

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 21st May, 2021

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE 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; and
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Carson, Garrett,
Groogan, Heading, Lyons, McAllister, McDonough-Brown,
McLaughlin, McReynolds, Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

Also attended: 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 23rd April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th May, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) declared an interest in respect of items 3d – 10 Per Cent Pay Increase for Council Workers, on the basis that the response from HM Treasury made reference to the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration, which was relevant to his profession, and left the meeting whilst that item was being discussed.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following two 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.

**UK Community Renewal Fund
and Levelling Up Fund**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reminded the Members that the Government had, in its Budget in March, as part of its commitment to “levelling up” prosperity across the United Kingdom, announced a number of investment funds.

He submitted for, their consideration, a report which provided details of two of funds which were of particular relevance to the Council, namely, the Community Renewal Fund and the Levelling Up Fund and set out the Council’s approach and bidding plans in relation to them.

He provided information on the level of funding which Northern Ireland was likely to receive under the Community Renewal Fund and pointed out that support would be available for investment in skills, local businesses, community and place and/or supporting people into employment. Officers were currently preparing funding bids around skills development for the green economy, information technology and digital transformation for small businesses, details of which would be presented to the Committee ahead of the formal submission of an application by 18th June. Discussions were also taking place with SOLACE and with other councils to determine if a collaborative bid was possible ahead of the application deadline, with adjustments to be made, if required, to prevent duplication.

He highlighted the fact that officers had explored the potential for submitting bids in the investment in communities and place category, however, no projects were sufficiently advanced to allow for a submission by the deadline date. Funding for projects in this category could, he pointed out, be explored through other funding opportunities.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy went on to provide details of the Levelling Up Fund, which would allow for investment in infrastructure, local transport and cultural and heritage assets which would have a visible effect on people and communities. He confirmed that the themes for the first three rounds of funding would focus upon investment in transportation, regeneration and town centres and culture and outlined a number of challenges being faced by the Council for round one, primarily around the submission of applications, the challenging timeframe, the funding allocation and the need for clarity around the eligibility for future rounds.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

He recommended that the Members of the Committee:

- i note the contents of the report;
- ii endorse the three Community Renewal Fund bid proposals, as outlined, and agree that they be moved forward to application stage for submission by 18th June, 2021;
- iii grant approval for officers to adjust the number and scope of proposed Community Renewal Fund bids, should discussions with other councils on collaborative bid(s) provide the opportunity to provide improved outcomes for Belfast citizens; and
- iv agree that officers continue the development work to prepare suitable bid(s) for future bidding rounds of the Levelling Up Fund and that the Council does not submit a bid under Round 1 of the Levelling Up Fund, in light of the considerations which he had outlined.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations and to approve any eligible projects which might come forward in relation to the investment in communities and place category, in advance of the submission date.

UNESCO City of Music Status

(Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, attended in connection with this item.)

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism informed the Members of the Committee that, in order to become a Member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, candidate cities were required to submit a detailed application outlining clearly their willingness, commitment and capacity to contribute towards the objectives of the Network. The Network covered seven creative fields, namely, Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music.

She reported that, following an initial scoping exercise and assessment against the criteria, it had been agreed that music represented the most appropriate designation for Belfast and referred to the ten-year cultural strategy 'A City Imagining', which included a commitment to bid for UNESCO City of Music status by 2021.

She explained that the strategy sought to recognise the transformative power of music for individuals, communities and the City as a whole and referred to the positive results of an economic impact assessment of the cultural and creative industries and the music sector on Gross Value Added, employment and job creation.

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, reported further that a City of Music Steering Group, with representation from different sectors and genres, had been formed

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

to design and implement the process, in conjunction with the Council, and she reviewed the wider engagement which had taken place to date. In addition to setting out the detail on the City's sustainable agenda and details on the creative profile of the City, the application for City of Music status also included a commitment to deliver six cross-cutting initiatives, focusing on the themes of City Development, Creativity and Learning, Inclusion and Access and Sustainability and Environmental Responsibility. She provided an overview of three initiatives which would be delivered at a local level and of three internationally and outlined the next steps in the process, which would lead ultimately to the submission of an application to UNESCO by 30th June, 2021.

She then provided a breakdown of the annual programme and one-off project funding requirements which, in terms of the Council, would total £650,000 and confirmed that provision had been made within the current Departmental budget and estimates for future years.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of the report and approve the allocation of funding to support the initiatives set out within the application for City of Music status.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

(The Members of the Committee agreed, given that the following three reports were closely linked, to consider them simultaneously.)

Motion - Statue of Mary Ann McCracken

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 4th May, the following motion had been proposed by The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) and seconded by Councillor Nicholl:

"This Council resolves to install a statue of Mary Ann McCracken in the grounds of the City Hall."

The High Sheriff explained that Mary Ann McCracken was a Presbyterian, a member of the United Irishmen and eminent business woman who was renowned for her work on women's rights, child education and living conditions, prison reform and the anti-slavery movement in the City, as well as her promotion of traditional music.

He pointed out that the grounds of the City Hall were not reflective of modern day Belfast, in terms of recognising women and those from a nationalist/republican background, and highlighted the need to address this imbalance, in the context of the recommendations resulting from the Equality Impact Assessment which had, in 2012, been undertaken in relation to the City Hall and the City Hall Grounds.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the motion and that it be considered further in the report later in the meeting on installations in the City Hall/City Hall Grounds.

Installations - City Hall/City Hall Grounds

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 In November 2012, the Council received an independent Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) relating to the City Hall and City Hall grounds. This EQIA was carried out in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Council’s Equality Scheme. This EQIA underpinned the decision to relocate memorabilia into the exhibition, allowing it to be seen and understood in a different way. Whilst the relocation of the artefacts and memorabilia from various parts of the City Hall into the exhibition space addressed the issue of the City Hall itself, in terms of the EQIA, the EQIA also applied to the City Hall grounds, in respect of which no steps have been taken to address the report’s findings that there is a need to provide a contemporary image of the City, reflective of its vibrancy and diversity.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval on a number of issues related to installations and future installations in City Hall and City Hall grounds.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:
- i approve the installation of a statue of Winifred Carney, the final form of this statue to be brought back to Committee for approval, as part of the Capital Programme (approval is being sought through the Physical Programme paper to move this to Stage 2 under the Capital Programme);
 - ii approve the installation of a plaque commemorating Sir Edward Carson and the signing of the Ulster Covenant;
 - iii establish a Member Working Group to consider and agree commissions for future installations in City Hall or City Hall grounds; and
 - iv note the ongoing discussions in respect of statues in the City Hall grounds and the development of a contemporary installation styled as a community arc.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Discussions have been ongoing at Party Group Leader level in relation to the installation of additional statues within City Hall grounds. This is in the context of the EQIA referred to in the introduction to this report and the need to achieve a greater level of balance in terms of the persons who are depicted or represented within the grounds. One such figure promoted as being a person of significant historical importance, viewed by many as worthy of being commemorated, is Winifred Carney. In the context of the EQIA and not in any way to undermine her historical importance, Winifred Carney goes some way to providing the balance that the EQIA recommends. She does so as a woman, as a Trade Unionist representing workers and as an Irish Nationalist and Republican. Notably she was married to George McBride, a prominent member of the UVF. At Party Group Leaders there was some discussion as to whether this relationship needed to be covered in terms of the statue or referenced in some narrative. A copy of the Redhead report relating to a Winifred Carney installation has been circulated. Members are asked to note that approval to move this to the next Stage (Stage 2) under the Capital Programme is on the agenda for today's Committee as part of the Physical Programme report.
- 3.2** At the time that the relocation of memorabilia to the exhibition was agreed there was, as part of that arrangement, a commemorative tile to be installed marking the place at which Sir Edward Carson stood when he signed the Ulster Covenant. Discussions took place with HED as the City Hall's listing would require consent for the installation to go forward. HED took issue with the installation and the tile, asserting that it would break the symmetry of the marble in the reception area. As it has not been feasible to proceed, officers are presenting an alternative proposal which would be the erection of a plaque within the reception area commemorating the place at which the Ulster Covenant was signed by Edward Carson. An example of the type of plaque and its proposed location appears in the Redhead report has been circulate to Members.
- 3.3** Members will be aware that decisions have already been taken supporting the installation of two stained glass windows representing the LGBT community and the NHS. Discussions are ongoing at Party Group Leaders in respect of future installations to include Mary Ann McCracken (which is the subject of a NOM), Grace Bannister, Inez McCormack, Robert McAdam and Paddy Devlin.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- 3.4** These discussions will continue with a view to getting to a settled list which will then be developed into a programme. For this and the other installations work will have to be undertaken to establish commissions in order to allow the installations to proceed subject of course to funding. Members were also presented with a proposal for a municipal arc type installation sitting within a contemporary modern design. The arc has a more dynamic type use in that the panels can be changed to promote different content or themes.
- 3.5** Given the extent of these proposals going forward Members are asked to consider establishing an All-Party Working Group to engage in the commissioning and design of these installations. Final decisions on commissions would of course be taken through Committee in the normal way for approval.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6** No approvals are sought at this time in respect of funding. The installations referred to will have to be included within the Capital Programme and taken through the established procedures for approval.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7** Any decisions in respect of the installations referred to would require to be subject to an equality screening or an EQIA if found to be necessary.”

During discussion, a Member requested that consideration be given to including within discussions the potential for installing in the grounds of the City Hall a statue in recognition of Isabella Tod, who was noted for being a dedicated social reformer on behalf of women and those experiencing poverty, as well as a suffragist and the person who had secured the admission of women to Queen's University.

He highlighted her links to the Council by pointing out that, in 1888, when a new city-status municipal franchise for Belfast had been granted, she had ensured that the vote had been conferred on persons, including women, rather than solely on men. She was, therefore, a deserving candidate and the proposal would assist in addressing the under-representation of tributes to women in the grounds of the City Hall.

He went on to welcome the proposal contained within the report that a plaque be erected within the reception area of the City Hall to commemorate the place where Sir Edward Carson had signed the Ulster Covenant. However, he requested that consideration again be given to placing an inscription on a single tile on the exact spot where he had stood.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report and:

- i to approve the installation of a statue of Mary Ann McCracken in the grounds of the City Hall, the final form of which would be submitted to the Committee in due course for approval, as part of the Capital Programme; and
- ii to refer to the Party Group Leaders the requests for the installation of a statue of Isabella Tod in the grounds of the City Hall and for a tile to be inscribed marking the spot in the entrance area of the City Hall where Sir Edward Carson had stood when signing the Ulster Covenant.

Update on Physical Programme

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/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 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.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:**

- **City Hall Statues - Move ‘City Hall Statues - Winifred Carney’ to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme; and**
- **City Cemetery Project - note the update provided on the appointment of a mapping and genealogy software specialist.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 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**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

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 Movement - 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
City Hall Statues – Winifred Carney	The creation of new statues within the grounds of City Hall. One of the pieces is to be a representation of Winifred Carney .	Move to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i>

Members will be aware that the overarching City Hall Statues project was approved at SP&R Committee in January 2020 as a *Stage 1 - Emerging* project on the Capital Programme. Members are asked to recommend that one element of the statues, Winifred Carney, is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme. Further detail on this is contained with the '*Installations – City Hall/City Hall Grounds*' report which is also on the agenda for discussion by the Committee at its meeting on 21st May. An Outline Business Case (OBC) will now be worked up on the proposal with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

- 3.3 **City Cemetery Project – Mapping and Genealogy Software Specialist**

Members will be aware that the City Cemetery project was approved at the SP and R Committee in August 2018 as a *Stage 3 – Committed* project on the Capital Programme. The project is designed to protect and enhance the rich heritage within the cemetery, and incorporates a number of elements such as the development of a new visitor centre, restoration of key heritage assets and enhanced interpretation. Members are asked to note that the specialist company Plotbox will now be appointed

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

under delegated authority, with the costs to be met from the overall capital project budget.

3.4 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial – City Cemetery Project – costs will be drawn from the existing project budget

Resources – officer time to deliver as required.

3.5 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report and, in line with its earlier decision, to move City Hall Statues – Mary Ann McCracken to Stage 2 Uncommitted on the Capital Programme.

Motion - War Years Remembered

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 4th May, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Pankhurst and seconded by Alderman Copeland:

“This Council notes the priceless and globally renowned work of War Years Remembered, as well as the impact which COVID-19 has had on the museum.

Consequently, given the importance of not only preserving our social and military history as well as offering educational lessons that offer excellent ways of building bridges between communities, including ethnic minorities, this Council agrees to engage with War Years Remembered on finding a suitable solution to their current struggles, including a proposed relocation to Belfast.

This Council agrees that such a move would be beneficial not only to our city’s economy and attractiveness through local tourism, but also through the provision of education to our schools, colleges and local community groups.”

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

Councillor Pankhurst provided details of the various historical artefacts contained within the War Years Remembered Museum and pointed out that some of those had been placed on display at the event which had taken place on 15th April in the City Hall grounds

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

to mark the 80th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz. He explained that the owner was experiencing a number of challenges around the operation of the museum and that he was seeking to relocate it from a warehouse several miles away into Belfast. He highlighted the significant benefits which such a move would bring, in terms of raising awareness, attracting visitors and supporting the economy and urged the Members of the Committee to grant approval for Council officers to enter into discussions with the owner on the future of the museum.

Alderman Kingston then spoke in favour of the proposal.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to submit to a future meeting a report on the outcome of those discussions.

**Motion - Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures –
Response from Managing Director Northern Ireland**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st April, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McAteer and seconded by Councillor Gormley:

“This Council:

- notes the plans announced by Bank of Ireland to close 103 branches across the island of Ireland, including three in South Belfast;
- notes the expectation set by the Financial Conduct Authority that banks should assess customer needs and consider the availability and provision of alternative arrangements where closures are planned;
- notes the concern expressed by the Financial Conduct Authority that it may be more difficult than usual to reach all customers under the current restrictions and engage with them on closure proposals effectively;
- supports the call from the Financial Services Union that there should be no closures of branches during the pandemic and its call for a moratorium on closures until the end of 2022; and
- agrees to write to the CEO of Bank of Ireland to call for such a moratorium.”

The City Solicitor informed the Members that a response to the motion had been received from Mr. I. Sheppard, Managing Director, Bank of Ireland Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sheppard stated that he understood the concerns which had been expressed around the proposed branch closures and stressed that the decision had not been taken lightly. He explained that Bank of Ireland had undertaken a thorough analysis of its services, including branch usage, the growth in online banking and the range of services

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

which it could offer through the Post Office network, and had highlighted the fact that 52% of counter services provided to Bank of Ireland customers in Northern Ireland were already carried out at a local Post Office.

He pointed out that the trend towards digital banking had been evident for more than a decade and had been accelerating since 2017. Given the clear changes being seen in customer behaviour, Bank of Ireland was not, therefore, in a position to change its approach in relation to branch closures.

He explained that the bank was committed to ensuring that customers were fully informed of the alternative arrangements available to them and highlighted mobile, on line and telephone banking services, and the option to use remaining Bank of Ireland branches and the Post Office. Full details of these arrangements were contained in a letter and a branch impact analysis which had been sent to customers of those branches in Belfast which had been identified for closure. The branch impact analysis documents had also been published on the bank's website.

Mr. Sheppard referred to the fact that Bank of Ireland customers could, at their local Post Office, make lodgements of cash and cheques, withdraw cash and make balance enquiries. Business customers would, later this year, also be able to use nominated Post Office outlets to access enhanced services, such as cheque encashment, bulk cash lodgements and obtaining pre-ordered coinage. The bank would again be writing to its customers before and after each branch closed. In addition, branch teams would be making proactive calls to those customers who may need additional support and would meet with them in branch, if required.

He added that Bank of Ireland was engaging fully with its Regulators on the closure of the branches, including the communication of its decision analysis, its consideration of the impact of the closures on customers and businesses and the alternative arrangement which had, or would be, put in place. In line with guidance, it had also considered the impact on customers of the closure dates, should lockdown measures be in place at that time.

He stressed that Bank of Ireland was committed to Belfast and that the outcome of the strategic review of its business had underlined its commitment to providing financial services in Northern Ireland in the long term. However, it needed to restructure its business to respond to the significant and accelerating changes in customers' banking requirements. It was, therefore, focusing on a smaller, better equipped branch network and investing in technology improvements, which would mean that it could continue to play a strong role in Northern Ireland for the years to come.

Mr. Sheppard had concluded by pointing out that Bank of Ireland would be investing in its remaining branches and technology in order to improve customer service across its business. It was also relocating its Head Office from London to Belfast, which again underlined its long term commitment and would, in time, provide employment opportunities by securing talent from local Universities, apprenticeship schemes and the wider community, which had recognisable banking expertise.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the response.

**Motion - 10 Per Cent Pay Increase for
Council Workers – Response from HM Treasury**

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

“Over the last year, councils have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local Government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is.

But the pandemic has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income and the Government has failed to provide the full amount of promised support.

Local Government workers have kept our communities safe throughout the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health and deliver functioning services during this difficult time.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 23 per cent of their value since 2009/10. At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity.

The funding gap caused by Covid-19 will make local government employment even more precarious. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Westminster Government were to fully fund the unions' 2021 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

The Council believes that:

- our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need, and ensure services continue to function. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services would not be deliverable. Local government workers deserve a proper real term pay increase; and

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- the Government should take responsibility to fully fund this increase, it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding streams have greatly suffered and who have not been offered adequate support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- support the pay claim submitted by Trade Unions representing all public sector staff for a substantial increase;
- to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for a pay increase for public sector workers to be funded with new money from central government;
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the Council can support the campaign; and
- encourage all staff to join a union."

The City Solicitor drew the Members' attention to a response to the motion which had been received from HM Treasury, on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The response had stressed that the Government recognised that public sector workers played a vital role in the running of public services and referred to their commitment in keeping the public safe during the pandemic. It hugely valued and appreciated the dedication of all key workers and was working hard to ensure that they felt supported and safe to continue that work.

Throughout the current crisis, the Government had sought to protect people's jobs and livelihoods and to support businesses and public services across the UK and had spent over £352 billion since the start of the pandemic to do so. Since March 2020, it had helped to pay the wages of people in 11.4 million jobs across the country, through the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme, protecting jobs which might otherwise have been lost, and had supported the livelihoods of 2.7 million self-employed workers. However, given the unprecedented impact of Covid-19, unemployment and redundancies were rising in the private sector. Employment in the public sector had not, however, been affected to the same extent.

The response had gone on to state that, prior to Covid-19, those working in the public sector were, on average, already receiving better remuneration packages than their counterparts in the private sector, with the Office for National Statistics estimating that public sector workers were paid 7% more than those in the private sector, having taking into account other factors, including pension contributions.

In order to protect jobs and ensure fairness, the Government had confirmed in the 2020 Spending Review that there would be a pause to headline pay rises for the majority of public sector workforces in 2021-22. Performance pay, overtime, pay progression and pay rises from promotion would continue for all workforces where such arrangements existed,

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

However, given the unique impact of Covid-19 on health services, and despite the challenging economic context, the Government would continue to provide for pay rises for over 1 million NHS workers. In setting the level for these rises, it would need to take account of the challenging fiscal and economic context. The NHS Pay Review Body and the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration would, as usual, make their recommendations later this year.

The response had concluded by stating that it had been correct to temporarily pause pay awards for the rest of the public sector earning £24,000 and above on a full-time equivalent basis, whilst the Government assessed the impact which the Coronavirus had had on the wider economy and labour market. If it were to carry on with blanket, across the board pay rises, the existing gap between public sector reward and the private sector would widen further. This approach would allow it to protect investment in public services, as the Coronavirus continued to have an impact. The Government would protect the lowest paid, with 2.1 million public sector workers earning less than £24,000 (Full Time Equivalent) receiving a minimum £250 increase.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the response.

**Motion - Support for Sign Languages Act and the Addition of
Languages to School Curricula – Response from Ministers**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st April, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McMullan and seconded by Councillor Heading:

“This Council notes that 15th – 21st March was Sign Language Week, timed with the anniversary of the UK Government formally recognising British Sign Language as a language in its own right on 18th March 2003. However, in 2021 neither British Sign Language nor Irish Sign Language have legal status in Northern Ireland nor are sign languages part of school curricula.

This means at present, that deaf people must rely on the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (NI) (1995) to secure reasonable adjustments via sign language provision. In order to do so, deaf people are required to identify as ‘disabled’, in sharp contrast to their right to recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

This Council believes that there is a need to create a more accessible and inclusive society in Northern Ireland, through greater learning of sign languages and awareness of Deaf culture.

It further notes this Council's previous support for the Belfast Statement on Mental Health and Deafness following the 6th World Congress, which met in Belfast in September 2014, to address issues around equal rights for

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

deaf people in mental health care under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Noting the rights of deaf people to recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this Council expresses its support for the introduction of a Sign Languages Act for Northern Ireland. Further noting Article 24(b) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that requires the State to facilitate the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community, the Council expresses its support for sign languages to be added to school curricula to ensure that all children learn from the earliest opportunity.

Therefore, the Council will write to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Education to ask when the New Decade, New Approach commitment to a Sign Language Act will be brought forward and further asks that this legislation includes provision for sign languages to be added to the Key Stage 1 and 2 Curriculum, with schools equipped to deliver these courses, as well as the introduction of sign languages as a GCSE for secondary school pupils."

The City Solicitor informed the Members that a response to the motion has been received from Mr. P. Weir, Minister for Education, and from Mr. T. McAuley, Acting Head of Sign Language Policy Team, on behalf of the Minister for Communities.

Minister Weir had stated that there was currently no statutory requirement for pupils to learn sign language in schools in Northern Ireland. However, young people should be given opportunities to engage with and demonstrate the skill of communication and to transfer their knowledge about communication concepts and skills to real-life meaningful contexts across the curriculum. Pupils were encouraged to become effective communicators by using a range of techniques, forms and media to convey information and ideas creatively and appropriately. Therefore, schools may choose to introduce sign language in this context.

He had pointed out that the curriculum was broad and balanced and that it provided schools with considerable flexibility to adapt what they taught and to use approaches which best suited the learning needs of their pupils. This flexibility afforded the freedom to include learning opportunities, such as sign language, should a school consider this to be a priority for its pupils.

He had gone on to explain that any changes in the current curriculum to make sign language a statutory requirement at Key Stage 1 and 2 level would require a legislative change to the 2007 Minimum Content Order. His officials were liaising with their counterparts in the Department for Communities, which had lead responsibility for taking forward the new Sign Languages Act, to discuss the impact and operational practicalities of the new Act.

The Minister had concluded by stating that, in terms of introducing sign languages as a GCSE qualification at post primary level, the Department for Education (England) was

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

developing content for a potential British Sign Language GCSE and hoped to consult on this later in the year. Following a period of consultation and approval of a qualification by Ofqual, it would then be available for delivery by centres in Northern Ireland. However, it was not possible to provide an accurate timescale for the potential rollout of this qualification at this time.

Mr. McAuley had confirmed that Minister Hargey had welcomed the Council's interest in this matter and was fully supportive of the need to create a more accessible and inclusive society in Northern Ireland, through greater learning of sign languages and awareness of Deaf culture. The Minister remained committed to the introduction of Sign Language legislation, built upon the principles of equality and social inclusion, to ensure that the Deaf community here had the same rights and opportunities as those in the hearing community and were able to access services in their own language.

He had explained that the Sign Language Policy Team had, over the past few months, been engaging with the Deaf community to outline the legislative timeframes and the options which had been considered for bringing forward a Bill, both in this mandate and the next, in the context of the challenges presented by Covid-19. The Department had taken on board feedback from the Deaf community, not only of the need for legislation, but, more importantly, of the need for the right legislation which would make a difference to their lives, even if it took more time to do so.

Whilst the Minister would have preferred to introduce legislation in the current mandate, responding to the pandemic had reduced the time available to do so. Therefore, despite the best efforts, a Sign Language Bill had not been included in the Department's Primary Legislation Timetable schedule for the remainder of this mandate. The Minister had recognised that this news would be viewed with disappointment and had directed officials to continue their engagement with the Deaf community to ensure that their views continued to be represented as work towards a future Sign Language Bill in the next mandate progressed. That would include continued engagement with the Council's Language Officer with responsibility for BSL and ISL.

Mr. McAuley had then addressed that part of the motion referring to "the need to create a more accessible and inclusive society in Northern Ireland, through greater learning of sign languages and awareness of Deaf culture" by pointing out that the Department's work with the Deaf community promoted respect and understanding of BSL and ISL and Deaf culture.

He had then highlighted the fact that the Department for Communities funded multiple BSL and ISL courses, such as Family Signing Language courses for families with deaf children, to learn together to enhance the crucial early years' communication which was the foundation for better life outcomes, including academically and emotionally. It also funded some Deaf awareness and sign language classes at primary and secondary school level, as well as some BSL and ISL courses at Levels 3,4 and 6, which were a requirement for a career in, for example, interpreting and translating. Projects and initiatives to promote the awareness of BSL/ISL and Deaf culture to local hearing communities and voluntary and community groups were also funded. He had pointed out that all of these courses were accessible across Northern Ireland and that many beneficiaries resided within the Belfast City Council area.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

Mr. McAuley had then made reference to the Council's previous support for the Belfast Statement on Mental Health and Deafness, following the 6th World Congress, to address issues around equal rights for deaf people in mental health care. He had concluded by stressing that the Department for Communities had been pleased to partner with the conference organisers and support the conference through funding to meet the significant costs of interpreting and translating.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the responses.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Update on Belfast Region City Deal

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), including an update on the development of Outline Business Cases (OBCs) and progress on the development and agreement of the Deal Documentation to allow phased delivery to commence.**

2.0 Recommendations

The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- note the programme overview and the progress that has been made in Outline Business Cases (OBCs) development for all projects, as detailed in the appendix accompanying the report;**
- note the development of the deal document, based on the agreed approach to delivery of a phased deal; and**
- note the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel and the minutes of the BRCD Council Panel held on 29th January 2021.**

3.0 Main Report

Programme Overview

- 3.1 In February, the Committee received a detailed update on progress across the programme and on the ongoing discussions between partners and the NI and UK Governments in relation to agreeing a phased deal, which recognises the**

varying states of readiness of projects across the programme. The NI Delivery Board, which oversees all the City and Growth Deals in NI has agreed this approach in principle, with approval of expenditure being sought for the most advanced projects in parallel with the deal document being developed. Members will be aware that the development and agreement of the deal document is critical to allow money to flow to the BRCD projects.

Deal Document

- 3.2 Over the past few months work has continued at pace and a draft Deal document has been developed based on content suggested by the UK Government in line with previous deals. The PMO has reviewed a number of deal documents to ensure the language and level of detail within the BRCD document is consistent with previous deals.
- 3.3 It builds on the BRCD initial proposition and the Heads of Term document signed in March 2019. However, the draft deal document also recognises that previous plans were agreed before the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the programme and its projects have been reviewed in light of the new economic challenges and outlines how the proposals have proven to be essential to plans for the recovery of the region.
- 3.4 The overarching deal document is supported by both an Implementation Plan and Financial Plan, which both also have to be agreed by the partners with the NI and UK government departments. These documents are also being developed as set out below.
- 3.5 The Implementation Plan provides detailed information on the projects including key milestones, financial information and funding flows, risks and outcomes. This information is being collated from the OBCs through programme assurance work undertaken by KPMG and through engagement with Partners. It should be noted that Implementation Plan forms the basis of the monitoring and reporting for each project.
- 3.6 The Financial Plan sets out the overall financial framework including stewardship, protocols and controls and the role of the accountable body. The plan also details the financial forecasts and predicted funding flows and timelines and forms the basis of the financial reporting and profiling arrangements. A first draft of the financial profiles based on the OBCs was sent to the Department of Finance in advance of the March meeting of the NI Delivery Board. A further iteration will be developed following the programme assurance work being completed by KPMG.

- 3.7 Discussions are now ongoing with UK and NI Governments to agree a timeline and process for negotiation and approval of the key documents, in parallel with formal consideration of OBCs.

Investment Priorities

Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.8 As previously outlined the Tourism and Regeneration programme recommends seven projects for inclusion in the Deal Document. These are Belfast Destination Hub, Bangor Waterfront, Destination Hillsborough, Carrickfergus Regeneration, The Gobbins, Mourne Mountain Gateway and Newry Regeneration. Since the last update to committee in February, Outline Business Cases (OBC's) for all these projects have now been submitted for consideration by the relevant government departments.

Innovation

- 3.9 OBCs for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) and Screen Media and Innovation Lab (SMIL) have been formally submitted to NI and UK Governments. SMIL has been through its casework review, with casework reviews for AMIC and I-Reach currently taking place. An updated OBC for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) will be submitted for approval to Executive Board in June in advance of submission to the NI and UK Governments. This will mean that all five Innovation OBCs, all of which are at an advanced stage of development, will have been formally submitted for approval.

Digital

- 3.10 The draft Digital Innovation Programme Business Case and the OBC for i4C digital innovation project have been submitted to NI and UK Government for review and consideration and feedback has been received which is currently being addressed through a series of workshops and written responses. A revised programme business case is currently being finalised and when approved through the BRCD structures will be formally submitted to the NI and UK governments. As previously reported the programme business case will prioritise a flexible 'funds-based' approach with the increased use of Challenge Funds alongside capital funding to support connectivity and other enabling infrastructure in order to support digital innovation. It will also ensure that innovation

support reaches priority sectors across the region, through investment in Regional Innovation Hubs.

Infrastructure

- 3.11 An OBC has been completed for the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge and interim OBCs have been prepared for the Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 and the Newry Southern Relief Road, due to the very early stage of their development, in advance of the necessary consultations on route development. Members will be aware that there is currently insufficient funding within the BRCD funding envelope to deliver all three projects and discussions are ongoing with the Department for Infrastructure and Department of Finance on proposals for an Infrastructure pillar level budget to allow projects continue to the next stage of development as part of the phased deal approach.

Employability and Skills (E&S)

- 3.12 The draft Employability and Skills Proposition is currently being finalised following a detailed engagement process with partners and key industry stakeholders. It incorporates three core component elements of an Employability and Skills Partnership (including an E&S Hub), a core E&S programme and approach to deliver inclusive growth. Once finalised detailed plans for its implementation during phase 3 will then follow.
- 3.13 Partners continue to work to develop and implement collaborative partnership projects in support of the BRCD objectives. This includes developmental work by council partners towards a new digital transformation programme for businesses. In addition, funding secured through the Department for Economy's Apprenticeship Challenge Fund has enabled the partners to begin to explore the potential for new apprenticeship pathways aligned to BRCD priority sectors, and to undertake research that will inform the development of a virtual apprenticeship platform. This work includes a series of webinars to help inform the research and to promote apprenticeships.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.14 Strategic engagement with key political representatives on the benefits and impact of the deal in supporting recovery has been taking place over the past few months. There has been strong support for the approach recommended by the BRCD partners involving a phased deal agreed on the basis of the most advanced projects having received OBC approval. There

was also recognition among senior political representatives of the deal's role in recovery and Members will be aware that the Department for the Economy's Economic Recovery Action Plan highlighted the need 'to accelerate delivery of City and Growth Deals'.

- 3.15 Plans are being finalised for enhanced engagement during May and June with business representative organisations and with businesses across the region, including through online events and forums. This will include online sessions with key sectoral groups and individual business chambers. It is also intended that a written briefing will be circulated to major businesses likely to have a specific interest in the BRCD or who have been significantly engaged in the BRCD to date.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.16 Members will be aware that the BRCD Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCD. Each council is represented on the Forum by four members and, as previously agreed by this Committee, the four BCC nominees are the party group leaders (or their nominees) from the four largest parties.
- 3.17 A Virtual meeting of the Panel was held on 28 April 2021 hosted by Ards and North Down Borough Council. At this meeting, the Panel received an update on the next steps in the development of the deal document and supporting documentation along with an update on progress in respect of each of the pillars of investment. Members also received a presentation on Ulster University's plans for a new, world class Screen and Media Innovation Lab (SMIL). SMIL is set to play a key role in the Belfast region's economic recovery post-COVID, by building on the success of NI's creative industries which already contribute over £1billion GVA to the NI economy and employ around 26,000 people. The minutes of the January meeting were also approved and have been circulated to Members.
- 3.18 The next meeting will be hosted by Belfast City Council and suitable dates are currently being considered.

Next Steps

- 3.19 As outlined above the key components for a phased deal are now well advanced, with OBCs submitted and being reviewed across the programme and draft deal documentation developed. The BRCD partners will therefore now be seeking agreement on a timetable for consideration of the most

advanced OBCs and for engagement and negotiation with the NI and UK Governments on the deal documentation, allowing the deal to be signed and funding start to flow to the transformative projects that are include within the BRCD.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.20 All costs associated with the BRCD are within existing budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.21 The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that:

‘BRCD is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’”

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of the report.

Update on Customer Focus Programme

(Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

Members are reminded that, in February 2021, they received an update on the Customer Focus Programme which included plans for a new Customer Hub function to be operational from 29th March, 2021.

- 1.2 This report provides Committee with an update on:

- the implementation of the Customer Hub; and
- the development of an Elected Members’ mobile app and plans for roll out of the app to all Members.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- 1. note the update on the implementation of the Customer Hub function;**
- 2. note the update on the development of a mobile application for Elected Members and plans to roll this out to all members starting in June 2021; and**
- 3. agree that Party Group briefings be held in June 2021 to obtain Members' feedback on their Customer Hub experience and to promote use of the new mobile app.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Our vision of customer focused services and associated blueprint for the Customer Hub were presented at the May 2020 Committee meeting and aim to ensure that we deliver:

- Optimised customer contact – professionalising resources and providing modern digital and telephony systems with access to real time data on contact performance**
- Channel shift – moving where possible to digitally enabled self-serve solutions**
- Customer centricity – designing our services around the needs of our customers.**

3.2 The Customer Hub blueprint remains as is, putting our customers at the heart of everything, ensuring we provide a consistent and professional service, affording our customers choice and convenience. This means improving and aligning all our access to service channels – telephone, face to face, website, and social media.

3.3 As part of this blueprint, the Customer Hub operation went live as planned on 29 March 2021. The Customer Hub operation consists of 16FTEs covering from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday to Friday, as a hybrid team working from Cecil Ward Building and from home, providing a first point of contact for a range of customers.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- 3.4 The first phase of this new function deals with customer contact for all departments and services, across a number of channels (online, telephone, email). Initially the hub will manage all customer contact for cleansing/waste and calls formerly through the main switchboard and corporate complaints numbers. All other direct dial telephone numbers remain unchanged.
- 3.5 As part of the blueprint for Elected Members, the Customer Hub provides specific services for Elected Members in the form of a direct phone line and email account and both these channels also went live on 29th March 2021.

Implementation of the Customer Hub Function

- 3.6 Preparation for implementation of the Customer Hub intensified from January 2021 to March 2021, completing the initial establishment of staff, filling 16 posts; development of systems and processes and delivery of training and development.
- 3.7 The first six weeks of operation have seen some challenges with double and single bank holidays which traditionally are followed by high call volumes.

Resources and Capacity

- 3.8 Planning for the Customer Hub anticipated call volumes in the region of 750 per day however actual call volumes in the first weeks of operation have been significantly higher. Day one of operation saw 1,049 calls and the day after the double bank holiday at Easter we received more than 1,600 calls. Email traffic has also been high accounting for one third of overall contacts. An analysis of the Customer Hub throughput for the month of April 2021 has been circulated to Members.
- 3.9 Because call volumes have been higher than anticipated we have been closely monitoring call queues, prioritising them and assessing the impact on staffing requirements.
- 3.10 Over these first few weeks of operation there have been resource constraints due to staff being recruited to other jobs and absence, coupled with a high demand for services. To achieve operational stability we have used temporary staff as an interim measure and are in the process of increasing and extending these arrangements whilst backfilling or recruiting temporary posts for a period of 6 months. We have also brought forward the recruitment of an additional 2 permanent posts within the agreed establishment.

- 3.11 Integral to this formative stage has been the inclusion of staff and Trade Unions in understanding the impact on staffing requirements during the transition and the early stages of operating the new Customer Hub.

Hand offs to Departments/Services

- 3.12 Work has been completed to co-design processes including the handoff from customer hub to services in other departments. The implementation initially is on a 'wide and thin' basis i.e. a basic level of information and signposting for customers is provided at the first point of contact for all services across all channels. Handoffs processes have worked well in general and are being refined as issues arise.

Dedicated Services for Elected Members

- 3.13 As stated, the Customer Hub went live with specific services designed for elected members – a dedicated telephone line and email account. In the first month of operation one or both of these channels have been used by 40 elected members. A profile of elected members engagement has been circulated.

A mobile App designed and developed for Elected Members

- 3.14 We continue to work with the Customer Focus Task and Finish group of Elected Members to develop a third contact channel, a mobile application which will enable members to raise issues, keep track of their cases and review their history of cases.
- 3.15 A prototype app was developed which members of the Task and Finish group have tested and at a recent workshop the group fed back on their experience and recommendations for improvement. We are grateful to elected members for their time and input to the development process. The app has been developed by Digital Services who are currently making changes based on members' feedback before making the first version of the app available to all members.

Our approach to rolling out the app

- 3.16 A briefing note was recently issued to Party Group Leaders setting out the approach to rolling out the members' app. This will be followed by a note to all members asking members to book a slot with Digital Services Trainers from week beginning 7 June 2021. Each slot will be used to facilitate members downloading the app and receiving training on use of the app. Two Digital Services Trainers will be involved in this

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

process, with each Trainer providing continuing support to their group of members. This approach was successfully used by Digital Services to roll out MS Teams to elected members.

Further Engagement with Elected Members

- 3.17** It is proposed that a series of Party Group briefings should take place during June 2021. The purpose of the Party Group briefings would be to engage with elected members to get their feedback on their Customer Hub experience to date to enable the Customer Focus team to inform service improvements and to facilitate a demo and promotion of the new Elected Members' app.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1** The Committee agreed, in November 2017, that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project.

Resource requirements for operation of the Customer Hub are provided for within existing Budgets.

5.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications**

- 5.1** No implications."

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i adopt the recommendations contained within the report; and
- ii submit to the Party Group Leaders a report on the operation of the street cleansing service, including staffing and rota arrangements.

Update on Summer Programme

(Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services attended in connection with this item.)

The Members of 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 Members on our proposed summer programme for 2021, which will focus on services for children and young people, families and older people and support for partners and the CVSE sector.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- note the planned citywide summer programme and that delivery remains contingent on the further relaxation of COVID restrictions by the NI Executive.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

Context

3.1 The ongoing NI Executive Covid 19 restrictions has resulted in a significant disruption to our services during Summer 2021. This disruption will affect the types of permissible activities, the maximum group numbers and the location of any programme offer to families, children and young people and older people. Our service offer will also be limited by our ability to comply with child ratios within available staff resources and limited volunteer support.

3.2 C and NS has established an internal summer programming team, to design and plan activities and events, as we emerge from lockdown. As restrictions are further eased we will review and amend our plans accordingly and in line with public health guidance. The programme will support the further recovery of some of our facilities, such as community centres and our parks and open space.

3.3 Our programme has been designed in line with the recovery recommendations published by Prof Siobhan O'Neill (NI Mental Health Champion) and via collaborative working with the Belfast Area Outcomes Group for CYP, the Education Authority and Youth Services, the Greater Belfast Seniors Forum and key community and voluntary sector partners. Prof O'Neill's recommendations focus on:

- Reconnecting and reducing social isolation;
- Good quality programming;
- Promotion and support of existing community provision;
- Incorporation of physical activities, such as sports, dance, music & drama.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

3.4 The BCC summer programme will focus on 4 key areas, namely:

- Children and Young People
- Families
- Older People
- Support For Partners & CVSE Sector

Children and Young People:

3.5 The current pandemic has made it difficult to plan a summer scheme programme based on the changing guidelines surrounding social distancing measures, capacity of participant numbers and what activities and sports are permitted at certain times.

3.6 We plan to deliver a two-week summer play programme which will move across the city from 17th July – late August 2021. This will operate with a capacity of 25 participants (related to child ratios) and we may also seek to allocate spaces via referrals from partners if necessary.

3.7 Given the fluid environment, we will maximise the use of our parks and outdoor space with fall back plans to use Community Centres when needed due to inclement weather and if permissible. The focus of this programme will be on:

- providing opportunities for children and young people to re-engage with their peers;
- health and wellbeing with an emphasis on the outdoors;
- providing opportunities to reflect on their personal journey during Covid-19 using supportive and creative methods;
- enable parents, young people and others within the community to celebrate events and achievements to promote self-esteem and hope; and
- re-engaging volunteers whose dedication, commitment and skills are vital in helping to deliver CYP services.

3.8 Our Sports Development Team are currently working with Sports Governing Bodies to develop a summer coaching and exercise programme and we are working in collaboration with GLL around complimentary programming across our Leisure estate.

Families:

- 3.9 Our OSAL team will be developing and implementing four community celebratory events (1 for each area of the city)
- 3.10 We are also working up activity offers to animate our parks and open space such as a series of Small Parks family entertainment programmes to include music and dance, summer fun days, etc. We are reinstating some of our previous animation programmes such as park life, wildlife displays, dance displays and the Belfast Parks Photographic Competition.
- 3.11 We will support strategic partners and 3rd party provider access to our parks and open space for localised community programming and a broad range of events (such as Belfast MELA, Connswater Greenway animation etc.)

Older People

- 3.12 We have been working in conjunction with the Greater Belfast Senior Forum, the 6 older people's forums, Engage with Age, Volunteer Now, North Belfast Seniors Citizen Forum and Men's Sheds to design an initial programme of activities where numbers can be easily controlled and social distancing enforced. This might include a range of outdoor activities such as walks, Tia Chi, boules, and other games.
- 3.13 We will support age friendly groups via access to our community centres and officer lead activities, for example, bingo, mindfulness classes, cookery demos, Park life, environmental awareness and recycling, etc.

Support for Partners and CVSE Sector:

- 3.14 We will continue to offer resource support to the Community Sector in the form of our Micro and Project Grants. It is expected both micro and medium grant programmes will follow similar priorities as in 20/21 (detailed below), but this may need to be updated based on requirements of external funders.
- Support children and young people to be happy and meet their full potential.
 - Contribute to increased civic pride by building community confidence and improved and connected neighbourhoods.
 - Contribute to improved wellbeing by preventing isolation.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- Promote positive emotional and physical wellbeing by addressing mental and/or physical health.
- Prevent, reduce or address antisocial behavior.
- Unexpected premises costs and PPE related to the recovery of services
- Promote connectivity and inclusion within communities, between communities and between communities and statutory partners
- Develop grass roots community capacity

Micro Grant: Indicative Budget (£150,000) – Maximum award £1,500.

Medium Grant: Indicative Budget (£300,000) – Maximum award £5,000

- 3.15 Both programmes are due to open in the first week of June 2021 at the latest. The streamlined Micro Grant process will allow for awards to be made in time to support summer programmes across Belfast City Council. The Medium Grant (due to increased level of award) requires slightly more stringent due diligence and awards are not expected until first week of September 2021.
- 3.16 Our area teams will continue to work locally with CVS to identify any support needs including access to BCC facilities and outdoor space, programme design, training or capacity support or access to funding.
- 3.17 The Programme Recovery group will continue to revise plans in line with the NI Pathway to Recovery process and the further easing of restrictions and confirmed dates to be announced by the NIE on 13th May and 10th June.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.18 The summer programme will be covered by existing budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.19 None.”

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided an overview of the report and, in response to a Member, confirmed that officers would work with groups/organisations around the development of programmes and the use of Council assets.

The Chief Executive then raised concerns around the extent of bonfire material across the City and pointed out that, given the underlying tensions, significant issues could arise this year, which would require political leadership and decision-making.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of the report.

Fairtrade in Belfast

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite Members to pass a resolution updating the Council’s support for the continued campaign to maintain Fairtrade City (Borough) status for the Belfast City Council area.**

2.0 Recommendations

The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- Demonstrate continued support for Fairtrade by passing the following resolution:**

‘This Council acknowledges the very real contribution that Fairtrade makes to sustainable development, tackling poverty, and to improving the lives of people from some of the most disadvantaged farming communities in the developing world.

Welcoming the efforts of the UK Fairtrade Foundation, Fairtrade Ireland and the regional campaign, with Northern Ireland a Fairtrade devolved region, to raise awareness of the worldwide impact of unfair trade and the opportunities that Fairtrade provides to promote sustainable development, the Council resolves to provide civic leadership and active support for a campaign to maintain Fairtrade City/Borough status for Belfast City Council area.’

- Nominate two Elected Members to the Fairtrade Steering Group, who will act as the Chair and Deputy Chair.**

2.2 Towards this objective we will:

- Seek to ensure that Fairtrade certified food and drink options are offered internally, in Council canteens and vending machines, 100% Fairtrade coffee and tea is available for all internal meetings; and included in procurement guidelines with subsequent annual review;**

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- **Work in partnership with the media, businesses and local communities to raise awareness of Fairtrade issues and the opportunities for supporting Fairtrade throughout the City;**
- **Use our influence to encourage the increased availability and use of Fairtrade products locally, including during Council organized events, hospitality and festivals;**
- **Encourage the active involvement of communities from across the City in the local Fairtrade Steering Group and campaign for Fairtrade status, including representatives from local schools, churches, businesses and charities;**
- **Monitor progress on maintaining Fairtrade City/Borough status through production of an annual report; and**
- **Appoint officer(s) from the Council as administrative support and nomination of two elected members to the Fairtrade Steering Group, who will act as Chair and Deputy Chair.**

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Fairtrade is a global movement for change that works to guarantee a better deal for disadvantaged producers in the developing world, securing better prices, decent working conditions and fair terms of trade. Its primary objective is to tackle poverty and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goals 2,5,8,12,13, 16 and 17 in the developing world.**
- 3.2 Working through the concept of trade rather than aid, Fairtrade supports the development of thriving farming and worker communities and the protection of the environment in which they live and work. Fairtrade tackles any use of child labour and/or human trafficking.**
- 3.3 The Fairtrade system achieves a better deal for producers in the developing world, by offering them two major benefits: the 'Fairtrade Minimum Price', which is a guaranteed, minimum price paid by importers and buyers, which covers the cost of sustainable production; and an additional 'Fairtrade Premium', which is designated for social and economic development in the producing communities.**

- 3.4 The farmers and workers themselves decide how the Fairtrade Premium will be spent within their community; hence, in real terms, it means investment in schools, transport, health care, sanitation, an improved environment, infrastructure and better business equipment and practices.
- 3.5 Fairtrade has a strong and active presence in both the UK and Ireland, represented by the Fairtrade Foundation and Fairtrade Ireland, respectively. A key area of activity for these national organisations is to raise awareness and understanding of trade issues, and to promote the buying of Fairtrade certified products as a way for everyone, no matter who they are, to use the power of their purchase to make a difference to the lives of farmers and workers in the developing world. One of the ways in which this is achieved is through 'Fairtrade Town' campaigns, whereby, local communities at borough, district, city, town or village level will be awarded Fairtrade status if they satisfy certain criteria set by the national organisations. Belfast passed Fairtrade resolutions to support a Fairtrade campaign and achieve the Fairtrade status, through full Council on February 18, 2000, October 18, 2004 and through the Policy and Resources Committee on November 19, 2004.
- 3.6 In 2005, Belfast was awarded Fairtrade City status by the UK Fairtrade Foundation and in 2006 awarded Fairtrade City status by the Fairtrade Ireland, in recognition of the work being carried on to promote Fairtrade. At this stage this was the highest level (City) of status available.
- In 2017, Northern Ireland achieved Fairtrade devolved region status as done in the other devolved regions of Scotland and Wales. <http://www.northernirelandfairtrade.org/projects> This requires every Council across Northern Ireland to play its active role in ensuring the entire Council area (City, Borough or District) and all Cities and Towns above the population of 6,000 within the Council area achieve Fairtrade status; hence the entire City/Borough/District becomes Fairtrade accredited.
- 3.7 With the expansion of Borough and District Fairtrade accreditations by the Fairtrade Foundations - Belfast was granted both City and Borough status upon renewal in 2016 and been successfully renewed every two years since, currently until March 19, 2022. Achieving Fairtrade City status was a significant milestone on this City's Fairtrade journey. However, it is important that the campaign continues to gain momentum, obtains commitments from more organisations and increases understanding across the whole community.

Key Issues

- 3.8 In order to be awarded Fairtrade status for their borough, city, town, district, village or other area, local communities must meet certain criteria. The criteria, or 'goals', set by both the UK Foundation and Fairtrade Ireland are broadly similar and can be summarized as follows:
- 3.9 **Goal 1: Local council passes a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and agrees to serve Fairtrade products (for example, in meetings, offices and canteens), with the exploration and review of internal public procurement to include Fairtrade. Belfast City Council**
- 3.10 In relation to Goal 1, Belfast City Council procurement of tea and coffee is included within the Ambient Foods contract; the specification indicated that coffee was expected to be supplied from Fair Trade products. In addition, there are concession contracts for example catering franchises at City Hall and parks sites where the specification states 'Use of a selection of Fair Trade certified products. It should be noted that the franchisee should, if possible, use a selection of Fair Trade accredited consumables' or 'Only high quality ingredients from reputable suppliers shall be used. The Contractor offers produce that is in season, fair trade and free range as part of its menu offer'.
- 3.11 **Goal 2: A range of Fairtrade products (at least two) must be readily available and served in a number of the area's shops and catering establishments through a stock taking exercise.**
- 3.12 **Goal 3: Local workplaces and community organisations, such as places of worship, and schools, are encouraged to support Fairtrade and to use Fairtrade products whenever possible.**
- 3.13 **Goal 4: Use is made of the media and events to raise awareness and understanding of Fairtrade across the community.**
- 3.14 In relation to Goal 4, Belfast City Hall was illuminated in the Fairtrade colours on Saturday 8th May 2021 to mark World Fairtrade Day following a request from the All Party Group on Fairtrade.
- 3.15 **Goal 5: A local Fairtrade steering group, which is representative of the local community and has a member of the council, is convened to ensure the Fairtrade campaign continues to develop and gain new support.**

- 3.16 The passing of a Council resolution in support of Fairtrade is, therefore, a key element in maintaining the campaign. Support for Fairtrade will demonstrate Council's commitment towards social justice and sustainable development and exemplifies the ethical leadership that is one of the corporate values that defines how Council will do business.
- 3.17 Sustainable development is one of the cross-cutting themes within the Corporate Plan. Running through every aspect of the Council's work, sustainable development is based on balancing social, economic and environmental costs and benefits to ensure the best future for all. Significantly in the context of this item, it necessitates consideration of the international, as well as the local, view.
- 3.18 It is important to emphasize that Fairtrade is not in competition with local farmers and that buying local and buying Fairtrade need not be mutually exclusive. It is recognized that many farmers locally in the UK and Ireland face similar issues to farmers elsewhere, not least in ensuring that they get a fair return for upholding decent social and environmental standards in their production. However, Fairtrade focuses on tropical products, such as coffee and bananas, that are not grown locally or on a few items, such as honey, for which local supply is insufficient to meet demand, necessitating imports from abroad and traded outside local season.

Consequently, using the example of honey, the choice facing shoppers is not necessarily between local honey and Fairtrade certified honey, but between Fairtrade honey and conventional honey imported from abroad. It is possible, therefore, to advocate the purchase of local produce from our own farmers, while at the same time promoting Fairtrade and making an international difference in tackling poverty.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.19 It is anticipated that the costs associated with Council's support for and promotion of Fairtrade will be met from within existing budgets. The purchase of Fairtrade products and items, which the resolution commits Council to considering, will be carried out in accordance with relevant purchasing and procurement policies.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.20 None have been identified.

- 3.2.1 Fairtrade is the gold standard of ethical labelling and can only appear on products from the developing world. Fairtrade is not a charity but local ethical consumerism led by cross community, public/private sector demand and statutory obligations: United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), particularly Goals 2,5,8,12,13, 16 & 17, which falls to each council under sustainability. Fairtrade alleviates poverty, tackles global issues and all forms of exploitation (child labour, trafficking), environmental and social considerations, including climate change. Fairtrade has an international dimension and wider implication for the most disadvantaged vulnerable small-scale producers world-wide, that produce the tropical commodities that are not able to be grown locally.**
- 3.22 Fairtrade accreditation (status) in Northern Ireland is based on the entire council area (boundary): District, Borough or City. It is an entire council-wide achievement/accreditation of all sectors and representation of society (government, businesses, schools, churches, colleges/universities, etc)."**

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i adopt the recommendations contained within the report; and
- ii approve the Council's participation in a "Toilet Twinning" initiative, similar to that which had been adopted in the Northern Ireland Assembly, whereby the Council would, by making a donation to have one or more of its toilets twinned, help to fund projects in underdeveloped regions, to provide families with access to toilet facilities, clean water and information on hygiene.

EU Exit - Proposed Economic Study and Briefing

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the process and resource implications around a study on economic opportunities on the island of Ireland to be gained through new trading and economic relationships, following a request raised at the April 2021 meeting of the Council.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 If the Committee is minded to approve the study, the Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i agree that officers work up terms of reference for approval by the Brexit Committee;**
- ii agree that officers bring back a costed proposal; and**
- iii agree that officers explore the potential for cost sharing with another statutory or academic body.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that, following the UK's exit from the EU, there are new processes in place governing trading relationships between Northern Ireland and GB and Northern Ireland and the European Union. The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) was approved in April and sets out a framework for the UK and EU's future relationship. It sets out arrangements in areas such as trade in goods and services (including financial and legal services), digital trade, intellectual property, public procurement, aviation and road transport, energy, fisheries, social security coordination and collaboration on scientific research and collaboration, thematic issues, health collaboration, participation in EU Programmes.

3.2 In addition to the TCA, under the NI Protocol arrangements, NI remains in the EU's single market for goods. This allows goods to flow to and from NI to ROI and the rest of the EU without customs checks, tariffs or new paperwork. The EU's rules on customs and regulation of agri-food products continues to apply to goods arriving in NI. The Protocol covers a wide range of areas: human rights, the Common Travel Area, the Single Electricity Market, limited state aid provisions, regulation of manufactured goods and VAT and excise.

3.3 Invest NI has set out its position for trade and investment, noting that Northern Ireland continues to have access to the Great Britain (GB) and the EU markets for goods and that 'this dual market access position means that Northern Ireland can become a gateway for the sale of goods to two of the world's largest markets and the only place where businesses can operate free from customs declarations, rules of origin

certificates and non-tariff barriers on the sale of goods to both GB and the EU’.

- 3.4 The implementation of the new trading relationships has clearly brought challenges. In April 2021, QUB released the results of an opinion poll undertaken on their behalf which demonstrated that public views are evenly split over whether the protocol is overall positive for Northern Ireland (43%; 44% disagree) although 65% of respondents acknowledged that particular arrangements for Northern Ireland are necessary to manage Brexit.
- 3.5 At the beginning of May 2021, Manufacturing NI released the results of the first survey of member businesses since EU exit. This demonstrated that while 1 in 4 businesses are struggling with post-Brexit operations, only 19% of respondents want the protocol to be replaced. The survey noted that the most significant challenges for manufacturing businesses at present related to supply chain issues and the availability of raw materials as well as current uncertainties related to both Brexit and ongoing impact of Covid-19.
- 3.6 At the April 2021 Council meeting, it was agreed that a report on the potential for commissioning an economic study to explore opportunities on how best to exploit the unique position of Belfast (post EU exit) would be brought back to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It was also agreed that a briefing session be held – to which all members would be invited – to receive an update on the work that had already been done by council officers and other agencies on this issue, and that relevant economic experts be invited to contribute to the discussion. It is suggested that in considering terms of reference for the study, if agreed, that this could be added to the agenda for the Brexit Committee with an invitation to other members to attend.

Economic Study

- 3.7 In terms of the economic study, it is important to note that the protocol and other instruments apply at a Northern Ireland level and therefore it will be important to engage with and take account of any work being undertaken by the Department for the Economy and/or Invest NI in this field. Areas of focus for a Belfast study may include:

Trade:

- Analysis of current export activity for Belfast-based firms (subject to data availability) – by volume and destination

- Assessment of potential impact on trade levels taking account of new governance structures (excluding Covid implications)
- Consideration of specific support required to help local businesses to maximise trade opportunities arising from new governance arrangements, including budget implications of the investment (details to be provided for NI/ROI; NI/GB; NI/EUE; NI/RoW).

Foreign Direct Investment:

- Forecasting global FDI trends for the coming five years, with a focus on those key sectors that have contributed most significantly to recent employment growth in Belfast
- An assessment of the implications of EU exit on the ability to continue to attract FDI in each of these sectors, including economic modelling in terms of jobs, salary levels and GDP
- Assessment of emerging opportunities in existing and/or new sectors to be targeted, based on new operating environment and Belfast's existing economic offer, to include consideration of investments such as City Deal
- Consideration of the role of city government in supporting Invest NI in this work, including specific recommendations on areas of investment and support to be developed
- Consideration of potential new opportunities (sectors/FDI locations) that may arise from the new trading arrangements, including relative assessment of Belfast's ability to capitalise on these opportunities and investment required to do so
- Consideration of implications for city positioning work, including target markets and locations.

- 3.8 Subject to further refinement of the terms of reference for this work – including engagement with other partner organisations – it is estimated that the costs associated with the study would be in the region of £80-£100k. Members will be aware that the Brexit Committee does not have a budget. At this point, no budget has been set aside in any departmental estimates to carry out this work. Ultimately approval will need to be sought

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

from SP and R following consultation with the Director of Finance and Resources.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 The costs associated with undertaking the research study are likely to be in the range of £80-100k. Members are advised that there has been no budget set aside within this financial year to cover the costs associated with this work. However if members decide to agree to the recommendations of this report a further report will come back with proposed terms of reference and detailed costings.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 Equality/good relations implications to be considered as part of the brief.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

That the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

On a vote, twelve Members voted for the proposal and seven against and it was declared carried.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Update on Phase 5 of the Alleygates Programme

(Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services attended in connection with this item.)

The Members of 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 Members with a further update on the next steps associated with Phase 5 of the Alleygates Programme.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the agreed approach for Phase 5.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will recall that, at the Committee meeting on 19th March, an update on Phase 5 Alleygates was provided and the decision was taken to allocate the £500K capital budget equally across North, South, East and West Belfast.

3.2 Additionally, Members were informed that a framework would be developed to assist Members in prioritising potential gate locations for Alleygates Phase 5.

3.3 Officers have reviewed frameworks used for previous phases of Alleygates and, having taken on board Members feedback, are suggesting the following 6 stage approach:

3.4 Initial Data Analysis

- Crime/ASB Data (PSNI/Council)
- Environmental Crime Data (Council)
- Registered Elected Member requests for Alleygates (Council)
- Customer requests for Alleygates (Council)
- Site Suitability for alleygates (including meeting definition of alleyway as per legislation as can't close off public footpaths)

3.5 The analysis will produce an 'initial priority list' of possible alleygate locations for future Committee consideration on an area basis (North, South, East and West). Alleygate locations ranking of high need in more than one of the categories above will likely be ranked higher as these are indicators of demonstrating stronger need/suitability.

Elected Member Assessment

3.6 Recognising that statistical data does not always present the fullest and most accurate analysis of need, formal Elected Member input will be sought via pro forma to enrich the data analysis.

3.7 The pro forma will include items such as:

- Member knowledge of history of crime, ASB, environmental crime and gate effectiveness
- Overview of any community consultation/feedback completed by Members

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- Identification of any other locations, assessed against suitability criteria

Agreed Long List

- 3.8 The initial data analysis and formal Elected Member assessment will be combined, producing a citywide 'long list' (presented on an area basis) and this will be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for formal consideration.

Area Allocation

- 3.9 Following agreement of the citywide 'long list', possible gate locations for each area will be considered by the appropriate Area Working Group. The Area Working Group will be asked to refine that list to an agreed priority short list based on available data and budget (£125K per area).
- 3.10 Area Working Groups will also be asked to consider agreeing a reserve list (in priority order) of possible gate locations as based on previous experience. This is because there are a range of reasons (community objection, further site suitability issues, statutory objection) which sometimes prevent alleygates from proceeding at later stages.

Final Gate Locations Agreed

- 3.11 The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee will then consider the recommended priority short list and priority reserve list from each Area Working Group for possible alleygates.

Legal Consultation and Gate Installation

- 3.12 Officers will commence the formal legal statutory and community consultation required under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (NI) 2011. Members will recall this is an extensive process and will take several months to complete before Alleygates can be ordered/installed.

Alleyway Transformation

- 3.13 Members will be aware of the commitment by the Department for Infrastructure Minister to support via the Blue Green Infrastructure fund a regional Alleyway Transformation Programme. The overall value of the monies to support the programme has not been finalised, but it is likely to be in the region of £1m - £2m for the whole of Northern Ireland.

Additionally, there has been no indication of how the funding will be allocated across the region.

- 3.14 Given the important link between Alleygates Phase 5 and the Alleyway Transformation work, it is proposed the above framework should be used to assist Members in making decisions at the appropriate point in the future on which alleyways may be supported as part of a Belfast Alleyway Transformation Programme. I.e. Alleyways identified in the final citywide 'long list' not taken forward by Elected Members for Phase 5 Alleygates would be specifically brought forward for consideration under Alleyway Transformation.**
- 3.15 Members should note that initial indications are that the funding will only support equipment purchase (and not associated capacity building), so it will be important to identify alleyways that have a strong existing community commitment to their sustainability and/or ensure potential locations receive capacity support from the Council.**
- 3.16 Officers will be engaging with DfI in the coming months to develop a potential delivery model for Alleyway Transformation for Belfast and will bring that forward for Members consideration in due course.**

Financial and Resource Implications

Financial implications are detailed in the body of the report.

Equality, Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

An Equality Screening will need to be completed on Alleygates Phase 5 in due course."

During discussion, a Member referred to the initial indications that the funding from the Department for Infrastructure for the Alleyway Transformation Programme could only be used to support equipment purchase. He explained that many alleyways required significant additional work, such as resurfacing and the removal of vegetation, to transform them fully and stated that the Council should seek to ensure that the cost of that work would also be met. He referred also to the need to request the Department for Infrastructure to adopt those alleyways which would be transformed under the Programme and which were currently unadopted, to allow them to be effectively maintained and serviced.

In response, the Director of Neighbourhood Services informed the Member that Council officers were continuing to engage with the Department for Infrastructure on the funding parameters for the Alleyway Transformation Programme and to identify other sources of funding to ensure that the needs of local communities were fully realised. He referred to a report which had on 8th December, 2020, been presented to the People

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

and Communities Committee which had included information on adopted/unadopted alleyways, in preparation for the implementation of the Transformation Programme and confirmed that discussions had taken place with the Department for Infrastructure and subsequently with the Council's Legal Services Section on the options which were potentially available. The aforementioned report would, he added, be circulated to the Members of the Committee for information and would form the basis for future discussions on alleygating and the Alleyway Transformation Programme.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the proposed approach for the implementation of Phase 5 of the alleygating programme, as set out within the report.

Assets Management

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

i) Hannahstown Hill Village Playground and Public Square

- extend the current Licence Agreement with Hannahstown Community Association for a further ten years;

ii) DfC Covid 19 Revitalisation Scheme – Legal agreements

- enter into legal agreements with DfI and DfC in respect to the revitalisation schemes at Castle Place and Adelaide Street;

iii) Forth Meadow Community Greenway – Licence Agreements

- enter into Licence Agreements on third party lands, as required, to facilitate the completion of the capital project;

iv) Conacre / Grazing Agreements

- approve conacre licences for the growing of crops, grazing and grass cutting on agricultural lands for a period of three years on Council lands at Cavehill Country Park, Glencairn, Lagan Meadows, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park, Barnett's Demesne, Clement Wilson Park, Ballygomartin Road (North and South), Lagan Lands East and Roselawn; and

v) Covid-19 Testing Sites

- approve the lease between the Council and the Department of Health and Social Care at Woodlands Playing Fields Car Park for a Local Testing Facility/Walk-In Centre for Covid-19 and the extension of the Access Agreement between the Council and Serco Ltd for Mobile Testing Units at Whiterock Leisure Centre and Northumberland Street Car Parks.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

Update on Area Working Groups

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 6th May, including the following recommendations:

- i that £40,000 of the allocated BIF funding be released to the Strand Arts Centre to progress with RIBA Stage 2 but that no further funding be released for RIBA Stage 3;
- ii that the Strand Arts Centre be required to provide up-to-date costings for the project as part of the Strand RIBA Stage 2 report;
- iii that both the Strand Arts Centre and the Titanic People projects be timebound, with a definitive timeline to be communicated to the groups via letter, and, if projects were to progress, that stages within the projects would also be timebound against key project deliverables, and;
- iv that a meeting be convened in October in order to review each project's progress against the timelines and to make decisions on any future commitments.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Update on Contracts

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

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

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Microsoft Enterprise Subscription Agreement (ESA)	Up to 3 years	£1,500,000	R Cregan	Microsoft Enterprise Subscription Agreement (ESA) is the contract to provide all or our Microsoft services such as Office 365.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

T2167 Management and coordination/referrals of service provision for the Traveller Communities. (fully funded)	Up to 19 months	£66,000	S Toland / R Black	Approved by SP&R April 2021. Further approval sought for an increase in Contract duration. To develop and enhance infrastructure that enables a coordinated approach in accessing services and service delivery for the Travelling Community in Belfast.
Provision of production management for Council events and activities	Up to 4 years	£350,000	A Reid	Tender required for the provision of a production management service for Council events and activities.
Development of economic strategy for Belfast	Up to 5 months	£80,000	A Reid	Position Belfast and Council in context of emerging regional strategy positions
T2082 Provision of a 'Youth Engagement and Civic Education Project' for Forth Meadow Community Greenway PEACE IV Programme Services	Up to 16 months	£80,000	S Toland / R Black	Approved by SP&R June 2020, project delayed due to covid - EU Funded project to engage with 600 young people along the Forth Meadow Community Greenway
Property Maintenance Units MTC for building energy management systems maintenance	Up to 4 years	£250,000	S Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and small works to building energy management systems to all Council properties
Property Maintenance Units MTC for CCTV, door access and public address systems maintenance	Up to 4 years	£250,000	S Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and small works to CCTV, door access and public address systems to all Council properties
Property Maintenance Units MTC for fire and intruder alarms maintenance	Up to 4 years	£350,000	S Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and small works to fire and intruder alarms systems to all Council Properties
Property Maintenance Units MTC for lifts maintenance	up to 5 years	£375,000	S Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and small works to lifts to all Council properties

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

Replacement metal railings at Dundonald Cemetery	Up to 16 weeks	£60,000	S Grimes	Works identified in Property Maintenance Units 2021/22 – non-recurring
Refurbishment of entrance gates at Ormeau Park	Up to 12 weeks	£30,000	S Grimes	Works identified in Property Maintenance Units 2021/22 – non-recurring
Replacement of vinyl floor covering at Falls Swim, Glen CC, Grosvenor CC & North Queens Street Play Centre	Up to 12 weeks	£70,000	S Grimes	Works identified in Property Maintenance Units 2021/22 – non-recurring
Replacement windows to Braniel CC, Downshire Hall & ATP Memorial CP	Up to 8 weeks	£55,000	S Grimes	Works identified in Property Maintenance Units 2021/22 - planned backlog
Replacement of the Linear Track Lighting within the Grove Wellbeing Centre	Up to 6 months	£180,000	S Grimes	Works identified in Property Maintenance Units 2021/22 – non-recurring
Replacement of the existing boilers within Grove Wellbeing & Belvoir Activity Centre	Up to 3 months	£240,000	S Grimes	Works identified in Property Maintenance Units 2021/22 – non-recurring
Electrical supplies	Up to 5 years	£1.6m	S Grimes	Supply and delivery of electrical goods/ consumables to facilitate the service delivery of the Property Maintenance section in maintenance and minor works refurbishments of Council properties.
Workwear and PPE	Up to 5 years	£1.3m	S Grimes	Supply and delivery of range of workwear and personal protective equipment 'PPE' (i.e. uniforms, footwear, safety gloves etc) for Council staff that are stocked and distributed by the stores team.
*Delivery of a feasibility study, partner engagement and project business case for the development of an Advanced Wireless investment model	Up to 7 months	£180,000	R Cregan	Based on expert recommendations on maximizing the impact of Belfast Region City Deal Infrastructure Enabling Fund investments

* For noting purposes as SP and R approval was granted April 2021 as a separate paper.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Provision of consultancy services - Port Health (ref Brexit) previous STA T2154	£47,000	J Tully	Deloitte
Brexit support services through the Innovation Factory Contract – 2nd phase. 1st phase approved in Dec 20.	£50,000	A Reid	Oxford Innovation

Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
Network Services	Up to 2 years	£100,000	R Cregan	Black Box

Equality and Good Relations

Update on Decade of Centenaries Programme

The Members of 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 Members on the current Decade of Centenaries programme and to seek approval from Members to apply for additional funding that has become available from the Northern Ireland Office.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:**
- i note the contents of this report and progress in the delivery of this year’s Decade of Centenaries programme; and**
 - ii agree the proposal to apply to the NIO’s Centenary Programme for £4,000 to deliver an Arts project, as part of marking the centenary of Northern Ireland, ‘Our Story in the Making: NI Beyond 100’.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that there are a number of projects being delivered as part of the Decade of Centenaries Programme this year. In addition to a range of Council funded activities, the Council has received funding from the Shared History Fund (administered by Heritage Lottery on behalf of the NIO) to deliver a number of projects. These projects are:

- Drama and animation programme on 22 June 2021 and live performances in the Autumn to schools and youth groups**
- 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 projects related to 1921 to be launched at a live event in Autumn 2021**
- A time capsule project with young people**
- End of Decade of Centenaries Conference in March 2022**

3.2 In addition to these events, others have also already been delivered or being planned, which are funded or supported by the Council, including:

- A programme of 37 online events for the Civic Weekend 1-3 May**
- Illumination of the façade of City Hall on 22 June 2021**
- An online conference on Violence, Conflict, Militarisation and Displacement; Belfast in 1920**
- An online panel discussion on ‘100 years of Northern Ireland; how has it gone?’**
- Cycle 100 events**
- Discussion events in the autumn**

3.3 An additional opportunity has now become available. The NIO is offering funding of up to £4,000 for each council to commission an artist, community group, or group of young artists local to the area, to create and develop a cultural piece of work - be that a piece of art or the development of a community space - that reflects the unique community of each council area.

3.4 The project is not required to have a centenary narrative, but instead should capture a moment in time for the community. Proposals are required to be submitted by councils to NIO by 1st June 2021 and the cultural piece is to be completed by 31st August 2021.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- 3.5** In order to ensure an open and transparent process within the timescale, the Council's Tourism Culture Heritage and Arts Unit will oversee a short competitive process and invite local street artists to respond with suitable proposals incorporating a co-creation process. Criteria will be aligned to the themes of the *A City Imagining* cultural strategy and the process will be guided by the Decade of Centenaries principles.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6** There are no new financial implications. Should Members be in agreement and the application is successful, this project will be fully funded at £4,000.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7** The Decade of Centenaries Programme is part of the District Council's Good Relations Programme, which was screened for equality, good relations and rural needs and was screened out."

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Request for Funding – Polish Heritage Flight Visit

The Members of the Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to advise Members of a request for funding towards a Polish Heritage Flight Visit due to take place in August, 2021.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i approve an amount of £3,000 towards the Polish Heritage Trail as part of the partnership approach with Our Freedom and Yours, the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Belfast, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough, Ards and North Down Borough and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Councils;

- ii approve an additional £800 towards the educational element, subject to liaison with the relevant Good Relations Officer to ensure that the sessions are targeted at wide audience and the content fits with good relations objectives; and
- iii note that the above funding support is subject to confirmation being received from The Executive Office on their allocation towards the District Council Good Relations Programme budget.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1 In 2019, the Your Freedom and Ours project started working on the Polish Wings Heritage Trail, bringing the forgotten history of the Polish Airmen in Northern Ireland to life in the form of an educational trail available online and physically to the wider public.
- 3.2 This year, to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland, as well as, to celebrate the relationship between the Polish and the Northern Irish communities, they propose to organise a 2 day visit in August by the Polish Heritage Flight to Northern Ireland with a ground event at the Newtownards airfield (subject to restrictions) and a flypast over several locations related to the history of the Polish Airmen in Northern Ireland. The Polish Heritage Flight is a historical aircraft collection based in Duxford, flying the Hurricane and the Spitfire in the Second World War Polish Air Force markings. During the visit, the PHF will provide an aerial display over Belfast including the City Airport, Milltown Cemetery also flying over South, East and North Belfast. This display will be visible to thousands of spectators around Belfast.
- 3.3 Prior to the visit, they also propose delivering a series of talks explaining the history of the Polish Air Force in the Second World War and Northern Ireland. This series will be available to local communities either face-to-face or online. Such an approach would allow the project to explain the historical connection between NI and Poland and foster relationships with the Polish community living in Belfast today.
- 3.4 To make the whole project successful, a partnership was formed between the For Your Freedom and Ours project, the Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Belfast, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough, Ards and North Down Borough and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Councils. All the mentioned

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

above parties have agreed to support the programme and to contribute to the budget.

- 3.5** They are asking the Council to become partners in the programme and to support the idea of bringing shared history to life by supporting the Polish Heritage Flight. They advised that the total budget required for the two days programme is £15,000, and are asking partners to contribute £3,000 for the aerial display. An additional £800 is being requested for an educational element including talks on the history of the Polish Air Force.
- 3.6** Members may wish to note that the last time the Polish Air Force was visible over Northern Ireland was in 1945, so bringing the Hurricane and the Spitfire in Polish markings to Northern Ireland will be a significant way to celebrate the past and the present connections.
- 3.7** The group advises that such a project will have an impact on the Good Relations in the city; from their experience with delivering shared history programmes across Northern Ireland; such an educational approach plays a massive role in changing people's perspectives on the presence of the Polish community in Northern Ireland.
- 3.8** A project outline and draft Programme to take place on 21st and 22nd August has been circulated.
- 3.9** By way of background, there are currently approximately 25,000 Polish people living in Northern Ireland. The majority of them are settled in the Greater Belfast area, including a large population living in East Belfast.
- 3.10** In recent years, a number of murals dedicated to the shared history between Poland and Northern Ireland were erected in Belfast and the For Your Freedom and Ours shared history project delivered a number of OCN accredited Good Relations programmes to over 1000 participants representing local communities. This programme was designed to help tackle issues related to integration and reduce levels of prejudice towards members of the largest ethnic minority group in Northern Ireland. Several groups that participated in the programme come from the Greater Belfast area, including Ballynafeigh Orange Hall, Ballynafeigh Historical and Cultural Society, Ballymac Friendship Club, ACT Initiative South Belfast, Belfast South Community Resources and Fortwilliam Youth Centre.
- 3.11** Members are asked to consider the request and to note that funding requested could be provided from the Good Relations

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

budget, subject to confirmation of funding through a Letter of Offer from The Executive Office which is expected shortly.

- 3.12 Officers would advise that the educational element of £800 could also be supported subject to liaison with the relevant Good Relations Officer to ensure the sessions are targeted at wide audience and the content fits with good relations objectives.**
- 3.13 The project would make an important contribution in building relationships between the Polish and wider communities, emphasising connectedness and promoting understanding.**

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 The above request of £3,800 could be covered from existing budgets once confirmation has been received from The Executive Office on their allocation towards the District Council Good Relations Programme budget.**

3.15 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The above event would be supported through the Good Relations Programme which has the aim of promoting good relations within the City.”

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Equality and Diversity - Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report

The Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of a report which provided a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for the period from January to March, 2021.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership

The members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 10th May, including the recommendations:

- i that the Partnership receive at its next meeting a presentation from Blu Zebra on the draft report “The Council’s Covid Response in Lockdown One – Making Sure No One Was Left Behind”; and

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

- ii to note that the Partnership took part in a facilitated discussion on sectarianism within the City and that the outcome of that discussion would be brought to the next meeting of the Shared City Partnership for endorsement and then to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Operational Issues

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 13th May.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Social Policy Working Group**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 27th April.

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group of 21st April.

**Requests for Use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the recommendations made in respect of those applications received up to 7th May, 2021, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Clonard Swimming and Waterpolo Club	6 November 2021 <i>Dependent on City Hall recovery and COVID guidelines</i>	Celebration Dinner of Clonard ASC - A dinner to celebrate the 100 years of the club, its history and heritage.	C	No (voluntary group)	Yes, Wine Reception as centenary	Approve No charge Wine Reception

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

		<p>Numbers attending – 300 - 400</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>				
2022 EVENTS						
Queens University Belfast	Monday 5 September 2022	<p>British Society for Cardiovascular Research Conference Dinner - welcome dinner linked to 2-day conference taking place in QUB, Belfast.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 80</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	A & B	No (charity)	No hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality
2025 EVENTS						
Ulster Automobile Club	13 September 2025	<p>Celebration Dinner of Ulster Automobile Club - A dinner to celebrate the 100 years of the UAC, and its significant contribution to the cultural and sporting</p>	C	No (voluntary/ community group)	Yes, Wine Reception as centenary	Approve No charge Wine Reception

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 21st May, 2021**

		life of Belfast and Northern Ireland. Numbers attending – 350 <i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>				
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Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Crohn's and Colitis UK 'Invisible Disability Employer Scheme'

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommended that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to accede to a request from Councillor McMullan that the Council join the Crohn's and Colitis UK 'Invisible Disability Employer Scheme'.

Chairperson