

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,
on Monday 3rd February, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
and Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors
Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty,
M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey,
Kelly, Long, Lyons, Maghie, Maskey,
McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCusker,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson,
O'Neill, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor Smyth.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, declared an interest in the items "Community Recovery Fund", "Physical Programme", "Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 13th January 2025" and "Vacant to Vibrant Programme", within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that she worked for an organisation which had been involved with the programmes, as the items did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in the item "Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 13th January 2025" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

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Minutes of the Council

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 9th January, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Condolences

The Lord Mayor, together with representatives of several political parties, extended sympathy to Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects, on the recent passing of her mother, Councillor Lyons on the recent passing of his father and Councillor de Faoite on the passing of his grandmother.

The Lord Mayor and Councillor Lyons expressed condolences to the family and friends of Mr. M. Longley, an influential poet who had received the freedom of the city, who had recently passed.

Councillor R. Brooks offered her condolences to Councillor Verner on the recent passing of her grandfather.

Birthday Wishes

The Lord Mayor and several Members of the Council wished Mrs. N. Largey and Councillor Beattie a happy birthday.

Congratulations and Thanks

A number of Members expressed thanks to Council staff who had assisted the community in its response to Storm Eowyn.

Councillor McCann praised the actions of the players and staff of Linfield Football Club for their swift actions in response to a recent pitch-side emergency and asked the Lord Mayor to write to the football club to express gratitude from the Council. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor R. Brooks expressed thanks to the Glentoran Goalkeeper, Daniel Gyollai, who had assisted a member of the public who had been experiencing a medical emergency and the Lord Mayor acceded to her request to send a letter of thanks to Mr. Gyollai.

Councillor P. Donnelly congratulated all those who had been nominated and won awards at the Eastside Awards, in particular Ms. Bernie McConnell who had been presented with the award for Outstanding Contribution.

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Councillor P. Donnelly congratulated the Short Strand Community Forum's Mental Health and Wellbeing project on its recent launch.

Councillor de Faoite congratulated Patricia Stevenson on her election to the Seanad Eireann and the Lord Mayor agreed to write to Ms. Stevenson in recognition of her achievement.

Request to address the Council

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from The Workers Party in relation to the granting of planning permission for a private hospital on Boucher Road.

Ms. L. Kerr explained that she was addressing the Council's decision to grant planning permission to another private hospital and stated that there were plans to close and redesignate current health service facilities and another private facility would drain resources,

She stated that the proposed private hospital was located in an area of close proximity to a number of other private hospitals and facilities in south Belfast and within half a mile radius of three National Health Service hospitals which had been starved of funds that were needed to deliver quality community outcomes.

She highlighted the areas of Belfast that experienced poverty, deprivation and health inequalities and stated that it was the reason her party had raised funds to provide defibrillators in north Belfast.

She praised the National Health Service and its history and explained how private hospitals were detrimental to the service and only had the intention of generating profit.

She concluded by stating that, if the privatisation of health services continued, it would be detrimental to the National Health Service both financially and through the loss of human resources, that working class people deserved the highest standards of healthcare through the National Health Service, and she called for Members to reject the race towards privatisation of healthcare.

Change of Position of Responsibility

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party that it wished to replace Councillor Bell with Councillor Hanvey on the Climate and City Resilience Committee.

The Council noted the change.

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Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

In response to a Member's query in relation to the minute under the heading "Newington Football Club", which had been 'called-in', the Chief Executive explained that he had received correspondence which outlined that Newington Football Club was unable to act as the applicant in its pursuit of funding from the Football Fund and he therefore advised the Council that a proposal in respect of the item could proceed.

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 27th and 31st January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That the minute under the heading "Newington Football Club" be amended to provide that the Council would be the applicant to the Football Fund, subject to due diligence.

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

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Whyte,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the minute under the heading 'Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2025/26' be amended to provide that, the Council reject the decision and write to the Ministers for Finance and Communities to request an update on the funding position, and that a Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council be convened before 14th February, 2025.

On a vote, ten Members voted for the amendment and forty-nine against and it was declared lost.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the minute under the heading 'Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2025/26' be amended to include that the Council write to the Ministers for Finance and Communities to request an update on the funding position,

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and that, should funds become available before 14th February, 2025, a Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Council be convened.

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

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Alderman Copeland,

That the minute of the meeting under the heading 'Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant' be rejected and, accordingly, that the Council adopts the following motion:

“That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces service leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately.”

On a vote, twenty-eight Members voted for the amendment, twenty-nine Members against and, with two no votes, it was declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 27th and 31st January, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 14th and 29th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McKay,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan, and

Resolved - That the minute under the heading 'Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Park Opening Hours Consultations' be amended to provide that Botanic Gardens be included in the consultations.

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Community Recovery Fund

At the request of a Member, the Chief Executive agreed that a report would be brought to the People and Communities Committee, which would identify areas of need based on key statistics on hate crime figures.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment and request, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 14th and 29th January, 2025, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 15th and 29th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 22nd January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Cobain, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 21st and 29th January, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.
Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Verner and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 20th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

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Climate and City Resilience

Moved by Councillor R.M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Brennan and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 16th January, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson