

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th March, 2021

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long);
Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford;
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,
Groogan, Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown,
McLaughlin, McReynolds, Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

Also attended: Councillor Michael Collins and
Councillor McMullan.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th February 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 March, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bunting declared an interest in relation to item 2d – Bonfire Approach 2021, on the basis that she acted as the Secretary to the Belvoir Area Residents' Group, which had applied for the micro grant and cultural leadership programme funding mentioned in the report, and left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

Councillor Groogan drew the City Solicitors attention to that part of the report under item 2h – Asset Management, referring to a potential planning application for Site D within the Gasworks Northern Fringe Site, and sought advice on whether those Members who were also on the Planning Committee should declare an interest. The City Solicitor

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confirmed that, should a discussion arise around the merits of that application, they should leave the meeting at that point.

Councillors Carson, Garrett, Heading, McReynolds and Pankhurst declared an interest in relation to item 3b – Motion: Health and Social Care Workers Thank You Payment – Response from Minister of Health and item 3c – Motion: Takeover of Private Healthcare – Response from Minister of Health, on the basis that family members were employed by the National Health Service, and left the meeting whilst those reports were being considered.

The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) also declared an interest in respect of items 3b and 3c, in that he was employed by the National Health Service and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Alderman Sandford and Councillors Garrett and Groogan declared an interest in relation to item 4b – Revisions to the Scheme of Allowances, in that they represented the Council on the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. The City Solicitor informed the Members that, since those were Council appointments, there was no requirement for them to leave the meeting whilst that item was being considered.

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in respect of item 9d – James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign, in that he was involved in that initiative, and left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Restricted Items

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

Finance Strategy

The Committee:

- i. agreed to extend the temporary expenditure controls outlined within the report into the 2021/22 financial year;
- ii. agreed that the five step financial strategy which had, in June, 2020, been approved to manage the impact of Covid-19 upon the Council's finances, be extended into the first quarter of 2021/22;
- iii. agreed that the weekday rate for bereavement fees would continue to apply to weekends for the first quarter of 2021/22;

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- iv. agreed that any increases resulting from rent reviews across the Council estate be deferred until April, 2022, rather than July, 2021, as had been recommended within the report;
- v. noted that the aforementioned decisions would be subject to regular review, in line with ongoing Covid-19 restrictions; and
- vi. noted that a report would be submitted to its meeting in April providing an update on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

**Update on Organisational Recovery
and Covid Management**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided details of:

- i. the ongoing approach to organisational recovery and Covid-19 management;
- ii. the factors to be taken into consideration in response to the Northern Ireland Executive's Roadmap to Recovery; and
- iii. the roll-out of an asymptomatic testing programme for those working for key employers in the public and private sectors and local government.

Support for Street Traders

(Mr. A. Thatcher, Director of Planning and Building Control attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had considered a report providing details of the measures which had been put in place by the Council to support various licence-holders over the course of the current pandemic. The Committee had agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting indicating whether there were any additional ways in which licensed street traders could be supported.

The Director of Planning and Building Control explained that Street Trading Licences were normally issued for three years, with traders being required to pay an application fee at the start of that period and an annual licence fee once the licence had been granted. The annual licence fee could be paid at the start of each year, although many traders availed of a scheme to pay by direct debit on a monthly basis.

He pointed out that, in light of these differing payment arrangements, not all street trading fees had been collected for 2020/21 and that some traders might have paid a fee for a period during which they had been unable to trade. It was proposed, therefore, that officers review each licensee's payment circumstances and draw up appropriate criteria, similar to that being used to assess applications for rent relief from businesses operating across the Council's estate, which those applying for support must meet. Should the criteria be met, it would enable a credit, to the value of the last financial year, to be placed on a trader's account to offset any future licence fee. The Council would seek to recoup the financial cost from the

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Northern Ireland Executive through the support package being provided to local councils to cover income lost during the pandemic.

The Committee endorsed the proposed approach for the provision of additional support to eligible licensed street traders, as outlined by the Director.

Bonfire Approach 2021

The Committee agreed:

- i. that those groups which had, in 2019, availed of the opportunity to replace a traditional bonfire with a beacon be requested to confirm if they wished to do so again this year and noted that the provision of beacons would be subject to any Covid-19 restrictions in place in July; and
- ii. to align funding which had been delivered previously through the Bonfire and Cultural Expression Programme with the specific micro grant and cultural leadership programme being delivered through the City Imagining Strategy, as outlined within the report.

**Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council –
Local Development Plan – Focused
Changes Consultation**

The Committee approved the following response to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council's latest consultation on its Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy:

**Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Local Development Plan Draft Plan Strategy
Proposed Focused Changes (published 14/1/21)**

**Local Development Plan Comments to clarify / supplement
the previous formal submission to the draft Plan Strategy**

Growth

The Council notes that LCCC's focused changes include a revision to the housing growth study to take account of the 2016-based HGI's that were published in September 2019 and that the growth figures have been adjusted accordingly. The overall figure between 2017 and 2032 is now 12,375 dwellings (825 per annum over 15 years), compared to the 2016-based HGI (10,700 or 764 per annum over 14 years), which represents an annual rate increase of 8% above the latest HGI's. This is 4% higher than the annual rate initially proposed relative to the 2012-based HGI.

The above figures have been informed by an adjustment made to reflect the mid-point between the two employment-led scenarios in the Housing Growth Study (as updated), which are based on long and short term trends. However, it is unclear why a mid-point between these two employment scenarios has been taken, other than to seek closer alignment with the revised HGIs. Given that the housing growth originally proposed was based on the adjusted HGI baseline figure, which took account of the differences

in plan period covered by the HGI and which was already updated to reflect the 2016-based household projections, it would seem more logical to retain growth on that basis. Using the updated 2016-based HGI figure, adjusted to reflect the different time periods, would seem a more consistent approach to take account of the updated HGIs and should result in a housing requirement of 10,845 units.

However, the Council would also reiterate previous concerns regarding the continuation of unsustainable trends that have been largely based on commuting flows into Belfast for employment. The original housing growth study notes that the labour force ratio, which takes account of commuting for employment, is held constant from 2017 and that the District “is a net exporter of labour” with a “close functional relationship with Belfast.” A constant ratio means a rise in real terms of commuting into Belfast, an assumption that will exacerbate the existing congestion and associated problems within the Belfast District. There does not seem to have been any consideration of these cross-boundary implications raised in our previous consultation response.

If the intention of this apparent change in approach is to ensure that housing growth aligns with employment growth, then it would seem more coherent to use one of the two jobs-led scenarios, as amended in the Addendum to the Housing Growth Study. Given the current economic context, it would perhaps be more prudent to take the lower of the two requirements as contained within the short-term jobs-led scenario E. This should result in a requirement for 10,260 net additional dwellings over the plan period. Although this is lower than HGI requirements, we would note that the HGIs are only indicators and should be considered a starting point for assessing housing need rather than a target to be met. To that end, we would refute the statement at p58 of the dPS that the requirement for the Council to ensure that the identified HGI figure can be met.

Given that the Belfast LDP is seeking to accommodate the housing growth associated with its baseline economic growth within its own boundaries, reducing the requirement in the LCCC District to better reflect likely jobs growth in that District would also serve to minimise potential negative implications for Belfast. This is particularly important given the current commuting context and the fact that the majority of housing within the Belfast District will be delivered on previously developed land within the existing urban footprint, as opposed to the less sequentially preferable greenfield land (only 40% is within the existing urban footprint) land and urban extensions delivered at a relatively low density (25-35 dph).

Given this context, we would also question whether the revised Sustainability Appraisal assessment of FC1A and FC1B is appropriate given that there are no resultant changes as a result of the likely increased pressure for greenfield land. This reiterates our comments previously submitted that the overall approach to housing growth in the LCCC plan area is unsustainable.

West Lisburn / Blaris Lands

In addition to the general comments above regarding the housing growth, it is notable that the revised 12,375 dwelling requirement over the plan period continues to include a 10% buffer that can accommodate the West Lisburn / Blaris proposals. The Council

is disappointed to note this retention as a Strategic Mixed Use site, despite previous concerns in respect of sustainability.

The Council would refer to previous comments made in its submission of 10th January 2020, which noted that the inclusion of a 10% buffer still seems to be driven by the desire to deliver development at West Lisburn/Blaris, rather than being required to meet housing needs over the plan period. As previously articulated, this is contrary to the SPPS sequential test and highlights significant shortcomings that still remain within the sustainability appraisal process.

The Council would reiterate comments from its previous submission, that no alternatives have been assessed from a sustainability appraisal perspective, apart from the Blaris lands as a new policy option. By way of example, no consideration has been given to the scope for an increase of densities above 35dph in the wider urban area, outside of Lisburn City Centre, as an alternative to the delivery of housing in West Lisburn / Blaris, which would better align with the SPPS requirement to deliver increased housing density without town cramming.

Moreover, following the Council's previous comments in relation to the potential of the Maze lands, it is noted that it is now proposed to remove reference to the employment potential of these lands from the Urban Capacity Study (Minor Change MC67). We are not clear how this helps address the concerns previously raised by this Council given that, whether or not the 141 ha of land are referenced in the Urban Capacity Study, LCCC have not assessed the potential to use these lands to meet housing or economic development needs. The Council would contend that these brownfield lands should be fully assessed as a potential alternative to the Blaris lands, in line with the sequential approach advocated in the SPPS, in the context of future sustainable economic development.

The intention to retain the Blaris lands is also considered at odds with the statement made at the end of section 7, page 61 of the focussed changes document that *'The Strategic Housing Allocation presented in Table 3 negates the need to provide any greenfield extension to allow for future housing growth'*. Clearly, the Blaris lands are a significant greenfield expansion of the existing settlement, which when taken alongside the fact that only 40% of housing sites are considered to be within the existing urban footprint is highly misleading. The Council would contend that the 10% buffer should be removed from the overall housing allocation, which would reduce the need for housing at West Lisburn / Blaris and therefore address some of the concerns previously raised in relation to the sustainability appraisal process.

The Council remains concerned that transportation issues relating to the West Lisburn / Blaris lands have not been adequately considered or addressed particularly with regard to the 'significant additional commuting traffic on the M1 to Belfast' that DfI have highlighted in the Lisburn and Castlereagh Local Transport Plan – Transport Study (para 2.11.4, pg17, [TS8](#)). There does not appear to be any robust, quantitative evidence demonstrating that the potential transport implications this proposed mixed use site will have on the transport network have been considered and the potential impact this will have on a neighbouring council.

Similarly, despite the assertion that this site is a ‘highly accessible location’ (POP, pg 78) there doesn’t appear to be any specific accessibility analysis to substantiate this or demonstrate that Blaris is significantly more accessible than any other Lisburn City site.

Density

Further to the Council’s letter of 10th January 2020 to the consultation on the draft Plan Strategy, which outlined some concerns in relation to density levels, the Council notes the proposed rewording in respect of densities within policy HOU4 (FC5B). However, the Council considers that further clarification is needed, in particular in terms of density levels to be used within the Greater Urban Area.

Whilst we recognise that existing densities are lower in the LCCC District than the Belfast District, it would seem prudent to prevent any barriers to higher density development in appropriate locations. The Belfast LDP has proposed a density band of 25-125 dph within the outer city, which forms a continuous built-up area with the Lisburn and Castlereagh Greater Urban Areas. Whilst such a large range may not be appropriate for the LCCC District, we would suggest that the upper limit should be removed or increased for land, particularly within the Greater Urban Area.

As previously advised, increasing the density of development in appropriate locations would represent a more sustainable option for future growth and avoid or reduce reliance on more peripheral sites. Such an approach would also assist the increase in the amount of new housing being delivered within the urban footprints of LCCC settlements, noting the RDS target of 60% to be accommodated within existing urban areas.

Affordable Housing

The Council notes the revision to affordable housing need over the Plan period and welcomes the adjustment to reflect up to date evidence of prevailing need. The proposed revision to policy COU5, to require proposals for affordable housing located outside settlement boundaries to demonstrate that need cannot be met within the settlement, is also supported.

Adaptable Housing

The proposed change to amend the second sentence of criteria e) of Policy HOU4 (MC13) is noted as follows: *“The design of dwellings should ensure they are capable of adaption to provide accommodation that is wheelchair accessible for those in society who are mobility impaired.”*

The Council would caution against an approach which moves away from dwellings being capable of modification for occupation by wheelchair users, to relating solely to access. The Council’s approach on this issue sets out a clear focus on ensuring that homes are accessible for those who live in them, and the evidence points towards an increasing need for accessible and adaptable accommodation into the future.

Knockmore Link

The Council's concern that the new Knockmore Link is described as key to unlocking the development potential of the West Lisburn / Blaris lands, rather than improving public transport access, has not been taken on board. In fact, following a submission from DfI Transport, the wording around this under Strategic Policy 20 has effectively been diluted:

"In addition the Local Transport Study will consider the strengths and weaknesses of various modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport and roads. This will provide clarity on the transport measures that DfI expect to deliver during the LDP period to 2032 and which will become evident at Local Policies Plan stage."

The Council would stress the importance of enhancing accessibility by sustainable transport modes, such as bus and rail, and active travel modes such as walking and cycling, with the need to reduce single occupancy car journeys. We would strongly encourage an approach which promotes more sustainable patterns of transport and travel in line with the SPPS (para 6.293) which not only will reduce the impact on the highway network in terms of addressing commuting-based congestion but also contribute to improvements in air quality arising from reduced vehicular emissions and associated health benefits for society (SPPS para 6.294). Facilitating opportunities for modal shift through improvements in sustainable transport infrastructure which in turn gives people greater choice about how they travel should be the priority here. In this context, the status of the West Lisburn (Knockmore) rail halt should be clarified and given appropriate recognition in the Plan.

Sprucefield

The Council welcome the intention to remove criteria b) from Strategic Policy 14 that sought to support Sprucefield Regional Shopping Centre in recognition of its regional status in accordance with key site requirements (FC2). This focused change aligns this policy with a town centre first approach to retail investment, as recommended in the SPPS. In this regard, the Council also support the proposed amendment to policy TC1 to clarify the application of a sequential approach.

The Council note the correction of existing gross external retail floorspace to 44,750 square metres. However, concerns remain with policy SMU03, which enables an additional 50,000 square metres gross external floor space to be permitted at Sprucefield (25,000sqm of which is unrestricted retail floorspace). The separation of Sprucefield from the retail hierarchy within the dPS, continues to raise significant concerns that the policy approach would have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of both the Lisburn and Belfast city centres. The Council would again refer to the Addendum to its submission of 10th January 2020 in this regard.

Policy TC3

A change has been proposed to TC3, to remove reference to proposals for town centre uses outside of town centres not having an adverse impact on the role and function of the town centre as a result of the proposal (MC27). This appears to dilute the original policy intent to protect town centres and only allow development that does not have

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adverse impact on adjacent land uses. Any proposals for town centre uses outside of town centre locations must ensure there is no adverse impact on the vitality and viability of centres within the proposals whole catchment that may include centres outside its council boundary.

Further minor points for info

Policy HOU1 on new residential development is being amended to make provision for housing as part of mixed-use development, with LCCC citing the DfI submission (DPS-109) which asked the Council to consider the relationship between HOU1 and SMU01 (West Lisburn / Blaris) and any other strategic mixed-use zonings.

‘*Cycling*’ has been added into criteria c) of policy TRA 1 on creating an accessible environment, in response to DfI submission. This ties in with the proposed change to SP20 in reference to the Local Transport Study that it will ‘*consider the strengths and weaknesses of various modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport and roads*’.

Note for policy HOU11 on specialist accommodation, clarifying its purpose and removing reference to ‘*retirement villages*’.”

Carnegie UK Trust – Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Committee that the Carnegie UK Trust’s ‘Embedding Wellbeing in Northern Ireland’ project was providing financial and in-kind support to those Community Planning Partnerships working in the Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council areas, to assist them in overcoming the challenges they faced in implementing their Community Plans.

He explained that, in 2018, following an expression of interest process, those councils had been selected to participate in the project, which would conclude with the publication of a final report in the spring/summer of 2021, which would be relevant to all councils. He drew the Members’ attention to key recommendations for the Northern Ireland Executive, Community Planning Partnerships and other organisations which had been formulated by the Trust over the course of the project and recommended that those be endorsed by the Committee and that the Minister for Communities be advised accordingly.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations

(The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item, on the basis that the Committee was proposing, as part of its decision, to write to his wife, the Justice Minister.)

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had considered correspondence from the Police Service of Northern Ireland in response to a motion which

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had been passed by the Council on 7th January on the policing of Black Lives Matter Demonstrations in Belfast and Londonderry on 6th June, 2020.

The response had stated that the policing of the pandemic had created difficulties for the Police Service, in the balancing of rights and had accepted that errors had been made. It had stated also that the withdrawal of Fixed Penalty Notices was not possible, due to the absence of any statutory power to do so.

The City Solicitor explained that he had, at that meeting, identified a potential issue with the Police Service's response, in that the extent of its powers appeared to have been misconstrued. He drew the Members' to the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) Act 1954, which stated that, if an authority was empowered to do something, all powers necessary or incidental to that power were also conferred, even if not expressly referred to in the legislation under which that power had been given. That would, in this case, include a power to withdraw Fixed Penalty Notices.

Accordingly, the Council, at its meeting on 1st March, had authorised him to commission legal advice in relation to the issue which he had identified. The resulting Counsel opinion had concurred with his position, in that the Police Service had the power to withdraw Fixed Penalty Notices. Furthermore, it had confirmed that the Public Prosecution Service should take into account the public interest and any change in circumstances and had noted that the Magistrates' Court was empowered to set aside fines when it was in the interest of justice to do so.

Councillor Michael Collins, who was in attendance, welcomed the Counsel opinion and expressed concern that the Police Service had misinterpreted its powers in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices during the two demonstrations on 6th June, 2020. He referred to the fact that the Police Ombudsman's report had found that the actions of the Police Service on that day had been discriminatory and highlighted the disproportionately higher level of fines which had been imposed on those from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background since the introduction of the Coronavirus Regulations in Northern Ireland. He concluded by inviting the Committee to write to the Police Service of Northern Ireland informing it of the Counsel opinion and requesting it to withdraw all of the Fixed Penalty Notices which it had issued at the Black Lives Matter Demonstrations on 6th June, 2020, and to write also to the Justice Minister and to the Minister of Health.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. to write to the Police Service of Northern Ireland enclosing Counsel opinion and calling upon it, in the context of that opinion, to revisit the Council's motion of 7th January requesting:
 - a.) that all Fixed Penalty Notices be rescinded and that prosecutions against Black Lives Matter activists relating to the protests on 6th June, 2020 be abandoned; and
 - b.) that the Police Service exercise its discretion and withdraw or rescind applications made to the courts for registration of the Fixed Penalty Notices; and

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- ii. to write to the Minister of Health, the Justice Minister and the Northern Ireland Executive's Adherence Group making them aware of the Council motion, the Police Service's response and the subsequent Counsel opinion.

Asset Management

The Committee approved the following:

- i. Shankill Shared Women's Centre**
 - "step in" rights for the Council in the Development Agreement between the Department for Communities and the Shankill Women's Centre;
- ii. Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan – Site D Car Park**
 - the issuing of a notice to terminate the Licence Agreement, dated 1st July 2005, with Inislyn Limited in respect of the 'pay on foot' visitors' car park at the Gasworks Estate; and
- iii. Surrender of Lease of White City Community Centre**
 - the transfer of ownership of the existing White City Community Centre from White City Community Centre Development Association to the Council.

Brexit and Port Health – Transition Update

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the significant programme of work which was being undertaken in support of the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol, which had been agreed as part of the European Union and United Kingdom Withdrawal agreement, including the phased introduction of new processes and functions required at Belfast Port.

The report referred to correspondence which the Chief Executive had forwarded recently to the Food Standards Agency and to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs highlighting a number of issues which would impact upon the Council's ability to fulfil its obligations under the Protocol and which required urgent resolution. The Chief Executive had also called for the immediate establishment of an oversight board to oversee service planning until such time as new arrangements were clarified and embedded.

The report set out also the legal considerations to be taken into account by the Committee in terms of:

- i. the Permanent Secretary's assertion within correspondence to the Council that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was not the competent authority in respect of any functions undertaken by the

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Council and that it had essentially no legal relationship to the Council in respect of obligations arising under the Northern Ireland Protocol; and

- ii. the Minister's decision to suspend construction works at Belfast Port, which would impact upon the Council's ability to fulfil its legal obligations under the Protocol.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

That the Committee agrees that the City Solicitor issue a pre-action letter to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, in the context of a potential future Judicial Review, in relation to his decision to suspend construction works at Belfast Port and that the response to that letter be presented to the Committee for consideration in advance of any further action being taken.

On a recorded vote, fourteen Members voted for the proposal and six against and it was declared carried.

<u>For 14</u>	<u>Against 6</u>
Councillor Black (Chairperson); The High Sheriff(Councillor Long); Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Groogan, Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McLaughlin, McReynolds, Murphy and Walsh.	Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; Councillors Bunting and Pankhurst.

The Committee also granted approval for the City Solicitor to commence proceedings seeking declaratory relief, which would mean that the Court would be asked to determine the issue of competent authority and to whom obligations fell, in the context of the Northern Ireland Protocol and International Law.

**Roselawn Cemetery – Action Plan to Implement
Recommendations in Peter Coll QC Report**

The Committee was reminded that Mr. Peter Coll QC had, on 18th February, published his report on the outcome of an investigation which had been commissioned by the Council into the arrangements surrounding the cremation of Mr. Robert Storey at Roselawn Cemetery on 30th June, 2020.

The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 19th February, it had, in considering Mr. Coll's report, agreed that a report be submitted to its next meeting outlining how the six recommendations contained therein would be implemented and monitored, in order to ensure that wider lessons were learnt and that a similar situation did not occur.

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Accordingly, the Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's approval an action plan which had been developed in response to the aforementioned recommendations. She explained that the actions set out within the plan were pragmatic and practical, with a focus on improving decision-making and communication between Members and officers, workforce planning and crisis management.

The Council approved the action plan.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion: Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st March, the following motion on Real Living Wage Foundation Accreditation, had been proposed by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Murphy:

"This Council is proudly a Real Living Wage Foundation employer for its direct employees. However, the Council does not pay the Real Living Wage Foundation rate to casual workers, industrial placements and apprentices. As a result of this policy, the Council is not an accredited Living Wage Foundation Employer. This Council believes that this must change.

The Council wants to become a leader for Workers' Rights in this City and encourage other organisations/business through our Social Value Procurement strategy to become Real Living Wage Foundation Employers. Many local authorities in Scotland, Wales and England are Real Living Wage Employers, however, no Council in the North has yet to become an accredited Real Living Wage employer. Therefore, this Council commits to becoming an accredited Real Living Wage Foundation Employer by 1st April, 2022.

Furthermore, the Council recognises its continued use of outside employment agencies and notes the difficulties that this can present, which were highlighted throughout the Covid 19 pandemic when we had limited control over the terms and conditions of those employees carrying out Council functions employed through an agency. Therefore, the Council will establish plans to review workforce planning, with a view to reducing the use of agencies and will bring a report before exploring options on how we can achieve this."

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion had been referred without discussion to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining how it might be progressed and resourced.

Motion: Health and Social Care Workers - Thank You Payment - Response from Minister of Health

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 7th January, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Brooks and seconded by Councillor Verner:

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“In recent years through austerity where pressures on the system have grown significantly, and most recently throughout the pandemic; we recognise that the best way to value health and social care workers, including student doctors and nurses, is through a fully funded fair and decent pay award negotiated through their health trade unions, and the provision of safe staffing levels underpinned with safe staffing legislation and, to express our thanks for their commitment to the care for community during the pandemic, we will write to the Ministers of the NI Executive urging them to engage with trade unions on NHS pay and to administer a “thank you” payment of at least £500 as a practical demonstration of our gratitude. This payment must not replace a fully funded 2021 pay award.”

The City Solicitor drew the Committee’s attention to a response which had been received from the Minister of Health.

The Minister had stated that he had decided to proceed with a special recognition payment of £500 for health and social care workers in Northern Ireland, which, reflecting the principle of parity, would be similar to a scheme operating currently in Scotland. His officials were finalising the details of the special payment and information would be published on the Department of Health’s website as soon as that work had been completed.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Motion: Takeover of Private Healthcare –
Response from Minister of Health**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins:

“This Council calls on the Stormont Executive to continue to work with all available health care resources, including all publicly funded health professionals and the private health sector, to ease the burden on our overwhelmed health service and health workers; to ensure the health service has the available beds, capacity and staff to care for all those sick with Covid; and in order to carry out all Red Flag cancer surgeries, and all other vital operations and life-saving procedures.”

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee’s consideration a response which had been received from the Minister of Health.

The Minister had begun by stating that it was unacceptable that any patient had had to wait longer than was clinically appropriate for surgery or treatment and had stressed that waiting times for elective surgery remained one of his key priorities.

Since the number of patients requiring admission and treatment for Covid-19 related illness began to rise in October, it had become increasingly difficult to maintain planned services. Staff across the system had had to be redeployed to help manage the higher number of patients being admitted to hospitals on an emergency basis and also to allow the system to increase critical care capacity.

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He had explained that all Trusts maintained urgent bookable theatre lists for emergency surgery and utilised capacity within those lists for cancer surgery. This was kept under daily review.

In addition, his Department had established a Regional Prioritisation Oversight Group to ensure that clinical prioritisation of time critical and urgent cases across surgical specialities and Trust boundaries was consistent and transparent. The Group ensured also that the utilisation of all available capacity was fully maximised.

Whilst this may mean that patients were required to travel further for their surgery, the Minister would rather see the highest priority treatments delivered elsewhere in Northern Ireland, than not at all.

He had gone on to point out that, given the impact of Covid-19 on health service operating capacity, he had made it clear that all possible sources of additional capacity should be utilised. That had included securing theatre capacity from local independent sector health providers. From 1st April, 2020 to 7th February, 2021, approximately 4,300 patients had been treated by local HSC consultants in the three local independent sector providers. Provision for continued access to the three independent hospitals had been made until 31st March 2021 and would continue for the foreseeable future.

In addition to that, some capacity had been secured from private clinics in the Republic of Ireland and discussions were ongoing with NHS England for in-house and independent sector capacity for Northern Ireland patients.

The Minister had assured the Council that Trusts were working hard to maintain cancer care, in so far as that was possible during the current surge. That would include seeking to continue to maximise fully all available in-house HSC and independent sector capacity, both within and outside Northern Ireland.

He had added that it must also be recognised that cancer services had been in a challenging position before the pandemic. The pandemic had exacerbated the challenges but it had not created them. There was no doubt that some services would benefit from reform, but above all, there needed to be a commitment to significant and sustained investment.

The Minister had concluded by stating that he deeply regretted that anyone had had their surgery postponed or delayed.

The Committee noted the response.

**Motion: Child Poverty Task Force –
Response from Department for Communities**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker) and seconded by Councillor Whyte:

“This Council notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which shows that 122,000 children in Northern

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Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children.

This Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force and to identify regional policy with local outcomes, with a clear target, to eradicate child poverty.”

The City Solicitor reported that a response had been received from Mr. Michael Donnelly, Director for Central Policy, on behalf of the Minister for Communities.

Mr. Donnelly had explained that the Department for Communities was responsible for taking forward poverty policy on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. On 24th September 2020, the then Minister for Communities, Carál Ní Chuilín MLA, had announced the commencement of work on the development of a range of Social Inclusion Strategies, including an Anti-Poverty Strategy, as part of the commitments made under the New Decade, New Approach deal.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy would be developed using a co-design approach, with meaningful involvement from stakeholders at all stages of the process. In October 2020, an Expert Advisory Panel had been appointed and been tasked with producing recommendations on the key themes, priorities and headline actions which the strategy should address. A Co-design Group, with representatives from twenty-seven voluntary and community sector organisations, was helping to shape the development of the strategy and a Cross-departmental Working Group would be responsible for developing the associated action plan.

Mr. Donnelly had gone on to state that, in September, 2020, the Northern Ireland Executive had agreed to extend the 2016-2019 Child Poverty Strategy until May, 2022. The purpose of that extension was to allow time for key stakeholders to be consulted on whether the Anti-Poverty Strategy, covering all age groups, was sufficient or whether the development of a Child Poverty Strategy was also required.

He had pointed out that the most recent Child Poverty Annual Report, for 2019/20, which had been published on the Department for Communities website in September 2020, had outlined the measures which Departments were taking to ensure, as far as possible, that children did not suffer socio-economic disadvantage. The areas of focus and actions fell under four high level outcomes, namely, health, education, safe/secure stable living environments and economic well-being.

In view of the work currently taking place, the Department would not, therefore, propose convening an additional body, such as a Child Poverty Taskforce, at this time.

Mr. Donnelly had added that, in the course of the development of the Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Department for Communities would continue to engage with and listen to the

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views and ideas of those impacted by poverty and their representative organisations and would continue to work collaboratively across Departments to address their needs.

The aforementioned Anti-Poverty Co-design Group would, over the coming months, be assisting the Department for Communities to facilitate a number of feedback sessions to seek the views of stakeholders, in order to inform their decisions on a range of specific areas of the recommendations.

The Department also planned to host a session to obtain the views of district councils and would in the near future be writing to SOLACE with further details. There would also be a public consultation in the latter half of this year and the Department would welcome comments from the Council when this was published.

Mr. Donnelly had concluded by stating that, subject to Executive approval, it was planned that the Child Poverty Annual Report for 2020/21 would be published in March, 2021 and that an Anti-Poverty Strategy would be published in December, 2021.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Governance

Committee Motions – Quarterly Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of all motions for which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is recommended to

- i. note the updates on all motions for which the Committee is responsible; and**
- ii. agree to the closure of a number of motions, as referenced in Appendix 1 and noted in paragraph 3.8 below.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 At the Committee meeting on 25th October 2019, the following motion was agreed:

‘That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to motions and agrees that Belfast City

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Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly motion update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:

- 1. Date received**
- 2. Motion title**
- 3. Submitted by which Councillor**
- 4. Council meeting date**
- 5. Committee motion is referred to**
- 6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated**
- 7. Month it will be reported back to committee**
- 8. Other action to be taken.'**

- 3.2 As a first step, officers undertook a review of existing motions to ensure any that had been completed could be reported to Committee as closed before commencing the live database. This review was undertaken in 2020 and recommendations were brought to the Committee to close 69 motions.**
- 3.3 The remaining motions were added to a new database with all additional motions from this point in time now added to the database for quarterly reporting to the relevant Standing Committee. Appendix 1 is the first of the quarterly updates showing 54 currently active motions and Issues Raised in Advance which the Committee is responsible for.**
- 3.4 At the Committee meeting on 20th November, there was a query in relation to a missing motion on Abortion Imagery. Upon investigation, it was realised that the query raised was in relation to an Issue Raised in Advance at Committee rather than a motion. Members are asked to note that all outstanding Issues Raised in Advance at Committee have now been added to the database and will be regularly reported through this database.**

Motions Updates

- 3.5 The Committee is asked to note that, given the current pressures in responding to the pandemic, it has been difficult to afford the usual time towards progressing motions. Nevertheless, there has been progress in a number of motions.**
- 3.6 Likewise, given the nature of remote working at present, it has proven more difficult than usual to coordinate the updates across all departments. Members will note that estimated completion dates and Next Steps require further updates – these will be progressed and reported back at the next quarterly update.**

Closure of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance

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3.7 At the Committee meeting on 20th November, it was agreed that motions could be closed for one of two reasons:

- **Category 1 - Motions which contained an action that has been completed and recommend they are closed.**

All motions within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the motion. As these are not technically part of the motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The motion can, therefore, be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions are not contained in this report, but will be noted in the live database moving forward.

- **Category 2 – Motions which have become Council policy and recommend they are closed.** These notices of motion did not contain a specific task that could be complete. Instead, they were more strategic in nature and required changes in Council policy and/ or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.

3.8 The Committee is asked to agree that the following 13 motions be now closed:

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- **Regeneration Powers** (Ref number 42). This was an issue raised in advance at Committee on 24th January 2020 and had a specific task of writing to the Minister for the Department of Communities requesting that she consider again the transfer of regeneration powers to local councils. This task has been undertaken, along with further representation in regards to the devolution of powers to local government, including in the draft response to the PfG Outcomes Framework which is one the agenda for today's meeting.
- **Flying of the Flag on 19th February to mark the Birthday of the Duke of York** (Ref number 60). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.

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- **Celebration of Donor's Day** (Ref number 75). City Hall was illuminated pink to mark Donors' Day on 29th January 2021.
- **Light Up the City Hall Request - World AIDS Day, 1st December** (Ref number 81). City Hall was lit red to mark World AIDS Day on 1st December 2021.
- **New Lodge Bonfire** (Ref number 84). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.
- **Lighting Up City Hall for World Suicide Awareness Day on 10 September** (Ref number 94). City Hall illuminated on 10 September 2020.
- **Babyloss Awareness Week Virtual Book of Remembrance 9-15 October** (Ref number 109). Virtual Book of Remembrance arranged for 9 - 15 October 2020.
- **Unit Fees for St. George's Market** (Ref number 118). Members agreed to the setting up of rental relief for Council Tenants at a special committee meeting on 10th December 2020. The criteria and process around this has been left with officers to set and does not require to be sent back to Members. A draft approach is now being reviewed by legal, audit and others.
- **Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies** (Ref number 126). This was a time sensitive issue and the manner has now been resolved.
- **Illumination of Belfast Castle** (Ref number 133). Belfast Castle illuminated in blue on 29 November 2020.
- **Pay for Student Nurses** (Ref number 135). Response from Minister of Health noted by the Committee on 19th February 2021.
- **Funding for Palliative and End-of-life Care** (Ref number 141). Response from Minister of Health noted by the Committee on 19th February 2021.
- **Proposed Future Development - Writer's Square** (Ref number 155). Response from Minister for Communities noted by the Committee on 19th February 2021.

Category 2 Recommended Closures:

- **Report by the Environmental Audit Committee into the impact of disposable coffee cups in the UK** (Ref number

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5). This issue will be considered as part of the internal sustainability review being undertaken by KPMG on behalf of the Council under the Climate Adaption and Mitigation Plan.

- **City Tree Initiative** (Ref number 36). City Tree Initiative is being progressed as part of One Million Trees programme.
- **SUDS and the City** (Ref number 68). Council have made significant progress with Dfl in relation to the use of SUDS in Belfast, as evidenced by their extensive inclusion in the recent Living With Water in Belfast consultation document, including Distillery Street/Westlink. These will now be taken forward across Belfast in partnership between the Council, Dfl and NI Water, subject to funding being available.

3.9 Additional information in relation to these Notices of motion and Issues Raised in Advance are available in Appendix 1, a copy of which has been circulated.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Revision to Scheme of Allowances

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider amendments to the Council’s Scheme of Allowances to increase the rate of Basic Allowance, to increase the maximum rate of Special Responsibility Allowance, and to increase the maximum rate of Dependant’s Carers’ Allowance, in line with the National Living Wage for 2021-22.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is recommended to:

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1. consider whether it wishes to apply the increase in the Basic Allowance from £15,071 per annum to £15,486 with effect from 1st April, 2020;
2. consider whether it wishes to increase the total maximum Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) from the current £108,000 per annum to £117,774 as set out in Appendix 2 with effect from 1st April, 2020; and
3. approve the increase to the maximum rate of Dependants' Carers' Allowance as set out in the report, with effect from 1st April, 2021.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The Department for Communities issued a circular, LG 07/2021, which set out revised maximum limits for basic and special responsibility allowances with effect from 1st April, 2020.
- 3.2 The Committee, at its meeting in June 2019, agreed to apply the increase in the basic allowance from £14,200 per annum to the current £15,057. Local Government Circular LG 07/2021, dated 8th March, 2021, has increased the maximum basic allowance, which Councils may pay to Members, to £15,486 with effect from 1st April, 2020.
- 3.3 The Committee is also requested to consider whether to apply the increase to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) budget, with effect from 1st April, 2020. For a number of years, the Council has agreed a split in the special responsibility allowance budget so as to pay both the Chairpersons and the Deputy Chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Party Officers (Party Leader, Deputy Party Leader and Party Secretary – depending upon Party size). The current division of SRAs is set out in Appendix 1. If the increase in the overall budget is increased, a suggested split is set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.4 The Department for Communities determines the maximum hourly rates of Dependants' Carers' Allowance for both standard care and specialised care. The rate for standard care is based on the hourly National Living Wage for age 25+, which will increase on 1st April, 2021 from the current rate of £8.72 per hour to £8.91 per hour. The rate for specialised care is double the rate for standard care. In addition, the Department for Communities sets the maximum monthly amounts for standard care and specialised care, capped at the equivalent of 52 hours per month.

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3.5 Accordingly, in line with the increase in the National Living Wage, the Committee is requested to agree to the amendments to the Scheme of Allowances as follows:

3.6 “(iv) Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance

- Standard Care £8.91 per hour limited to £463.32 per month
- Specialist Care £17.82 per hour limited to £926.64 per month”

Financial and Resource Implications

3.7 The increase to the maximum rates of each of the allowances has already been considered and can be met through existing budgets.

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

3.8 There are not any Good Relations, Equality or Rural Needs issues associated with this report.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin,

That the Committee agrees to reject recommendations 1 and 2 within the report and to approve recommendation 3, that is, the increase in the maximum rate of Dependants’ Carers’ Allowance, with effect from 1st April, 2021.

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

The Committee subsequently approved the increases, as set out in recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the report.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Council Improvement Objectives for 2021-22

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the Committee with the draft corporate improvement objectives for 2021 - 2022 and to seek its approval to issue these

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for public consultation, in line with our statutory performance duty obligations.

2.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider the draft improvement objectives for 2021-22, and subject to any refinements, to authorise the public consultation required as part of the council's improvement duty.

2.2 The proposed improvement objectives for 2021-22 are as follows:

Our City
We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our city spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way
Our Services
We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term
Our Communities
We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
Our Economy
We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and support people into employment
Our Environment
We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
Our Digital Innovation
We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support jobs, our economy, sustainability and wellbeing

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1** We have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan, by 30th June each year. Last year, the Department for Communities (DfC) agreed to suspend the improvement plan process to enable councils to refocus efforts and reconfigure services to support the covid-19 pandemic response. However, DfC has now confirmed that an improvement plan will be required for 2021-22, including the requirement to consult with residents.
- 3.2** The Improvement objectives and plan does not include everything that council plans to do that year, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. For the past 4 years, we have aligned our improvement objectives to the key priorities within the Belfast Agenda. However, given the current situation and the lack of uncertainty around when restrictions might end, it is either no longer possible to deliver or sustain some of this activity. It is also questionable as to whether these improvement objectives would continue to be the highest priority for our residents and the city. For this reason, and to ensure focus remains on priority areas, we are proposing to realign the improvement objectives to the Belfast recovery plan published in September, 2020.
- 3.3** Our recovery plan has six main pillars, each helping to support our communities and economy to recover by building on our strengths and assets as a city and wider city region. Appendix 1 shows how these pillars have been adapted for our 2021-22 improvement plan and how it aligns to previous improvement objectives. Indicative areas of activity have been included for illustration. However, given the fluidity of the current situation, detailed activity and associated performance measures, the Strategy, Policy and Partnership Unit will work with services to refine the detailed actions and performance measures. Given current circumstances, we will take a pragmatic approach, which takes into account resourcing implications and covid restrictions. Activity will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. DfC are currently reassessing the statutory performance indicators in light of Covid; we await the outcome of this process.

Next Steps

- 3.4** Councils are legally required to consult on their improvement objectives and to publish an Improvement Plan by 30th June each year. Subject to approval, we will issue the improvement objectives for public consultation via our on-line engagement platform for a period of 8 weeks. However, it should be noted that resident feedback in relation to Belfast: Our Recovery

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yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfast-our-recovery has already informed the selection of the objectives and indicative actions. During this time, we will work develop detailed actions, milestones and performance indicators and factor in public feedback. A final report and draft improvement plan will be brought to SP&R for ratification and publication in June.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – agrees improvement objectives for consultation	19th Mar 2021
Improvement Objectives: 8 week consultation	22 Mar - 16 May 2021
Services refine actions and PIs	Mar - May 2021
SP&R approves Improvement Plan	18th June 2021
Publish Improvement Plan 2021 - 22	30th June 2020

Resources Implications

- 3.5 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. As some of our services continue to face significant pressures and budgets remain stretched, we have taken care to ensure that the improvement objectives align to the council’s recovery plan.

Equality Implications and Rural Needs

- 3.6 There are no equality or rural need implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Programme for Government Outcomes Framework –
Draft Consultation Response**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Committee with the draft response to the NI Executive’s draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework.

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2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- i. approve the draft consultation response for submission to The Executive Office, as set out in Appendix 2 and; and
 - ii. endorse the NILGA response to the draft PfG Outcomes Framework Consultation, as set out in Appendix 3.
- 2.2 Given the deadline for submission of responses by 22nd March, the Committee is asked to give delegated authority to officers to submit the agreed response before the deadline, noting that it is subject to Council ratification on 1st April.
- 2.3 To support the co-ordination of the new community plan with the completion of the Programme for Government it is proposed that the Council renews its contribution to the work of the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre for a 2 year period.

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 The NI Executive is developing a new strategic, Outcomes-based Programme for Government (PfG). The Executive's aim for the PfG is to deliver real, lasting and positive change in people's lives. This consultation is seeking opinions on the draft framework of nine Outcomes upon which the PfG will be built. Together these Outcomes create a picture of the kind of society we all want to live in.
- 3.2 The draft Outcomes are illustrated in the following diagram:

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- 3.3** The Framework focuses on the 9 Outcomes, each with a number of draft priority areas for focus and associated strategy documents. It should be noted that this is intended to be a high level document which, once finalised, will be followed by more detailed priority plans. It should, therefore, be seen as the first step in the development of a PfG, not the complete picture.

Draft BCC Response

- 3.4** A draft BCC response has been attached in Appendix 2, which contains feedback on individual outcomes, along with a number of suggested priority areas. In general, it is recommended that the Council supports the draft Outcomes – they are broadly in line with the Outcomes contained within the Belfast Agenda and the aspirations of our Recovery Plan.
- 3.5** The key elements of our response are focused on more overarching comments in relation the PfG, the need for better partnership working between the government departments and local government and the need for further devolution. A summary of our main comments are as follows:

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- **We encourage the NI Executive to recognise the important benefits a place based approach can bring and specifically recognise the importance of investing in the regional capital as a driver for economic regeneration for the entire region;**
 - **We recommend that the further devolution of neighbourhood services, regeneration and employability and skills powers would greatly help the public sector as a whole deliver on the aspirations articulated in the PfG Outcomes Framework;**
 - **We encourage greater collaboration between local government and government departments, in the planning, development, delivery and monitoring of interventions in order to increase their effectiveness for Belfast residents and, in turn, create a more cohesive society;**
 - **We strongly encourage the coordination of new community plans with the completion of the Programme for Government;**
 - **We strongly encourage the NI Executive to consider establishing a coalesced implementation body that can help coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Programme for Government and the 11 community plans for Northern Ireland;**
 - **We would welcome further detail on the timeframes for regular review and a commitment to involve key stakeholders in the review, including Belfast City Council;**
 - **We strongly encourage that key government strategies are reviewed in light of the new PfG to ensure they are still fit for purpose in the post Covid landscape.**
- 3.6 It is recommended that this response be submitted to The Executive Office, with the intent of following up with further communication as the PfG further develops.**
- 3.7 The Committee is asked to note that the deadline for submissions is 22nd March. In order to meet this deadline, the Committee is asked to give delegated authority for Officers to submit this consultation response in advance of full Council ratification. Should the Council not ratify the response, officers will ask for the response to be withdrawn as a formal submission.**
- 3.8 To support the co-ordination of the new community plan with the completion of the Programme for Government, it is proposed that**

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the Council renews its contribution to the work of the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre for a 2 year period, particularly in the post-Covid context. This will enable the Council to influence its research programme and support the connections between the new Programme for Government, community plan and the Belfast Region City Deal.

Endorsement of NILGA Response

- 3.9 Appendix 3 contains the draft response from NILGA, which has formally requested that this response is distributed through a council standing committee or full Council and to senior council policy staff, for feedback / support. The Committee is, therefore, asked to support the attached response from NILGA. It should be noted this response has been written as a regional response, designed to emphasise local government's collective view on what needs to change through the PfG and recognising that individual councils will have local and strategic priorities.

Resources Implications

- 3.10 The £40,000 contribution to the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre has been included in Departmental estimates.

Equality Implications

- 3.11 There are no equality implications in relation to our draft response.”

The Committee approved the Council's draft response to the Programme for Government Draft Outcomes Framework for submission to the Executive Office [here](#) and endorsed NILGA's response [here](#), as recommended within the report.

Inclusive Growth - Social Value Policy

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is update the Committee on the work of the Social Policy Working Group and in particular steps to progress social value procurement within the Council.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- i. agree to write to the Department for Communities Minister and the Chair of the NI Assembly Committee for Communities asking for legislation to be brought

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forward to enable increased powers for local government to introduce social value in procurement and requesting changes to be made to the existing 1992 Order as detailed in sections 3.5-3.7;

- ii. approve the amended terms of reference and the re-naming of the group to the Social Policy Member Working Group; and
- iii. approve and adopt the minutes of the Social Policy Members Working Group of 23rd February

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 In November 2020, members agreed to hold an initial workshop of the Social Value Members Working Group to lead the Council's work in relation to social value. Following the initial meeting on 29th January, the Working Group agreed to amend the group's Terms of Reference to reflect the need demonstrate further ambition in relation to the council's inclusive growth aspirations.
- 3.2 As part of the policy development journey to introduce social value procurement within the Council, officers developed a draft Social Value toolkit. The proposed toolkit provides a consistent approach to enable the measurement, monitoring and reporting of social value commitments within Council contracts and to, in as far as possible, deliver social value at scale. In developing the Toolkit, officers have built on the good practices already established in our procurement processes to support and develop our local supply base by ensuring improved awareness of opportunities, advice and guidance and removal of any barriers to tender.
- 3.3 Our message to our supply chain is clear – we want to do business with suppliers who have a strong people, environmental and ethical focus within their business. To that end the Toolkit includes:
 - Selection Criteria - This includes grounds for exclusions such as offences in relation to conspiracy, corruption, bribery, fraud etc. and compliance with Modern Slavery Act. These criteria are typically pass/fail minimum mandatory standards assessed at the tender evaluation stage and include: Ethical procurement policies and procedures; Environmental policies and procedures; and HR policies and procedures.
 - Award Criteria – These are additional interventions or actions that a supplier will deliver over and above the

supply of the goods/services/works and have been linked to the outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda.

- 3.4 What is permissible under procurement law, as selection and award criteria is not clear and impacted by the legislative picture in Northern Ireland. A Social Value Act was introduced in England and Wales in 2013 and in Scotland in 2014. It is essentially a requirement for the procurement of public services to consider wider social, economic, and environmental benefits. An equivalent Act, shaped to reflect the priorities of Northern Ireland has not yet been introduced.
- 3.5 Article 19 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 sets out restrictions on Council's freedom to consider various matters when procuring works or goods by declaring certain items 'non-commercial considerations' which can't be considered as part of a procurement process.
- 3.6 The Article includes a provision for the Department to make an order to the effect that any matter shall cease to be a non-commercial consideration. The Department has already done this through the Local Government (Exclusion of Non-commercial Considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015. This 2015 Order has therefore removed one of the constraints that the 1992 Order placed on Councils and means that it is permissible now for the Council to ask Contractors to, for example, employ apprentices.
- 3.7 This does, however, still leave exclusions in force. This could prove a considerable bar to the Council, as it will prevent the Council, as an example, specifying it wants goods or services supplied by a local supplier. There is a relatively straightforward procedure available to the Department to make an Order similar to the 2015 Order removing this exclusion. If this could be done, it would greatly widen the available options for the Council in seeking to ensure social value for Belfast through its procurements.

Resource Implications

- 3.8 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report.

Equality Implications

- 3.9 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report.”

After discussion, during which it was confirmed that the provision of a spend analysis and the expansion of the anchor institution network had been included within the Working Group's overall work plan, the Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that all Members be invited to attend the briefing by the Centre For Local Economic Strategies on community wealth building referred to within the minutes.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Alleygating Programme – Phase 5

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the next steps in the progression of Phase 5 of the Alleygating Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of the report and agree the next steps;
and
- ii. agree the funding allocation model across the city.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 The Committee will be aware that the Council has delivered to date four phases of the alleygating programme across the city which has seen the installation of 1081 gates with both Council funding and funding from external funders.

3.2 The total number of gates per area is currently:

North – 307
South – 278
East – 250
West – 246
Total – 1081

Capital Programme Commitment and Funding Allocation Model

3.3 Members will be aware of the Council’s decision as part of the 21/21 rate setting process that £500,000 will be made available from the Capital Programme for alleygates Phase 5 across Belfast.

3.4 The Committee is asked to consider how the total budget of £500K is allocated across the city.

3.5 It is not possible at this stage to give an approximate price for an average gate as there have been significant fluctuations in the

steel market and this will need to be formally priced by the supplier in due course. This information will be provided to Members at Area Working Group stage.

Alleygates Evaluation / Future Planning

3.6 Members will be aware that the People and Communities Committee has already agreed that the Council engage a suitably qualified contractor to under a review of the Alleygates Programme to date, specifically exploring the following:

- the benefits of the scheme within neighbourhoods and how the overall scheme performs against Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles;
- to review the current selection process and identify potential future options for selection of Alleygate locations taking in to account what has worked well and what could be improved to date;
- to examine if there has been any reduction in crime / return for investment in areas where there has been intense Alleygate installation;
- to examine whether there have been any long-term impacts or reduction in crime within gated areas in general;
- to identify opportunities to maximise the benefits of alleygating by working closer with other partners in the context of wider neighbourhood regeneration;
- to make recommendations about how to maximise the benefits and opportunities from the Alleygate Project, taking into consideration other Council work streams and external strategies;
- to consider the longer-term impact of the continuous alleygating investment to date in the city

3.7 It is more important to note that with the level of demand and Member priority attached to alleygating, that a medium-long term planning process and financing strategy will now begin to assess need and plan for a more significant roll out across the city following Phase 5.

3.8 The Committee is requested to note that this evaluation, and the future planning process, will be progressed simultaneously with Phase 5 Alleygates (as per the standing Phase 4 criteria).

Process for Agreeing Gate Locations

- 3.9 Members should note that the demand for gates throughout the city far outweighs the £500,000 available and, therefore, as part of the Full Business Case approval, it will be necessary to identify those areas to be considered for alleygating in order of evidenced need.
- 3.10 The agreed process for Phase 4 Alleygates recognised that official statistics do not always fully represent actual need, as crime and anti-social behaviour is often under reported in some of the areas of greatest need across Belfast.
- 3.11 Therefore, the process for agreeing the final list of streets to be gated was revised by the previous Health and Environmental Services Committee to include Area Working Group consideration of the evidence of need based on official statistics. Area Working Group Members would then use their local knowledge to enrich this evidence of need before making a formal recommendation to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.12 Before any engagement can take place with Area Working Groups in relation to potential gate locations, the Outline and Full Business Case must be developed to take this through to a fully committed capital project.
- 3.13 This combined with the time needed to complete the statistical analysis needed to inform Area Working Group discussions will mean it may be autumn 2021 before officers are in a position to bring forward reports to Area Working Group for discussion on potential gate locations.
- 3.14 Additionally, previous experience indicates that it can take a number of Area Working Group meetings to agree a final list of gate locations to be recommended to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.15 It is, therefore, not possible to give a detailed timeline at this stage, but for Members information the indicative timeline is provided below. Please note the timeline commences at the point at which Strategic Policy and Resources Committee/Council have agreed the gate locations.
- Start - Gate Locations Agreed by SP&R Committee and Full Council
 - Month 1 – Regulatory and Community Consultation Commenced
 - Month 3 – Regulatory Consultation Completed

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- **Month 4 – Community Consultation Completed**
- **Month 5 – Legal Preparation**
- **Month 7/8 – Notice of Intention Advertised**
- **Month 8/9 – Clarification of Objections**
- **Month 9 – People and Communities Committee Consideration of Traffic Regulation Order**
- **Month 10 – Full Council Approval of Traffic Regulation Order**
- **Month 10 – Gates Ordered**
- **Month 12/13 – Gates Manufactured and Installation Commenced**
- **Month 14 to 16 – Phase 5 Gate Installation Programme rolled out across the city**

3.16 Members should note that experience has also shown that not all agreed gate locations can be brought forward at the same time to Traffic Regulation Order stage due to objections as part of the community consultation process, not meeting the legal threshold of evidenced ASB to enact the legislation with further work needed and site suitability issues. Phase 4 Alleygates was brought forward to Traffic Regulation Order stage in four sub phases.

3.17 Members should also be aware timelines may be further delayed if the disruption caused by Brexit to supply chains for Alleygates material/parts continues and that orders must be placed with the contractor no later than 30th April ,2022 due to current contract end timescales.

Financial implications

3.18 Financial implications are detailed in the body of the report.

Equality, Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

3.19 An Equality Screening will need to be completed on alleygates Phase 5 in due course.”

During discussion, the Chief Executive confirmed that lists of streets which had been compiled by Members under previous phases would be included for consideration under Phase 5 of the alleygating programme.

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Councillor Groogan made a formal proposal that a scoring/evaluation matrix be developed for Phase 5, in order to ensure that there was transparency around all elements of the decision-making process.

In response, the Director of Neighbourhood Services pointed out that an evaluation of Phases 1 to 4 was ongoing and that its findings, including any relating to the decision-making process, would be used to inform the Council's approach to alleygating in the longer term. However, the evaluation had yet to progress to a stage where it could be used to fully inform Phase 5 and, should a decision be taken to wait until it was completed, it would significantly delay the commencement of that phase. He confirmed that there was an assessment process used for decision-making around prioritisation.

As there was no seconder for Councillor Groogan's proposal, it was not put to the meeting.

After further discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that the allocated budget of £500k for Phase 5 again be divided on an equal basis across North, South, East and West Belfast.

Update on Physical Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council's Physical Programme covers 170 current capital projects under 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. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Stage movements on the Capital Programme and to provide an update on contracts awarded for capital or capital-related works.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked –

- **To agree the following Capital Programme Movements:**
 - **IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement project moves to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted***
 - **IT Programme: Financial Replacement System project moves to *Stage 3 – Committed***
- **To note the update in relation to contracts awarded.**

3.0 Main Report

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial physical programme under a range of funding streams including the capital programme, BIF and LIF together with the projects that it is delivering on behalf of other agencies including the Executive Office, the Department for Communities and Department for Infrastructure. There are currently 170 live projects worth in excess of £120m, as well as 100+ early stage uncommitted projects and £300m+ of completed projects which still receive dedicated resourcing effort.

Proposed Movements - Capital Programme

- 3.2 Members agreed that all capital projects must go through a three stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to agree to the following movements on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage
IT Programme: Building Control System Replacement	Replacement ICT building control system to include building regulations, licensing, property certificates and addressing functions.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
IT Programme: Financial Replacement System	Replacement of the current SAP corporate financial system and support services which are nearing end of life.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed

Building Control Replacement System

Members are asked to agree that the IT Programme Building Control System replacement project is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme to allow the project to be further developed. Members are asked to note that further detail will be brought back to Committee in due course in line with the agreed three stage approvals process.

Financial Replacement System

Members are also asked to agree that the IT Programme Financial Replacement System is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*. The Council has reviewed the ongoing requirements of its current

financial system with the emerging outcome to replace the current system with a modern Financial System, which will enable streamlined, efficient processes, deliver accurate financial data, and provide seamless integration into and from other solutions. This offers the potential to reduce the number of systems that the council currently supports and the number of interfaces it manages. Any project which is being moved from Stage 2 to Stage 3 under the Capital Programme is required as part of the three stage approval process to complete an Outline Business Case. Members are asked to note that this has been completed and reviewed internally. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

3.3 Contracts Awarded

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in the attached appendix.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial – The final budget for the Financial Replacement System will be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation that it is within the affordability limits of the Council upon receipt of the tender return.

Resources – Ongoing running costs over a 10 year period to be confirmed

**3.6 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.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the North Belfast Area Working Group of 24th February and the West Belfast Area Working Group of 25th February, including the following recommendations from the West Belfast Area Working Group:

BIF Programme

BIF29 Greater Shankill Community Council - Royal British Legion

- to note the movement of the Greater Shankill Community Council – Royal British Legion project to Stage 2 - Uncommitted.

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LIF Programme

St. John's GAC

- to reallocate the remaining £17,000 to the St. John's GAC project.

Finance, Resources and Procurement

**CIPFA Prudential Code Capital Strategy and
Treasury Management Indicators 2021-22**

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

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the supporting Prudential and Treasury Codes produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), require the Council to consider the affordability and sustainability of capital expenditure decisions through the reporting of prudential and treasury management indicators.

1.2 The Prudential Code requires the Council to produce a Capital Strategy for 2021/22. This report provides information for Members on the Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators for Belfast City Council for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24, and the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of this report and the prudential and treasury management indicators included within the appendices to the report;**

and agree:

- **The Authorised Borrowing Limit for the Council of £154m for 2021/22; and**
- **The Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, which has been included as Appendix B to this report.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 requires the Council to adopt the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local

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Authorities. In doing so, the Council is required to agree a minimum revenue provision policy annually and to set and monitor a series of Prudential Indicators, the key objectives of which are to ensure that, within a clear framework, the capital investment plans of the council are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

- 3.2 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the 9 December 2011, Members approved the Council’s Treasury Management Policy which is based on the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Treasury Management Policy requires that a Treasury Management Strategy be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on an annual basis and that it is supported by a mid-year and year end treasury management reports.**
- 3.3 The Capital Strategy, incorporating the prudential indicators, is included as Appendix A, while the Treasury Management Strategy and treasury management indicators have been included as Appendix B.**
- 3.4 The comparison of ‘Gross Borrowing’ to ‘Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) is the main indicator of prudence when considering the proposed capital investment plans of the Council. Estimated gross borrowing should not exceed the CFR for the current year plus two years. The Council’s estimated gross borrowing position, illustrated in Table 6, Appendix A, is comfortably within the CFR in the medium term. The Director of Finance and Resources therefore considers the estimated levels of gross borrowing as being prudent.**
- 3.5 Table 9 (Appendix A) shows the estimated financing costs for capital expenditure as a percentage of the estimated net revenue stream for the Council, based on the medium financial plan. These illustrate that in the medium term, capital financing costs will represent 11.3% of the Council’s net running costs. On this basis the Director of Finance and Resources is satisfied that the level of capital expenditure is affordable.**
- 3.6 The Finance Act requires the Council to set an affordable borrowing limit, relating to gross debt. The Prudential Code defines the affordable limit as the ‘Authorised Borrowing Limit’ and gross borrowing must not exceed this limit. Table 7 (Appendix A) sets out the recommended ‘Authorised Borrowing Limit’ for the Council as being £154m for 2021/22.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 As detailed in the report**

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Equality or Good Relations Implications

3.8 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, in line with Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below;
- approved the modification of the contract term, in line with Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 3 below; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standard Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 1 - Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Tender for advanced expert knowledge and support in the event of IT security incident	up to 3 years	£60,000	R Cregan	Direct support of security appliances with direct connection to suppliers. In hours on call assistance and on-site support for security issues/incidents
Tender for the provision of 1100L euro bins and castors	one off purchase	£70,490	S Toland / R Black	Provision of 1100L euro bins & castors for commercial waste
Tender for the provision of laptops, docking stations and other IT peripherals	up to 1 year	£500,000	R Cregan	New devices and other peripherals to facilitate home working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle
Tender for the provision of dog kennelling facilities and related services	up to 4 years	£144,000	S Toland / R Black	Requirement to ensure council’s obligations under the “the Dogs (N.I.) Order 1983.”

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Belfast Safer Homes scheme including: home safety checks; equipment delivery; repairs; security assessments; security equipment fitting	up to 5 years	£500,000	S Toland	This is a joint project delivered in partnership with PCSP, BCC Older People budget (£20K) and external PHA funding. This is a health and wellbeing project which assists the Council in meeting its targets to address issues faced by older people in our community.
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Table 2 - Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Contract for the Information @ Work document management system	£105,000	R Cregan	Northgate PS
Contract for the support and maintenance and perpetual licences for the Housing Benefit system for NIHE (include recent legislation changes)	£856,800	R Cregan	Northgate PS
Contract for the NI Land & Property Services agreement	£150,000	R Cregan	Land and Property Services (LPS) NI
Contract for the Microsoft Premier Support	£180,000	R Cregan	Microsoft
Contract for the maintenance and support for SAP, SRM & VIM until financial systems replacement	£70,730	R Cregan	HCL Technologies
Contract for Clockwise System until replacement in HR/Payroll/T&A project implementation	£56,162	R Cregan	Softworks
Contract extension for 6 months for the removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hook lift containers (T1430 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed	£150,000	S Toland / R Black	Avenue Recycling
Contract extension for 9 months for the collection, storage,	£42,000	J Walsh	Morgan Document Security

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retrieval and destruction of office records (T629a contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst a formal procurement exercise is completed			
Contract extension for 2 years for £3.85m for the recycling collection service from 58,000 households on a weekly basis (T1200 contract) to ensure ongoing service delivery whilst economic appraisal of service is completed and a subsequent procurement exercise run.	£3.85m	S Toland / R Black	Bryson Recycling

Table 3 - Modification to Contract Term

Title of Contract	Supplier	Modification	SRO
Outline business case support for the Belfast Region City Deal Digital Pillar programme (T2042)	PWC	6 month extension.	R Cregan

Table 4 - Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Contract for the maintenance and support for eSourcing NI procurement system	up to 1 year	£31,799	R Cregan	Bravo Solutions

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership held on 8th March, including the recommendations:

PEACE IV

- to delegate authority to the Peace IV Programme Board to consider modifications to target delivery timescales for projects, subject to approval from the Special European Union Programmes Body.

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Good Relations

- that a further report be submitted to the Partnership outlining the current structures within the Council for working with groups aligned to those mentioned under the good relations duty and the following 'Hate Crime Categories' - disability, transgender identity and sexual orientation and how these should relate to the work of and representation on the Shared City Partnership.

**Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021
and 80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide an update on progress concerning the Decade of Centenaries Programme 2021; and
- provide further information on how the Council can mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021 in the context of Covid-19 restrictions.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i. note that Council has received £87,700 from the Shared History Fund, which is being by distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards the Council's Decade of Centenaries Programme;
- ii. consider the proposals contained in the report to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April 2021 with regard to the use of searchlights at City Hall and note the challenges in securing the use of the siren;
- iii. consider turning off the lights at City Hall on 15th April 2021, as referred to the Committee from the Council meeting on 1st March 2021; and
- iv. agree an amount of up to £800 towards the use of the searchlights/equipment on 15th April 2021.

3.0 Main Report

Decade of Centenaries Programme

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- 3.1 At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19th February 2021, Members were advised that an application requesting £87,700 had been submitted to the Shared History Fund which is being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The application was seeking funding for 4 projects which had been agreed by Council as part of the Decade of Centenaries Programme ; namely:**
- Drama and animation programme in mid June 2021
 - The restoration of the chairs in the Council Chamber, used by the King and Queen on the occasion of the inauguration of the NI Parliament in 1921
 - A digitised artefacts and stories project related to 1921 and;
 - A time capsule project
- 3.2 Members are advised that the Council’s application to the Fund has been successful, with the full amount requested being granted. Officers have already began work on the implementation of these projects.**
- 3.3 Members may wish to note that a panel discussion is being organized for March 26, from 12 noon – 2pm on the topic: ‘100 Years of Northern Ireland; How Has It Gone?’ This event is being run by ND Events and Tara Mills from the BBC has agreed to be our moderator.**

The panel for this event will consist of the following:

- Lord Paul Bew, Chair of the Centenary Historical Advisory Panel
 - Professor Mary E. Daly, UCD and Royal Irish Academy
 - Professor Thomas Hennessey, Professor of Modern British and Irish History, Canterbury Christchurch University.
 - Dr. Marie Coleman, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queens University Belfast.
 - Dr. Seán Byers, Researcher at Trademark Belfast and author of a number of pieces on trade unions, economic and political strategies
- 3.4 Each of the panel members have been asked to focus the topic from a particular angle.**

Registration for this event is here:

<https://ndevents.co.uk/bcccentenariesprogramme/>

80th Anniversary of the Belfast Blitz

- 3.5 At the last meeting of the Committee, Members agreed that in the current environment, and given that the Northern Ireland War Memorial (NIWM) are organising a range of creative activities including online lectures, work with schools, reminiscence projects which will reach a wider audience, Council would take the approach of supporting and promoting the programme in the following ways:
- Subject to restrictions, the Lord Mayor will take part in the annual laying of wreaths ceremony at City Cemetery and Milltown Cemetery on 15th April, on behalf of Council if small gatherings are permitted.
 - Lord Mayor to launch and/or promote the activities being planned around the anniversary.
 - Council Communications Team will liaise with the NIWM to ensure we promote the events and Lord Mayor could record an appropriate message as part of this promotion.
 - The NI War Memorial is planning to deliver reminiscence resource packs to care homes to mark the 80th anniversary. Council will liaise with the Museum to publicise the activity packs and the Lord Mayor will be involved in some capacity to be determined.
- 3.6 The Council also agreed to contribute up to £1,000 towards the printing costs of the school and care home packs.
- 3.7 Officers were asked to explore the possibility of including an air raid siren/searchlight within the programme and bring a report back to the Committee.
- 3.8 The Council has engaged with War Years Remembered who had previously provided an air raid siren and a searchlight for the 75th anniversary. However, while willing to be of help, at the time of writing, the organisation are not in a position to confirm if they can supply the equipment at this stage and Officers are still awaiting potential costs. The air raid siren which they previously supplied would only be heard in the environs of the City Hall grounds and the searchlight provided would not require permission from the Aviation Authority.
- 3.9 As a further option, officers have sourced a company which could provide two searchlights on the evening which could be seen across Belfast at a cost of £500. These would be more powerful

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than the previous searchlight used and would require that notice be given to the Aviation Authority.

- 3.10** In addition, at the March Council meeting, it was agreed that consideration would be given at the next meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to turning off the lights at the City Hall on 15th April to mark the anniversary.
- 3.11** Should Members approve the above action, the lights at the City Hall could be turned off at an appropriate time and the searchlights be turned on for a period of time which would be a significant visual representation for the commemoration of the anniversary.
- 3.12** Members may wish to note that the NIWM are also in the process of producing a Blitz Walking Tour booklet which will contain QR codes where information about the Blitz can be downloaded and the tour includes the NIWM, St Anne's cathedral among others, with the tour finishing at City Hall. Copies of the booklet will be made available at the City Hall to enhance the visitor offering.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

- 3.13** There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this event.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14** £1,000 has already been agreed from existing budgets and up to an additional £800 could also be covered from existing budgets for the above occasion."

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted that the Council had received £87,700 from the Shared History Fund, which was being distributed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, towards the Council's Decade of Centenaries Programme;
- ii. agreed to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz on 15th April with searchlights and an air raid siren at the City Hall, subject to appropriate equipment being sourced by Council officers;
- iii. agreed to turn off the lighting at the City Hall on 15th April; and
- iv. agreed to allocate an amount of up to £800 towards the use of the searchlights/equipment on 15th April.

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Operational Issues

**Minutes of the Meeting 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 11th March.

Minutes of the Meeting of Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel of 9th March.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Customer Focus Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group of 24th February.

James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a request had been received from Redhead Exhibition to install an interpretative interactive sign on a bollard facing the North West lawn in the grounds of the City Hall. The sign would form part of a James Connolly heritage trail in Belfast being funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

He reported that Mr. Michael Lyons, Assistant Director, Redhead Exhibition, was in attendance to outline the extent of the proposal and he was welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Lyons informed the Members that the James Connolly heritage trail had been designed as a walking tour and that it would be supported by an innovative augmented reality app, which would allow for the presentation of dynamic interpretative content via smartphone and tablet devices. The trail would commence in the grounds of the City Hall, as a natural meeting and focal point, and proceed, with stops being made at a number of buildings and areas of historical significance, to the Connolly family home opposite the City Cemetery on the Falls Road. It would, he pointed out, target local and international visitors and was being integrated into the City's tourism offering through Visit Belfast and other tourism centres.

He explained that Redhead Exhibition had been tasked with designing and installing thirteen signs for the trail, all of which would be 300 mm in diameter and of a consistent design. The sign in the grounds of the City Hall would, upon being activated virtually, create a virtual interpretative space which would set the cultural, economic, political and social context around the time of James Connolly's arrival in Belfast in 1911 as a Trades Union pioneer. All design, manufacturing and installation costs would be met by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. He concluded by inviting the Committee to accede to his request.

During discussion, a Member raised a number of issues around the proposal, such as the increasing number of tours which were now using the City Hall as a starting point and the potential for congestion, the setting of a precedent for further requests of this nature, the affixing of the sign to what was a listed building and the use on the sign of a symbol which

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had, in the past, been used by proscribed organisations. He made the point that the use of the sign would be limited to those occasions on which the grounds of the City Hall were open and suggested that it would be more effective if placed at a nearby public realm location, where it was more accessible or combined with other cultural tour signage nearby.

Other Members highlighted the benefits to be derived from the proposed James Connolly Trail and the need for the Council to develop a policy to deal with future requests of this nature was raised.

In response, Mr. Lyons confirmed that the interactive technology used in the sign was well advanced and would not be affected by crowds or other obstructions and added that the sign would be affixed to a post close to the main entrance, rather than on the façade of the building. He added that the symbol on the sign was a representation of that used by the Irish Citizen Army of trade union volunteers, of which James Connolly was a member, and was now part of the James Connolly Visitor Centre corporate brand.

After further discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst

That the Committee agrees to defer the request from Redhead Exhibition to install a sign in the grounds of the City Hall, as part of the James Connolly Heritage Trail, to allow for it to be considered by Party Group Leaders and agrees also that consideration be given to formulating a policy to deal with future requests of this nature.

On a recorded vote, eleven Members voted for the proposal and eight against and it was declared carried.

<u>For 11</u>	<u>Against 8</u>
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); Aldermen Dorrian, Haire, Kingston and Sandford; and Councillors Bunting, Groogan, McAllister, McDonough-Brown, McReynolds and Pankhurst.	Councillor Black (Chairperson); and Councillors Beattie, Carson, Garrett, Heading, Lyons, McLaughlin and Murphy.

The Committee noted that the City Solicitor would submit to a future meeting a report providing a legal opinion on the outcome of the independent Equality Impact Assessment which had, in 2012, been undertaken in relation to City Hall Memorabilia.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Working Group on the Climate Crisis**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 15th March.

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Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Autism Impact Champion

At the request of Councillor McMullan, the Committee adopted the following motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining how it might be progressed and resourced:

“As part of our commitment in the Belfast Agenda to become an accessible city for everyone and our further commitment to a COVID-19 response and recovery that is inclusive of disabled people, older people and carers, this Council will achieve Autism NI’s Autism Impact Award and become an Autism Impact Champion to ensure that every autistic individual feels welcome and comfortable accessing the range of services and facilities we offer.”

Chairperson