.19** Where an application is submitted not in compliance with the Validation Checklist, councils will normally request the additional information from the applicant on an informal basis. However, councils may ultimately issue a formal 'notice' of non-compliance with the Validation Checklist. The applicant will have the ability to lodge an appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) within 14 days from the date of the notice. The PAC will then preside over the appeal and determine whether the additional information in question is necessary. Where the appeal is allowed, the applicant may resubmit the application to the council without the originally requested information.
- 3.20** The statutory average processing time will be measured from the date of the last information required to make the application valid in accordance with the published Validation Checklist.
- 3.21** DfI has been preparing best practice guidance on the publication and implementation of Validation Checklists with support from councils. The best practice guidance has not been published at this time but is expected to be in due course.

Public consultation

- 3.22** Whilst there is no legislative requirement for councils to publicly consult on their proposed Validation Checklist, it is good practice to do so. The Planning Service therefore intends to carry out a public consultation exercise over the coming months to align with the legislative timetable set out by the Department. Officers are exploring options for consultation with the aim of adoption and publication of the final Validation Checklist by April (when the legislation comes into operation).

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- 3.23 Feedback from the consultation will inform the proposed final version Validation Checklist before it is brought to Members for adoption.
- 3.24 The Planning Service proposes to base the draft Validation Checklist for consultation on its current Application Checklist, which it will review and update.
- 3.25 The Council intends to target the following stakeholders as part of the consultation:
- Planning agents and architects
 - RSUA
 - Developers
 - Statutory and non-statutory consultees
 - Relevant community groups
 - Public – residents and businesses
- 3.26 Consultation will include an online questionnaire and targeted engagement with key stakeholders. The Planning Committee has agreed that a committee workshop should be arranged on the Validation Checklist.
- 3.27 The outcome of the consultation and proposed final Validation Checklist will be reported to the Planning Committee for feedback before referral to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for agreement and adoption, subject to ratification by Full Council.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.28 The Council's ability to specify information requirements for particular types of application will have an impact on efficiency and timely processing of planning applications.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.29 The draft Validation Checklist will be subject to a Section 75 Equality Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment. This information will be made available as part of the consultation and any feedback received will be used to inform the development of the draft Validation Checklist."

The Committee agreed to the preparation of and consultation on the draft Validation Checklist.

NICVA Future Thinking Summit 2024

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To bring forward for Members consideration a recent request received seeking financial support for the NICVA Future Thinking Summit 2024 (22 October 2024).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider a request received to provide financial support for the NICVA Future Thinking Summit 2024, which took place on 22 October 2024.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 As Members will be aware, Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) is a membership and representative umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. With over a thousand members - ranging from household name charities to grass roots community groups - NICVA lobbies and campaigns to advance the interests of the people and communities that their members support. NICVA offers a wide range of practical services, products and support to their members to help them find innovative solutions for social challenges.

3.2 NICVA’s strategic goals are as follows:

1. Support - Helping the VCS to innovate, develop and improve to meet the needs of the communities it serves;
2. Influence - Helping the VCS to influence policy;
3. Develop - Helping the VCS consolidate and develop the use of data, digital and technology; and
4. Invest - Ensuring continuous improvement to provide the best service to our members.

3.3 Officers have received a request for Council to provide financial support for the NICVA Future Thinking Summit 2024, which was held on 22 October 2024 in W5 and W5 Life, Belfast. Unfortunately, due to the timing of this request, it was not possible to bring the request to SP and R Committee ahead of the NICVA Summit taking place.

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- 3.4 The Future Thinking Summit was modelled after the successful Scottish Gathering and the renowned annual Wheel Conference. The summit was designed to bring together leaders, influencers, and changemakers to address key issues, share best practices, and drive meaningful social change.**
- 3.5 The Key Outcomes from the Summit were as follows:**
- **Value :** demonstrate the breadth and depth of the voluntary and community sector and the significant impact it makes.
 - **Inspire:** Gain insights from innovators and industry leaders who are shaping the future of the voluntary sector, as well as influencing policymakers with insights and evidence from the sector.
 - **Connect:** Network with peers, build new relationships, strengthen existing ones within the community, and foster partnerships that will drive real and meaningful social change.
 - **Strengthen:** Equip the VCSE with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate effectively and build a stronger, more connected sector.
- 3.6 The Summit was developed with and for the Voluntary and Community sector, covering themes including digital transformation, green economy, mental health, poverty, place-based collaboration. The summit used a variety of formats including:**
- **Keynote Sessions:** Inspiring talks from leading influencers and policymakers.
 - **Parallel Sessions:** Member-led discussions showcasing best practices and innovative approaches.
 - **Networking Opportunities:** Facilitated sessions for building meaningful connections.
 - **Resource Hub:** Access to vital information and learning materials.
- 3.7 To ensure this event was accessible to all, NICVA made the Summit free for attendees, including;**
- **Sector Leaders:** voluntary and community organisations.
 - **Policymakers:** Government officials and policymakers focused on civic issues.
 - **Practitioners:** On-the-ground staff and volunteers driving change.
 - **Stakeholders:** Businesses and organisations invested in community well-being.

- 3.8 Further details on the summit can be found at: [NICVA Summit 2024 Programme — NICVA Summit](#).

Request for Financial Support

- 3.9 NICVA has requested that Elected Members consider how this summit provided opportunities for capacity building, connections and confidence within the sector and is asked to consider providing financial support the following aspects of the summit:

- **Venue and Logistics:** Contribute to costs of the venue, equipment, and other logistics.
- **Speakers and Sessions:** Contribute towards the cost of travel and honoraria for key speakers and session facilitators.
- **Materials and Resources:** Contribute towards providing attendees with high-quality materials and access to resources.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 It is proposed that this request is supported via £10,000 from the in-year City and Organisational Strategy budget, which is in line with level of support provided to similar events in the recent past. There are no additional finance or resource implications contained within this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.11 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

The Committee approved the request received to provide financial support for the NICVA Future Thinking Summit 2024 in the sum of £10,000, which had taken place on 22nd October 2024.

Womens Night Safety Charter

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the Council's involvement with the Safer Socialising Initiative and to the Council signing the Women's Night Safety Charter.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- to defer consideration of Belfast City Council's involvement with the Safer Socialising initiative and to the Council signing the Women's Night Safety

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Charter to enable further information to be provided and to allow representatives of Hospitality NI to present to the Committee;

- that the Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Corporate Services champion and actively promote women's night safety;
- that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how the Council could provide spike testing kits at Council-run events and other events held on Council-owned land; and
- that a further report providing an update on motions previously submitted on the safety of women in the city centre be also submitted to a future meeting.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration an update report on the Physical Programme, a copy of which is set out below:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, along with updates on capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note that St Comgall's won the National RICS Award for Best Refurbishment / Revitalisation Project 2024.**
- **Capital Programme:**
 - **IT Programme – Grants Management System – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £60,000 be allocated.**

- **IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewalls** – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and 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.
 - **IT Programme – Complex Lives CMS** - Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and 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.
 - **Innovation Factory Access Control** - Agree that the Innovation Factory Access Control project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- Pitch provision - to authorise officers to discuss opportunities with partners across the city to facilitate opportunities for additional/enhanced pitch provision with further detail to be brought back to Committee as required in respect of potential opportunities.
 - Capital Letters of Offer – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q2 2024/25.
 - Contracts awarded – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded in Q2 2024/25.

3.0 **Main report**

Key Issues

3.1 **Awards and recognition**

Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Awards - Two of the Council’s physical projects were successful at the regional RICS Awards this year. Members may have noted that earlier this month St. Comgall’s also went on to win at the RICS National Awards for Best Refurbishment / Revitalisation Project 2024.

Construction Employer's Federation (CEF) Awards 2024 – Shankill Shared Women's Centre won the Social / Community Construction Project of the year (above £2m).

3.2 Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. Members are advised that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

3.3 Members have 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 – Grants Management System	Procurement of a replacement Grants Management System	Stage 3 – Committed: With a maximum budget allocation of £60,000
IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall	Procurement of replacement firewall hardware	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
IT Programme – Complex Lives CMS	Procurement of a case management system for the Complex Lives initiative	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Innovation Factory Access Control System	Procurement of a replacement for the access control system at the Innovation Factory.	Add to Stage 1 – Emerging

3.4 IT Programme – Grants Management System

Members will be aware that the Grants Management System was approved at SP&R Committee in November 2023 to move to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme. Members agreed that the necessary procurement processes be initiated as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has now been achieved and it is recommended that a maximum of £60,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.5 IT Programme – Palo Alto Firewall

This project is part of the overall IT Programme and will replace and licence new firewall hardware. The licencing on the current Palo Alto firewall ends in March 2025. Replacement is required before this date. Palo Alto Firewall is used to protect the Council from internet based attacks and provides web filtering, VPN services to suppliers including the new E5 finance system as well as the Global Protect service which allows staff and Members to work remotely.

Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and 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.

3.6 IT Programme - Complex Lives Case Management System

The Complex Lives initiative was established under Community Planning. It provides joined up support for some of Belfast’s most vulnerable people who have fallen into a cycle of rough sleeping, addiction, poor mental and physical health and offending behaviour. It is a multi-agency commitment across the statutory, voluntary and community sectors which brings together nine key organisations to address chronic homelessness in Belfast.

This project can be delivered via Digital Services and involves the procurement of a case management system for the initiative to collate data on performance and impact. The system will be accessible to Council staff and to users in six external organisations. The Council will continue to act as the lead partner. The project has received funding from NIHE for this financial year which it is anticipated will meet the costs of the IT project.

Members are asked to agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory

tender return; and 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.

3.7 Innovation Factory Access Control

The project is for the replacement of the access control system at Innovation Factory. The current system is no longer fit for purpose. This project is expected to come forward at pace. The Innovation Factory opened in 2016 and is operated by Oxford Innovation. The facility is currently operating at 83% occupancy with a range of businesses availing of the space and wrap around support through the centre. Flexible access to the centre is essential to the success and appeal to existing and potential tenants. The access control system has been an issue for several years with various mitigating steps taken over the years to try and repair the current system to ensure it is fit for purpose. All other options to fix the current system are exhausted and there is a requirement to upgrade the system which includes new door controllers, readers, and associated software.

Members are asked to agree that the Innovation Factory Access Control project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.

3.8 Pitch provision

Members will be aware that the provision of additional pitches across the city has been identified as a priority and that a piece of work is currently underway on developing a strategy for Belfast on Pitches and Outdoor Sports Facilities. Officers are currently looking at all options within the Council's own estate however Members will recognise that available land for additional and/or enhanced pitch provision within the Council estate is limited. However, officers are aware that there may be opportunities to work with partners across the city in terms of looking at sites for additional provision either via unutilised or under utilised land that is not suitable for other purposes, existing provision that is not being fully maximised in terms of community use, land that is surplus to requirements or where there is the potential to work with partners to ensure that pitch provision is fully developed within any new proposal (e.g. a new school development.).

Members are asked to authorise officers to discuss opportunities with partners (including the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Education Authority, Belfast Met,

Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure) across the city to facilitate opportunity for enhanced pitch provision with further detail to be brought back to Committee as required in respect of potential opportunities.

3.9 Capital Letters of Offer

Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer accepted in Q2 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

Contracts Awarded

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q2 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

3.10 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial Implications – IT Programme – Grants Management System - a maximum of £60,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – None

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2.0.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1), subject to the omission of the Security Guarding Services tender to enable consideration to be given to the introduction/delivery of an in-house model, with a report thereon to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee;
- approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2); and

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- approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Supply of vehicle spare parts and consumables	Up to 4 years	£400,000	D Sales	To supply a wide range of spare parts and consumables to support the maintenance and operation of the Council's 400+ fleet.
Security guarding services	Up to 5 years	£5,000,000	N Largey	To fulfil security responsibilities across the Council in respect of the safety and security of staff, the public and buildings. Security services include manned guarding, keyholding, mobile patrolling and events stewarding.
Taxi services	Up to 3 years	£165,000	T Wallace	For the transportation of Staff and Members for the purposes of Council business
Replacement of external firewalls	Up to 5 years	£365,000	P Gribben	Current firewall will require license upgrades in March. Project includes replacement of current hardware with higher specification hardware and licenses which represents the best VFM option.
Occupational health service	Up to 3 years	£900,000	C Sheridan	Provision of occupational health services for staff in line with HR policies and procedures. Previously approved April SP&R for £380,000. Error with original contract value estimate. Now updated.
Employee Counselling Service	Up to 3 years	£900,000	C Sheridan	Provision of an employee counselling service for staff in line with HR policies and procedures
Provision of building management, operation and café	Up to 12 months	£196,096	D Martin	2 Royal Avenue has been operating since 2022 providing a non-commercial

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provision at 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast				space in the heart of the city providing citizens and visitors with a free and accessible place to relax, have a coffee and enjoy an arts and cultural offering.
Segmentation tool to provide resident classifications at a post code level including health and wellbeing issues and characteristics	Up to 2 years	£32,734	J Tully	The need to meet the requirement arising from the Belfast Agenda specifically around health and wellbeing and to understand the behaviours of our residents at a post code level for communications, engagement and interventions.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier
Advertising panels at bus stops and outside newsagents	Up to 18 months	£140,000	E McConville	For the advertising of council initiatives to the citizens of Belfast and areas of Northern Ireland as required. Clear Channel is the only company that provides advertising at bus stops and newsagents in Northern Ireland.	Clear Channel
Bus internal and external advertising	Up to 18 months	£140,000	E McConville	For the advertising of council initiatives to the citizens of Belfast and in areas of Northern Ireland as required. Global is the only company to provide advertising on Metro and Ulsterbus buses in Northern Ireland.	Global

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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
Procurement of Public Bike Share Scheme.	Up to 9 years	Additional 9 months and £476,080	D Martin	Previous Contract Modification approved by SP&R in Jan 2024 for additional 9 months and £391,000 for the period of March 2024 – December 2024. From January 2025 the monthly fee will increase to £52,897.78, increasing the additional 9 months to £476,080.	NSL Service Group

Equality and Good Relations

Dual Language Signage at Olympia Leisure Centre - Call In

The Committee noted an update in relation to the receipt of legal opinions on the call-in which would be submitted to the meeting of the Council on 4th November for consideration.

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 7th October 2024

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 7th October 2024 including:

Presentation from MEARS

- To note the contents of the presentation detailed in the minutes.

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Presentation from Migrant Help

- To note the contents of the presentation detailed in the minutes.

Good Relations – Quarter 2 Update

The Shared City Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it:

- Notes the contents of the report, including the reprofiling of £7,500 within BCC9 to refresh the Good Relations Strategy and undertake an Audit to inform and develop a 3-year Good Relations Action Plan, through a co-design process. This project will continue as part of the 2025/26 Action Plan; and
- Agrees that the Chair of the Partnership issue the recently launched report, 'Segregation and the Environment, Breaking Down Barriers', to all NI Executive Ministers.

PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update

- The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

AOB

- The Partnership recommend to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the verbal update from Ms. A Roberts EBCDA who gave an overview of the work which had been undertaken in collaboration with a number of community and voluntary groups in the creation of a 'welcome pack' which was being distributed to new residents in the greater east Belfast area.
- The Partnership agreed the request of Fr. M. Magill, that Members would undertake a walking tour on the Forth Meadow Greenway in west Belfast at a future date.

Diversity Action Plans 2024-27

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To agree the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and LGBTQIA+ Action Plan for 2024 – 27 including resources to deliver year 1 activity.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **agree the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and LGBTQIA+ Action Plan for 2024 – 27 and associated year 1 costs.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

Our Equality and Diversity Action Plan outlines how we will promote equality and diversity in our ambitions to create a city in which people love to live, learn, invest, work and visit. It also contributes to our compliance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Actions are categorised under the following corporate plan priorities:

- Growing an inclusive economy
- Living here
- Cross cutting
- Organisational priorities

3.2 As part of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan the Council has committed to developing and delivering a Gender Action Plan, LGBTQIA + Action Plan and a Race Equality Action Plan. The Women's Steering Group has developed and agreed a three-year GAP for delivery between April 2024 to March 2027. Year 1 has been costed and is being presented to Committee for approval. HR has developed a three-year LGBT+ Action Plan for 2024-27, in collaboration with the LGBTQIA + staff network and this is also being presented, with costs for year 1, for approval.

Gender Action Plan (GAP)

3.3 Gender inequalities are deeply embedded in our social, economic and cultural systems. There is overwhelming evidence that women disproportionately experience disadvantage and discrimination, a reflection of historical unaddressed inequality, but also that inequalities have been exacerbated by austerity, welfare reform and by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics affirm the persistence of gendered inequalities, which continue to inhibit women's life opportunities in Northern Ireland. Men will benefit from gender equality as they too face gender-specific issues such as lower life expectancy, bad health, lower education levels and are impacted negatively by rigid gender norms.

3.4 The proposed GAP 2024-27 (see Appendix One) has been developed following a facilitated workshop to agree the overall vision and aim of the Gender Action Plan, take stock of progress to date and the current situation with regard to gender equality issues, generate ideas and proposals for the future and agree actions for the 2024-2027 action plan.

The feedback from the workshop and consultation process with the Women's Steering group and the Women's Network Group has been incorporated into the draft 3 year plan. Members will be aware of the recently launched Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and it is planned that a representation from TEO will attend CMT in the coming weeks to discuss in more detail how the Council can work with TEO to help deliver the Strategic Framework

Request for additional funding for the annual International Women's Day rally in the city.

- 3.5 At its meeting in January 2014, Strategic Policy and Resourcing Committee agreed recurring annual expenditure of £6000 to fund the annual International Women's Day rally in the city. The annual funding was increased to £6500 following approval at the Committee in January 2019. To date, the costs, like other Gender Action Plan costs, have been met through the Organisational Development (OD) budget. In December 2023, representatives from Reclaim the Agenda, organisers of the annual rally attended Women's Steering Group (WSG) to request an increase in the funding provided, to account not only for additional costs caused by inflation but also so those arising as a result of the increase in size and scope of the event. The group requested an additional £8,900, making the total request for funding £15,400. Going forward, Reclaim the Agenda has ambition to develop further the scope and size of the annual IWD celebrations and programme, in particular for 2025, the 50th anniversary of the United Nations officially adopting 8th March as International Women's Day.
- 3.6 WSG requested a breakdown of the event costs and undertook to explore the feasibility of increased funding. Reclaim the Agenda was also advised to explore the possibility of additional funding with other organisations, including those which have made contributions to the event in recent years (e.g. Equality Commission for N Ireland and various trade unions) and other organisations, in particular those that will benefit from the rally increasing its presence in the city.
- 3.7 The OD budget, which has not been increased for a number of years, funds a variety of activities and projects being delivered as part of the People Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, including officer learning and development, equality, diversity and inclusion and health and wellbeing initiatives. Other OD initiatives, for example, the elected member development programme, are also funded through the OD budget. OD commitments for 2024/25 and the next two years of the People Strategy years have been considered and in light

of current and continuing demands on the OD budget, it is possible to allocate an additional £3500 each year to the IWD rally. It is therefore proposed that the allocation in the GAP increases to £10,000 for 2024/25 and annually going forward.

LGBTQIA+ Action Plan

- 3.8 HR has developed a three year LGBTQIA+ Action Plan for 2024-27, in collaboration with the staff network 'Proud' and this is also being presented, with costs for year 1, for approval. Please see Appendix Two. The plan has been developed to ensure that our organisational culture and working environment allows staff to feel comfortable to be their whole selves at work and that policies and practices empower talent development at all levels and the removal of any form of discrimination. It also aims to increase the understanding of the wider workforce of issues facing the LGBTQIA+ communities.

Disability Action Plan

- 3.9 Members should also note that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ('DDA') Section 49 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, and to the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life. Our current Plan runs, approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and reported on annually, runs from 2022 until 2025.

Detail on all of the actions delivered as part of the Disability Action Plan, the Gender Action Plan and the LGBTQIA+ Action Plan are included in the annual report to the Equality Commission.

Race Equality Action Plan

- 3.10 Members will be aware that the Director of City and Organisational Strategy, as Executive Sponsor for Race, has been leading on the development of the Race Equality Action Plan. The development of the plan has considered how we deliver our services and actions that we can take as an employer to create a more diverse workforce, and as a city leader, to influence and bring about change. Directors and senior managers have undertaken Cultural Competence and Anti Racism Training and CMT has participated in one-to-one coaching with Dr Lucy Michael to identify and develop appropriate individual departmental actions. Members should also note that that Dr Michael briefed party group leaders on progress with development of the plan on 26 September 2024.

Financial & Resource Implications

Financial

- 3.11 The cost of delivery of the proposed Gender Action Plan 2024 - 2027 year 1 activities is estimated at £28 000. The cost of delivery of the LGBTQIA+ Action Plan 2024-2027 year 1 is estimated at £10 200. Both plans will be met from the Organisational Development budget.

Human Resources

- 3.12 The plans also identify the role that individual business units and departments have in delivery of the plans.

Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Implications

- 3.13 The delivery of the Gender and the LGBTQIA+ Action Plans will result in positive outcomes. The promotion of equality and diversity entails more than the elimination of discrimination, it requires proactive action. The actions contained within both plans will not only impact on internal operations but also have a positive impact externally on women and the LGBTQIA+ community in our city.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Committee considered a report in relation to signage at the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Alderman McCoubrey,

That, due to the late receipt of the report, it be deferred until the next monthly meeting of the Council.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Black,

That consideration of the report be deferred for a period of one week.

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

The amendment was put as the substantive motion and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report, in relation to the erection of signage on the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, to a special meeting to be held on Friday, 1st November at 9.30 a.m.

Operational Issues

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 17th October.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
2024 Functions					
Newstart Education Centre	11 December 2024	35th Anniversary Youth Celebration of Achievement of non-political, community-led organisation who deliver large-scale peace funded, cross-border, cross-community youth intervention programme called STRIVE for young people vulnerable to racism and sectarianism as well as manipulation from criminal/paramilitary gangs.	C	Current rate free as not for profit	Yes, Wine and Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending – 100			
Chartered Institute of Marketing Ireland	12 December 2024	Celebrate 15 years of the Chartered Marketer - the reception to celebrate the dedication, excellence, and achievements in personal development to becoming a Chartered Marketer. Numbers attending – 40 – 50	C	Room hire £450	No hospitality as Corporate Sponsor involved with reception.
2025 Functions					
Immaculata Football Club	18 January 2025	Celebration of 80 years of Immaculata Football Club - Reception, Dinner, Speeches, and entertainment organised in conjunction with Grosvenor Community Centre. Numbers attending – 250 - 300.	C & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Wine and Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
4 Corners Festival	4 February 2025	Celebrating Local Peacebuilding for a Shared Home – celebration of the contribution of local organisations to peacebuilding in Belfast with particular reference to the creation of a shared home in line with the Festival’s 2025 theme of ‘Home?’. Numbers attending – 50	D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee reception as charity
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful	13 February 2025	Live Here Love Here Community Awards – an awards night to celebrate the work of volunteers and groups who participate in our Live Here Love Here Campaign, working towards the vision of a beautiful Northern Ireland by inspiring people to take responsibility for creating cleaner, greener and more sustainable communities. Numbers attending – 130	B and C	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Wine and Soft Drink reception as charity

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Queen's University Computing Society	13 March 2025	Gala Dinner for colleagues and student of the Computing Society – reception, speeches, dinner and entertainment. Numbers attending – 350 - 400	D	Room hire £1250	No Hospitality.
ASG – Anderson Spratt Group	20 March 2025	NI Hummingbird Awards – daytime event to celebrate equality, diversity, and inclusion within workplaces and across communities in Northern Ireland. Numbers attending – 100	C	Room hire £450	No hospitality as Corporate Sponsors involved with the event.
Food Standards Agency NI	29 April 2025	FSA UK & International Affairs Celebration to showcase the work of protecting food businesses, environmental health, and ports to colleagues from England and Wales. Numbers attending – 150	B	Room hire £450	No hospitality

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Ormeau Runners	27 September 2025	10th Anniversary celebration of this community racing club, established to raise awareness of running fitness for mental health, social interaction and physical health. Numbers attending – 100	C	Current rate free as voluntary group	Yes, Wine and Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary

Request for the use of the Council Chamber

The Committee approved a request by the Ledley Hall Boys and Girls Club for the use of the Council Chamber for a mock debate as part of the ‘Democracy Works?’ Programme.

Request for Suffolk Winter Wonderland event at Suffolk Community Garden

The Committee was advised that the Council had received a request from Suffolk Events Circle to host a winter wonderland at Suffolk community garden on the 29th and 30th of November and 1st of December 2024. The event would be aimed at children between the ages of 0-16 and would allow them to experience a magical Christmas experience along with a visit from Santa and his elves. There would also be a live reindeer in attendance to make it feel authentic.

The group also planned on having a range of lights and displays to animate the garden to make it a memorable experience. The group had informed the Council that there would be a fee of £5 per child. However, this would be discounted for families with multiple children. The income that was generated from the event would be invested back into the community for future events. The event had taken place last Christmas and had passed off without any incidents. The money raised from that event allowed the organisers to host an easter event.

The Committee granted authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted; subject to the completion of the appropriate event management plan and satisfactory terms being agreed by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services and on the condition that the Event Organisers:

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- I. resolves all operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
- II. meets all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities; and
- III. shall consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.

The Committee noted that the above decisions were taken as a pre-policy position in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial team.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Disability Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Disability Working Group of 14th October.

**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 18th October.

**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 27th September.

Aisling Awards

The Committee was advised that correspondence has been received from the Aisling Awards for Belfast City Council representatives to attend its Awards Ceremony on 22nd November 2024.

Operating for 27 Years, the Aisling Awards celebrated the best of Belfast in the private, voluntary and community sectors. Previous honorary guests had ranged from Special Olympians to the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the family of Daithí Mac Gabhann.

The 2024 event would be held at the Europa Hotel on 22nd November.

The Committee was informed that various sponsorship opportunities for the event have been received by the Council. Those to be considered included:

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- Table for 10 at the Banquet £1500 + VAT
- A pair of tickets for the banquet £300 + VAT
- A single ticket for the banquet £175 + VAT

The Committee agreed to sponsor a table for 10 at a cost of £1500 + VAT at the Aisling Awards.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the City
Regeneration Members Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Regeneration Members Working Group of 3rd October.

Issues raised in advance by Members

**Fundraising box at the City Hall Christmas
Tree – Councillor McKeown to raise**

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor McKeown raised the issue of locating a fundraising box at the City Hall Christmas Tree.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the use of a fundraising box, on an annual basis, at the City Hall Christmas tree and that the monies raised this year be donated to the Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP) Charity; and that match funding of the monies raised be donated by the Council to the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice.

**Incident regarding Portrait in the City Hall
On 19 October – Councillor Bunting to raise**

The Committee noted that Councillor Bunting had indicated that this issue had already been dealt with.

Chairperson