

# Public Document Pack

**Democratic Services Section  
Legal and Civic Services Department  
Belfast City Council  
City Hall  
Belfast  
BT1 5GS**

28th February 2025

## **MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

As previously notified to you, I enclose a copy of the report for the following item to be considered at the meeting to be held at 5.15 pm on Tuesday, 4th March.

6. (f) Dual language street signs – Mechanism for dealing with deferred applications and consideration of Wellington Park Terrace and other deferred applications (Pages 1 - 10)

In addition, the following matter will be raised under 'Items Raised in Advance by a Member'.

7. (a) 'FIDO' - Dog Fouling Removal Vehicle - Councillor Canavan to raise.

Yours faithfully,

John Walsh

Chief Executive

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<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Dual language street signs – Mechanism for dealing with deferred applications and consideration of Wellington Park Terrace and other deferred applications</b>
<b>Date:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ian Harper, Building Control Manager, ext. 2430 Heather Fletcher, Acting Property and Legal Co-Ordinator 2464

**Restricted Reports**

Is this report restricted? Yes  No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual,
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual,
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained,
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction,
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

- After Committee Decision**
- After Council Decision**
- Sometime in the future**
- Never**


**Call-in**



<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	At the Council meeting on 4 <sup>th</sup> November 2024 members agreed that a report would be brought to the People and Communities Committee to include a mechanism to deal with deferred applications and to consider the decision to defer the application for Wellington Park Terrace, and the other dual language street signs that had been deferred. The minute was as follows:
1.2	“That the Council agrees that the decision of the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th October, in relation to an application for a second street nameplate at Wellington Park Terrace, under the heading ‘Proposal for Dual Language Street Signage’ be taken back to the Committee for further consideration, together with other similar applications which have met the threshold for approval but have been previously deferred, following an undertaking by officers to examine international best practice and develop a mechanism to deal with such applications.”
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
	Members are asked to consider the contents of the report and:
2.1	1. Agree to the proposed mechanism to deal with applications that are deferred.
2.2	2. Determine if the applications for Wynchurch Avenue, Sunningdale Park North, Ben Madigan Parth South, Wellington Park Terrace and Malone Valley Park are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) continue to follow this proposed mechanism,</li> <li>b) be reconsidered by committee based on the previous survey results,</li> <li>c) be subject to a further survey of occupiers or</li> <li>d) be closed.</li> </ul>
2.3	3. determine if the applications for Ebor Street and Ballysillan Road are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) follow this proposed mechanism,</li> <li>b) be subject to a survey of occupiers or</li> <li>c) be closed.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The report sets out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the current policy position,</li> <li>2. the proposed mechanism by which these decisions will be dealt with,</li> <li>3. consideration of best practice for these types of decisions and</li> <li>4. the decisions previously taken to defer applications and put them to the back of the queue.</li> </ul>

**1. Policy position:**

3.2 The current Dual Language Street Signs policy came into effect in October 2022. The policy states that

3.3 *“When an application is received, the Council will canvass by post all Occupiers of that street and seek their views on the request to erect a street sign in a second specified language.”*

3.4 *“Each application will be subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. This assessment will commence when the application is received and where any adverse impacts are identified, that information will be brought to Committee.”*

3.5 Therefore, some applications will be brought to committee seeking approval to carry out the survey of that particular street if adverse impact are identified.

3.6 *“Where fifteen percent or more of the Occupiers of that street have indicated that they are in favour of the erection of a second language street sign, then such a sign may be erected, subject to the residual discretion of the Council as specified in subsection (xi) below.”*

3.7 *“The Council will retain a residual discretion to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case by case basis. It may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account:*

- 3.8
- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street;*
  - (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs;*
  - (c) consideration of the local context of the application;*
  - (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and*
  - (e) all material considerations relating to the application.”*

**2. Mechanism for deferred applications:**

3.9 As a result of the decision to defer some applications, putting them to the bottom of the queue that existed at the date of decision, officers have been working to the following procedure:

Currently implemented.

- 3.10
- The applicant for the street that was deferred was written to and advised of the committee decision. Their application was marked as deferred and another application in their name was created at the end of the queue. The purpose of which would be to facilitate processing at the relevant time in the future when all other applications up to that point were dealt with. Once the deferred application is reached, it will be brought back to committee to consider how it is to be progressed.

Additional steps proposed

3.11 In addition to the above, and in instances where another application has been made for the street, officers propose the following to help manage these deferred applications:

3.12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We write to applicants of all applications for the same street and for any second language and advise them of the committee decision for that street based on a previous application.</li> </ul>																					
3.13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All the applications are marked “on hold” noting that further processing of the applications is on hold pending the outcome of the deferred application.</li> </ul>																					
3.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any subsequent applicants for the street would be informed that a decision has already been made to defer an application for consideration in the initial language but that applications would be taken and marked “on hold” until the time a decision is made on the deferred application.</li> </ul>																					
	<p><b>3. <u>Consideration of best practice for making decisions on dual language street sign applications in these circumstances</u></b></p>																					
3.15	<p>Council’s dual language street sign policy is based upon international best practice in relation to minority languages and was co-designed with stakeholders. The policy has regard to the Council’s commitments in the Language Strategy which include, amongst other things, addressing language barriers as well as promoting, protecting and enhancing linguistic diversity in the city. The policy therefore complies with best practice.</p>																					
3.16	<p>The application of the policy, including the weight to be attached to the views of the residents and the exercise of residual discretion, is for elected members having regard to its commitments in the Language Strategy around the promotion of minority languages, its statutory obligation to have regard to the views of the residents of the street and all other material considerations.</p> <p><b>4. <u>Decisions taken to defer applications:</u></b></p> <p><u>Deferred applications based on survey results.</u></p>																					
3.17	<p>Members have taken a previous decision to defer consideration of the following applications for the erection of dual language street signs based on survey results. Whilst 15% of residents were in favour of the erection of dual language street signs the committee took into consideration the number of people who voted against the proposal. For all of these applications the second language proposed was Irish. The streets involved and the survey results of occupiers for and against are indicated below. Full details are contained in Appendix 1.</p>																					
3.18	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Streets</th> <th>For Proposal</th> <th>Against Proposal</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Wynchurch Avenue (First Survey)</td> <td>18%</td> <td>26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wynchurch Avenue (Second Survey)</td> <td>15.04%</td> <td>28.31%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sunningdale Park North</td> <td>22%</td> <td>33%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ben Madigan Park South</td> <td>23.18%</td> <td>26.08%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wellington Park Terrace</td> <td>17.14%</td> <td>31.42%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Malone Valley Park *decision to be ratified at March Council</td> <td>15%</td> <td>16.25%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Streets	For Proposal	Against Proposal	Wynchurch Avenue (First Survey)	18%	26%	Wynchurch Avenue (Second Survey)	15.04%	28.31%	Sunningdale Park North	22%	33%	Ben Madigan Park South	23.18%	26.08%	Wellington Park Terrace	17.14%	31.42%	Malone Valley Park *decision to be ratified at March Council	15%	16.25%
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<p>3.19</p> <p>3.20</p> <p>3.21</p> <p>3.22</p> <p>3.23</p> <p>3.24</p> <p>3.25</p>	<p><u>Deferred applications prior to survey.</u></p> <p>Members have also taken a previous decision to defer consideration of two applications prior to survey based on adverse impacts identified at the initial assessment and based on elected member notifications. These applications were for Ebor Street and Ballysillan Road</p> <p>The record of the decisions taken in relation to all these deferrals were similar to that taken for the first deferred application in relation to Wynchurch Avenue where the minute states:</p> <p><i>“That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the decision to erect a Dual Language Street Sign at Wynchurch Avenue until those applications already received to date had been processed.”</i></p> <p>The effect of these decisions meant all the above applications were put to the back of the queue that existed at the time of the decision being taken, following the ratification of each decision by council.</p> <p><b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b></p> <p>There are no Financial, Human Resources, Assets and other implications in this report.</p> <p><b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></b></p> <p>Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. The applications being considered in this report underwent this assessment and feedback was given for each application when originally presented to committee. Details for each application are contained in Appendix 2.</p> <p>The applications were also notified to elected members to allow any member of the DEA in which the street is located to identify any potential for adverse impacts on the grounds of equality of opportunity and good relations. Details of any elected member responses for each application are also contained in Appendix 2.</p>
<p><b>4.0</b></p>	<p><b>Appendices</b></p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>Appendix 1 - Original survey details for deferred applications. Appendix 2 – Initial assessment and member notification information previous included in committee reports for deferred applications.</p>

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## **APPENDIX 1 – P&C Committee March 2025**

### **Wynchurch Avenue**

Survey Date: 09/03/2023 Two extra days were added to original date of closure 10/04/2023 due to April Bank holidays.

Number of Surveys Issued: 113 (17 to proceed)

Number of surveys returned: 54

<b>Yes - 20 (18%)</b>
<b>No - 30 (26%)</b>
<b>No Pref -4 (4%)</b>
<b>Not Returned - 59 (52%)</b>

### **Wynchurch Avenue ( Resurvey)**

Resurvey Date: 03/08/2023

Number of Surveys Issued: 113 (17 to proceed)

Number of surveys returned: 51

<b>Yes - 17 (15.04%)</b>
<b>No - 32 (28.31%)</b>
<b>No Pref - 2 (1.76%)</b>
<b>Not Returned - 62 (54.86%)</b>

### **Sunningdale Park North**

Survey Date: Delivered 25/01/2024

Number of Surveys Issued: 100 (15 to proceed)

Number of surveys returned: 56

<b>Yes - 22 (22%)</b>
<b>No - 33 (33%)</b>
<b>No Pref - 1 (1%)</b>
<b>Not Returned - 44 (44%)</b>

### **Ben Madigan Park South**

Survey Date: 06/02/2024

Number of Surveys Issued: 69 (11 to proceed)

Number of surveys returned: 34

<b>Yes - 16 (23.18%)</b>
<b>No - 18 (26.08%)</b>
<b>No Preference - 0</b>
<b>Not Returned - 35 (50.72%)</b>

**Wellington Park Terrace**

Survey Date: 09/07/24

Number of Surveys Issued: 35 (6 to proceed)

Number of surveys returned: 18

<b>Yes - 6 (17.14%)</b>
<b>No - 11 (31.42%)</b>
<b>No pref - 1 (2.85%)</b>
<b>Not Returned - 17 (48.57%)</b>

**Malone Valley Park** \*decision to be ratified by March Council

Survey Date: 12/11/24

Number of Surveys Issued: 80 (12 to proceed)

Number of surveys returned: 28

<b>Yes - 12 (15%)</b>
<b>No - 13 (16.25%)</b>
<b>No pref - 3 (3.75%)</b>
<b>Not Returned - 52 (65%)</b>

Street	Potential for adverse impacts identified at Initial Assessment	Objections raised by Elected Members
<b>Streets deferred based on survey results</b>		
<b>Wynchurch Avenue (first)</b>	None	None
<b>Wynchurch Avenue (resurvey)</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Sunningdale Park North</b>	An initial assessment for Sunningdale Park North was carried out by officers and potential adverse impacts were identified. A draft equality screening was carried out to assess the application for equality and good relations issues. The screening identified that the carrying out of the survey and the erection of the dual language street signs could cause community tension. An objection was also received by an elected member. The application was subsequently brought to committee on 5th December 2023 where it was agreed that the survey would be carried out, ratified at council on 8th January 2024.	Sunningdale Park North (in relation to the decision to carry out the survey – An objection was raised to this application by Court DEA member Cllr Ron McDowell stating 'The area has been settled for a few years now after some tensions around parading and flags etc. The flags having been curtailed and the parade passing quietly and peacefully again for the first time in a few years. This is a predominantly Unionist area and I do fear a tinderbox effect if these signs are to be erected where they are not wanted.'
<b>Ban Madigan Park South</b>	None	None
<b>Wellington Park Terrace</b>	None	None
<b>Malone Valley Park</b> *decision to be ratified by March Council	None	None

Streets deferred prior to survey		
<b>Ebor Street</b>	The request for dual language street signs (in the Irish language) for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Avenue were assessed for equality of opportunity and good relations issues and the applications for the streets were presented to Elected Members through the notification process. On this occasion objections were raised stating that due to the fact that these are Unionist communities the proposals may lead to a negative impact on community relations within these areas.	Ebor Street – Botanic DEA Cllr Tracy Kelly raised an objection stating 'We must not forget that this is a strong unionist community, and this will not be welcomed at all. My fear is that it will greatly impact community relations and cause upset when it is not necessary.'
	3.13 The applications were subjected to an initial Section 75 assessment to determine what impact the potential erection of dual language signs might have in the areas surrounding these streets. A full screening process was carried out to address the issues associated with carrying out a survey and the placing of street signs in these streets.	
	3.14 The draft screenings have identified that the carrying out of a survey in itself in these areas could cause community tension, as could the erection of the street sign and therefore has the potential to cause an adverse impact on the grounds of good relations. It is acknowledged; however, the process could alternatively assist in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity.	
<b>Ballysillan Road</b>	The request for dual language street signs (in the Irish language) for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Avenue were assessed for equality of opportunity and good relations issues and the applications for the streets were presented to Elected Members through the notification process. On this occasion objections were raised stating that due to the fact that these are Unionist communities the proposals may lead to a negative impact on community relations within these areas.	Oldpark DEA member Cllr Jordan Doran raised an objection stating 'Ballysillan is an over-whelming Unionist community, and I have strong concerns that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Ballysillan Road would have a strongly negative impact on community relations within the area.'
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