

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,
on Tuesday, 1st April, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, 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, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin,
McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown,
McDowell, McKay, McKeown, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Murphy, Nelson, O'Neill, Smyth,
Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the High Sheriff (Councillor McAteer) and Alderman McCoubrey.

Declarations of Interest

Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Councillors Bradley, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and R-M Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item "Minutes of the Shared City Partnership" in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS, in that they were employed by organisations which had applied for funding.

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, Duffy, Groogan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item "Social Supermarket Fund", in that they were employed by, or were associated with, organisations which had received, or applied for, funding.

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item "Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25", in that she was employed by an organisation which had applied for funding.

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Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the item “Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25”, in that his partner was employed by Save the Children.

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to the item “Support for businesses affected by the August riots”, in that his wife was Justice Minister.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in relation to items “Update on Hardship Fund” and “Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund”, in that she worked for an organisation which had applied for funding.

As the above-mentioned matters did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Brennan further declared an interest in relation to the item “Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments” in that she was employed by an organisation which had applied for funding and left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

**Minutes of the People and
Communities Committee**

Aldermen Copeland, McCullough and Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brennan, M. Donnelly, Doran, Duffy, Groogan, McCabe and Verner declared an interest in relation to the item “Funding Awards for 2025/26 (Capacity Building and Revenue Grants and Generalist Advice)”, in that they were associated with organisations which were in receipt of revenue grants.

Councillors Beattie, Canavan, Duffy, Groogan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets”, in that they were employed by, or were associated with, organisations which had received, or applied, for funding.

Councillors McKeown and Smyth declared an interest in relation to the item “Pitch Partnership Agreements”, in that they had children who played for Rosario Football Club.

As the above-mentioned matters did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.

**Minutes of the City Growth and
Regeneration Committee**

Councillor Duffy declared an interest in relation to the item “Vacant to Vibrant Scheme”, in that he worked for an organisation that had applied to the scheme. As the item did not become the subject of discussion or debate during proceedings, he was not required to leave the meeting.

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**Notice of Motion - Paramilitary Transition
Scoping and Engagement Exercise**

Councillor Groogan declared an interest in relation to the item “Notice of Motion – Paramilitary Transition Scoping and Engagement Exercise”, in that she worked for an organisation in receipt of funding from the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC).

Councillor Long declared an interest in relation to the same item, in that his wife was Justice Minister.

The Members left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 3rd March, 2025, be taken as read and signed as correct subject to the amendment under the heading “Requests to Address the Council – Action to Address Empty Homes” to reflect that Mr. S. Doherty, rather than Mr. S. Gibson, had addressed the Council as a representative of the Community Action Tenants Union.

Call In – Newington FC Football Fund Application

The Council was provided with a copy of the legal opinion which was obtained in relation to the call-in of the Council decision of 3rd March, 2025, regarding an application to the Football Fund on behalf of Newington Football Club.

The Council noted:

- the contents of the legal opinion;
- that the call-in was not considered to have merit on community impact grounds; and
- that officers had made an application to the Football Fund on a protective basis suitably caveated as such.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor informed the Council that Mr. Stephen Hewitt, Building Control, had recently retired after thirty-five years’ service with the Council, and wished him well in his retirement.

The Lord Mayor highlighted the recent announcement that Belfast would be the host city for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026, the world’s biggest celebration of Irish music and culture, which would take place from 2nd August, 2026 to 9th August, 2026.

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Alderman McCullough referred to a recent statement from Belfast Pride in respect of the Belfast Pride parade.

Alderman Lawlor commemorated the 125th anniversary of the Irish Guards and paid tribute to all Irish Guards past and present.

Councillor R. Brooks welcomed the installation of communication boards in the Council playground on Grampian Avenue, Titanic, and highlighted that further boards would be installed in playgrounds located within the Taughmonagh and Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Parks. She stated that the installation of communication boards was a positive step in creating accessible and inclusive spaces for all children.

Councillor Bunting highlighted that April was World Autism Acceptance month and praised the work of Belvoir ASD Family Support Group in helping to support children and their families.

Councillor Flynn highlighted International Transgender Day of Visibility, which took place on 31st March, 2025.

Councillor Collins welcomed the installation of a new pedestrian crossing at Upper Dunmurry Lane. He also expressed his solidarity with members of the 'Mothers Against Genocide' group who had been arrested following a protest outside the Dáil Éireann, Leinster House, Dublin, on Sunday 30th March, 2025.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor expressed his sorrow, on behalf of the Council, on the recent passing of staff member Mr. Edward (Ted) Long, City and Neighbourhood Services Department, who had served with the Council for thirty-five years.

The Lord Mayor extended his condolences, on behalf of the Council, to staff member Ms. Sandra Robinson, Office of the Lord Mayor, on the recent passing of her mother.

Councillor Bunting extended sympathy, on behalf of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), to all those that had lost loved ones in the past month.

Councillor M. Donnelly offered his condolences to former Councillor Marie Cush and her family, following the recent passing of her husband.

Congratulations

The Lord Mayor congratulated, together with Councillor Groogan, the Council's Belfast 2024 and Digital Services teams on receiving their recent Northern Ireland Local Government Association Awards (NILGA) awards. The Digital Services team were awarded the "Best Use of Data and Technology Award" for their bespoke Customer Relationship Management (CRM) digital solution for Regional Enterprise, and the Belfast 2024 Team were awarded the "Engaging Communities Award" for their Belfast 2024 Programme.

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The Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated Braniel Primary School on their recent success in winning Division Two of the South Belfast Primary School Football League. He extended his thanks to Mr. Tomes of Holy Rosary Primary School for his work in organising the league and ensuring its success.

The Deputy Lord Mayor congratulated Ormiston (DEA) constituent, Elijah Saunders, on his selection to the Irish Ice Hockey Association's U13 Saints team, who competed in the SEDMHA ice hockey tournament in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Councillor Kelly congratulated Linfield Football Club on its recent success in winning the Northern Ireland Football League Premiership title for the fifty-seventh time in the club's history. The Lord Mayor acceded to a request from Councillor Kelly that he send a letter of congratulations to Linfield Football Club.

Councillor R. Brooks congratulated the Ulster Tower Street Community Development Association on being awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service.

Councillor Ferguson congratulated Clonduff Football Club and Cregagh Wanderers Football Club on reaching the final of the Northern Amateur Football League Cochrane Corry Cup and wished both clubs well in the final.

**Change of Membership –
Committee Membership and Position of Responsibility**

Committee Membership

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Doherty with Councillor de Faoite on the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee.

The Council noted the change.

**Position of Responsibility –
North Belfast District Policing
and Community Safety Partnership**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Green Party indicating that it wished to vacate its position on the North Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

In accordance with the d'Hondt order of choices, the vacancy had been offered to the next Party on the list, namely, the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV). Accordingly, it was reported that Councillor McDowell would be appointed for the remainder of the Council term.

The Council noted the appointment.

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Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

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

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.

**Summer Community Diversionary
Programme Assessments**

The Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments', be amended to include that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in respect of the 2025 Summer Community Diversionary Programme Assessments.

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

At the request of Councillor Long, the Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum', be amended to provide that a report be submitted to a special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the closure of Connswater Shopping Centre, and that delegated authority be granted to the Committee in respect of support for businesses and charities affected by the closure.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the above-mentioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st March, 2025, were 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 4th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

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

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March 2025, under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs –

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Proposed Mechanism for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South and Wellington Park Terrace', be rejected and, accordingly the Council agrees that no further surveys be carried out on the aforementioned streets and the applications be closed.

At the request of Councillor Long, the proposer and seconder agreed to the following amendment:

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March 2025, under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Proposed Mechanism for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South and Wellington Park Terrace', be rejected and, accordingly the Council agrees that the applications are deferred.

The proposal, as amended, standing in the name of Councillor R. Brooks was put to the Council and on a recorded vote, twenty-six Members voted for the amendment and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

For (26)	Against (31)
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick); Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Maghie, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, I. McLaughlin, Nelson and Verner.	Councillors, Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brennan, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McKay, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, Murphy, O'Neill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

**Dual Language Street Signs – Proposed Mechanism
for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue,
Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South
and Wellington Park Terrace**

At the request of Councillor R. Brooks, the Council agreed that, in addition to the decision under the heading 'Dual Language Street Signs – Proposed Mechanism for Deferred Applications and Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Park South and Wellington Park Terrace', a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that would explore options in respect of funding the provision of communication boards for Council playgrounds in 2025/26.

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Council Allotment Provision

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Council agreed that the decision under the heading 'Council Allotment Provision', be amended to provide that Beechvale Farm be included in the review of allotment provision.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th March, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan

That the decision of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th March, 2025 under the heading "International Engagement Approach", in relation to New York–New Belfast event, be referred back to the Committee to enable further consideration.

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

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th March, 2025, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor M. Donnelly and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

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Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 18th March, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,
Seconded by Councillor Verner, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Committee of 10th March, 2025, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor R-M Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Long, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 13th March, 2025, be approved and adopted

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 25th March, 2025, be approved and adopted.

Notice of Motion

**Paramilitary Transition Scoping and
Engagement Exercise**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, it was

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor T. Brooks,

“That this Council categorically opposes proposals from the UK and Irish Governments to appoint an independent expert to scope out a new process of engagement seeking to bring about paramilitary group

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transitions to disbandment; agrees that, more than 25 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there is no place for paramilitarism in our society, and that such groups should either immediately disband or face a robust law enforcement approach like other organised crime gangs; welcomes the work of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime; and agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach calling on them to abandon plans for this paramilitary transition scoping and engagement exercise and reinvest the associated funding in law enforcement approaches to paramilitary activity.”

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Canavan,

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Nelson and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks be amended as follows:

Delete: ‘categorically opposes’ and **insert:** ‘notes the’. **Leave out all after:** ‘Paramilitarism and Organised Crime;’ **and insert:** ‘and calls on the UK and Irish Governments to set out a short and strictly limited timeline for the scoping and engagement exercise.’

The motion, as amended, therefore read:

“That this Council notes the proposals from the UK and Irish Governments to appoint an independent expert to scope out a new process of engagement seeking to bring about paramilitary group transitions to disbandment; agrees that, more than 25 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there is no place for paramilitarism in our society, and that such groups should either immediately disband or face a robust law enforcement approach like other organised crime gangs; welcomes the work of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime; and calls on the UK and Irish Governments to set out a short and strictly limited timeline for the scoping and engagement exercise.”

The amendment was put to the Council and on a vote, thirty-seven Members voted for the amendment, fourteen against, one no vote and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the amendment was put to the Council as the substantive motion and was passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson