

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 20th November, 2020

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

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

Also attended: Councillors Matt Collins and Gormley.

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 October, omitting those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November, subject to the omission of the decision under the heading "Bilingual Street Signage", which had been called in.

### Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

### Restricted Items

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following seven 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.

### **Restricted Items**

#### **Medium Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme**

The Director of Finance and Resources drew the Committee's attention to a report which provided a further update on the assessment of the key financial factors which would influence the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021/22 - 2023/24 and the rate setting process for 2021/22, together with an overview of the priorities and work in progress to establish the 2021/22 – 2023/24 Efficiency Programme.

The report set out the six key elements involved in the annual setting of the District Rate and provided details of the main business as usual cost pressures, licences/support costs, rates scenarios, growth proposals and the Efficiency Programme. It provided also details on the forecast non-recurrent impact of Covid-19 on 2020/21 income and expenditure levels.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

#### **Finance Update**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd October, it had received an update on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's financial position and on a strategy to address the forecast deficit and the mitigation measures which had and would be taken as the situation evolved. Accordingly, the Director of Finance and Resources submitted a further report which provided the latest forecast update, as well as the outturn report and Treasury Management Report for Quarter 2 of 2020/21.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

#### **Unit Fees for St George's Market**

The Committee agreed to defer until the special meeting being arranged to allocate funding for food poverty, a report in response to a request from Councillor Gormley to waive, for a three-month period, rental fees for those businesses operating from the units in St. George's Market, in light of the trading difficulties which they were experiencing as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The report had included also a request from stallholders within the market to waive rental fees for a further three months for the same reason.

The Committee agreed also that the report should include details of the cost to the Council of waiving, for a two-week and a four-week period, the rental fees for those businesses within its estate which would be adversely affected by the imposition of the further restrictions which had been announced by the Northern Ireland Executive on 19th November and how that cost would be met.

### **Update on the Operational Recovery of Council Services**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the recovery of Council services and the response to and ongoing management of the second wave of Covid- 19.

The Chief Executive reported that, in terms of service recovery, the Council continued to adhere to its six guiding principles for sustaining its services and pointed out that, over the past month, officers had been collating information for use in the event of a second lockdown or further restrictions being imposed, with the aim of trying to maintain operational status for as many services as possible. The Council was continuing to work closely with the Public Health Agency and was engaging with key services and had processes in place to quickly access and implement any changes to services, following any amendment to regulations. It was also working closely with the Executive Office to foster a culture of compliance and adherence to the current restrictions, with enforcement teams playing a key role.

She provided an update on the current operational status of Belfast Castle and Malone House and referred to a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners (in respect of its Police Force) and, which set out an agreed framework for the enforcement of Covid-19 related regulations.

She highlighted the Covid-related guidance for staff which was being provided through the Council's internal communication channels and, finally, reviewed the work which was being undertaken in response to the Chancellor's decision to extend the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme until 31st March, 2021.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Destination Hub – Update on Outline Business Case**

(Ms. W. Langham, Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the Belfast Destination Hub represented the key project under the tourism and regeneration pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal.

She reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 21st June, 2019, it had granted approval to proceed to the next stage in the development of the Hub, which would comprise a number of work strands and involve the production of a Treasury compliant Outline Business Case, which would require approval by the Department for the Economy before funding could be allocated.

She explained that the final draft of the Outline Business Case had been prepared and that it was currently under review, with advice and feedback having been requested from the Departments for Communities, the Economy and Finance, as well as Tourism NI, prior to it being submitted to the Belfast Region City Deal Executive Board for consideration.

The Programme Director provided a brief overview of the Belfast Destination Hub, including its primary objectives, the draft programme and timescale and the direct and indirect benefits to the City and provided additional information on the strategic, economic, commercial financial and management elements reflected within the Outline Business Case.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and granted approval for the Destination Hub Outline Business Case to be submitted to the Belfast Region City Deal Executive Board by the deadline date of 8th December.

### **Recruitment of Senior Posts**

The Committee noted the timeline for the recruitment of the post of Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, following the retirement in September of Mr. Nigel Grimshaw from the Council, and agreed that the selection panel should comprise the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee (or their nominees), together with Councillor Groogan.

The Committee noted also that a request to appoint a selection panel for the new post of Head of Climate, which had been created due to the forthcoming departure of Ms. Grainia Long from the Council, had been withdrawn to allow for additional work to be undertaken. The matter would now be considered at the special meeting which was being arranged to allocate funding for food poverty.

The Committee agreed also that the potential for appointing a Council officer to deal specifically with the increasing issues of poverty and deprivation should be examined.

### **Inner City Kerbside Sort – Update on APSE Review**

(Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the findings to date of a review which had been undertaken by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) of a waste collection options appraisal for inner Belfast, which the Committee had requested at its meeting on 21st August.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the content of the report, including the need for APSE to undertake further in-depth research to build upon its findings;
- ii. noted that Council officers, with support from the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP), would run a detailed collections modelling on emerging proposals, details of which would be presented to the Committee within a composite report in the New Year; and
- iii. agreed to support an invitation being extended to the Collaborative Circular Economy Network, which represented businesses in Northern Ireland which utilise recycled products collected by councils, to make a future presentation, with the People and Communities Committee meeting on 8th December being suggested and all Members to be invited to attend.

**Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

**Motion - Secured Serviced City Centre  
Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion on Secured Serviced City Centre Civic Bicycle Parking Facilities had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor McKeown:

“The coronavirus pandemic has forced us all to rethink how we live our lives. However, as we seek to build back better, it is essential that we do this in a safe, sustainable way.

Supporting cycling infrastructure in Belfast is key to this, enabling people to get around our city in a way which is good for health and good for the environment.

However, given the regular theft of bicycles in the city centre, it is important that we take steps to provide facilities to enable people to feel secure when they travel there by bicycle.

Therefore, the Council agrees to the creation of secured, serviced city centre civic bicycle parking facilities, and will reallocate car parking space or other appropriate property in the city centre for this purpose, and work with partners to enable this to happen.”

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

Councillor Smyth informed the Committee that the increasing number of bicycle thefts in the City centre, as had been confirmed recently by the Police Service of Northern Ireland, had highlighted the need for secure facilities to be provided for cyclists in that area and had given rise to his motion.

He pointed out that the significant growth in cycling, together with the likely increase in the number of e-bikes over the coming years, reinforced this need and he suggested that a vacant retail unit or units within the City centre be used for that purpose. He, therefore, urged the Committee to adopt his motion and, in so doing, agree that Council officers work with the Belfast Community Safety Partnership, the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Sustrans and other stakeholders to produce, within a three-month timescale, a report on the feasibility of putting in place, preferably by the spring of 2021, a secure facility for bicycle storage in the City centre.

In response to a request from a Member, Councillor Smyth agreed to amend his motion to provide for the inclusion of e-bikes and e-scooters.

During discussion, clarification was sought on current bicycle storage provision in the City centre and the need for improved cycling infrastructure in the west of the City and to extend the Belfast Bikes scheme into that area was highlighted. The point was made that storage facilities should be covered and that the use of Section 76

Developers' contributions and the acquisition of funding from other sources should be explored.

In response, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy pointed out that the Council had, as part of its response to Covid-19, secured funding from the Department for Infrastructure to increase bicycle storage facilities across the City and that a number of potential sites were being assessed. It was hoped that these would be capable of storing between ten and twenty bicycles. He pointed out that a review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, which had been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, would seek to address the issues which had been raised in relation to the west of the City and would also consider other areas.

The Committee adopted the motion, as amended, and agreed to the submission of a report, in line with that which had been requested by Councillor Smyth, and incorporating those additional points which had been raised.

**Motion: Climate Change Act - Further Response from Minister of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, had passed the following motion on a Climate Change Act, which had been proposed by Councillor Flynn:

“This Council welcomes the environmental commitments in the New Decade New Approach Deal. This council is deeply concerned that the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs did not support an Assembly Motion to develop a Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland.

This Council notes that Northern Ireland has fallen behind other parts of the UK in progressing reduction of emissions. A Climate Change Act can help us realise the ambition of the Belfast Agenda to create an environmentally sustainable City. This Council calls on the Minister to immediately prioritise the development of a Climate Change Act with legally binding and ambitious sectoral emission-reduction targets and a just transition to protect jobs through upskilling in less carbon intensive sectors.”

The City Solicitor reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 23rd October, it had considered a response from the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. The Minister had confirmed that he had written to the UK Climate Change Committee for advice on what Northern Ireland's equitable contribution to the UK's net zero emissions target would be, to ensure that its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets were credible and evidence-based. Unfortunately, the Committee had not been in a position to respond to his request until after it had provided advice on the UK's sixth carbon budget, which would be published in December, 2020.

In the interim, his officials had provided him with proposals on an options appraisal for a Climate Change Bill in Northern Ireland. The Minister would consider those options, along with the advice provided by the Climate Change Committee, and would present his findings to the Northern Ireland Executive to agree a way forward.

The Committee, on 23rd October, had noted the Minister's response and had agreed that a further letter be forwarded to him seeking an update on the work which was being undertaken by his Department to address increasing carbon emission levels, including the mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and enforcement, the role of the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in that work, and any assessment of carbon emissions which had been undertaken at a local level.

The Minister, within his response to that letter, had pointed out that reducing carbon emissions required a collective approach from Government and society and that it was the responsibility of Northern Ireland Departments to take action to reduce emissions in those areas under their control. He had explained that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs was responsible for emissions in the Agriculture, Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry and Waste sectors and that it was taking forward or supporting a number of programmes of work which would directly contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

He had gone on to review the latest greenhouse gas emission figures for Northern Ireland and for its proportion of total UK emissions, both overall and in relation to the agriculture sector and had pointed out that that sector was recognised by the Climate Change Committee as being one of the most difficult in which to achieve reductions.

The Minister had then confirmed that the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency was responsible for enforcing the various pieces of legislation designed to protect the environment and public health from harmful emissions and had concluded by referring to the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations and to the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, in the context of the monitoring and reporting of emissions.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Motion: Moratorium on Licences for Fracking and Exploration and Extraction of Fossil Fuels - Response from Ministers for the Economy and Infrastructure**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st October, had passed a motion on Licences for Fracking and Exploration and Extraction of Fossil Fuels, which had been proposed by Councillor Baker:

"This Council recognises that we are in a climate emergency and, being aware of the environmental and public health damage caused by fracking and the exploration and extraction of hydrocarbons, agrees to write to the Minister for the Economy and to the Minister for Infrastructure to establish their respective intentions regarding (i) the issuing of exploratory licences and (ii) the removal of Permitted Development Rights for hydrocarbon exploration which are currently provided for under Part 16 of the Planning Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Council also calls upon the Northern Ireland Executive to place an immediate ban on all petroleum licensing and deny permitted development rights to any company seeking to prospect for oil and or/gas."

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that responses have now been received from the Minister for the Economy and the Minister for Infrastructure.

The Minister for the Economy, within her response, had confirmed that the policy governing the issue of Permitted Development Rights for hydrocarbon exploration was the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure and that she had, therefore, no comment to make on that matter. However, that section of the motion dealing with the issuing of exploratory licences and calling upon the Northern Ireland Executive to place an immediate ban on all petroleum licensing did fall within her remit.

She had explained that, on 13th October, in response to a Private Member's motion on Onshore Petroleum Licensing and Drilling, she had outlined in the Northern Ireland Assembly her position on a moratorium or ban on petroleum development, as well as her intentions regarding the handling of two current petroleum licence applications. The full transcript of that debate can be accessed by clicking on the following link and scrolling down to page 28: <http://data.niassembly.gov.uk/HansardXml/plenary-13-10-2020.pdf>

The Minister for Infrastructure, within her response, recognised, like the Council, that there was a climate emergency and had stressed that she was continually examining ways in which to address it. She referred to the fact that, on 5th October, she had announced her intention to bring forward a package of changes to permitted development rights, including the removal of permitted development rights for petroleum (oil and gas) exploration. Her proposals would be presented to the Infrastructure Committee in the coming weeks for scrutiny.

The Minister had then pointed out that her Department also had a responsibility for regional planning policy, including the Strategic Planning Policy Statement provisions that "there should be a presumption against the exploitation of unconventional hydrocarbon extraction until there is sufficient and robust evidence on all environmental impacts." She confirmed that her position on this issue, like those of her predecessors, remained unchanged, and that, in her view, that remained an appropriate precautionary approach.

The Minister had then highlighted the need to note that any proposals for development, involving unconventional hydrocarbon extraction, were likely to be determined by her Department as regionally significant development. Such proposals would be assessed on their individual merits and would take into account Strategic Planning Policy Statement provisions, the views of consultees and all other material planning considerations, including health and environmental impacts. Finally, she had pointed out that there were currently no such planning applications before the Department for Infrastructure for consideration.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Motion: Funding for the Arts and Creative Industries –**  
**Response from Ministers for Communities and Finance**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st October, had passed the following motion on Funding for the Arts and Creative Industries, which had been proposed by Councillor Mulholland:

“This Council acknowledges the contribution of those employed in the Arts, Events and Creative Industries. It understands the impact that lockdown has had on these sectors; on theatres, museums, live music venues, comedy clubs, freelancers and individual artists and all other creative outlets that have been in the dark since March, with most having no finite indication of when their activities can recommence safely.

The Council welcomes the allocation of £29million by the Northern Ireland Executive to the Arts, Culture and Heritage sectors, as part of a £1.57 billion investment from the UK Government, purposefully designed to protect these world class industries across the UK.

The Council agrees to write to the Communities Minister, Carál Ní Chuilín, in support of the direct allocation of funds to those within these industries who have been most impacted. The Council agrees also to write to the Finance Minister, Conor Murphy, to encourage any further measures that can be taken to support and protect the creative sectors going forward.”

Mr. J. Ball, Head of Arts Branch, who had responded on behalf of the Minister for Communities, had stressed that the Minister placed great value on the role of arts and culture and that she had been engaging with representatives from across the sector and was fully aware of the significant impact which the Covid-19 restrictions were having on them. The Minister had welcomed the £29m of funding which had, in September, been allocated by the Northern Ireland Executive across the arts, language, culture and heritage sectors and the wider creative economy. On 28th October, she had allocated the first £3m of that to the Individual Emergency Resilience Programme, which was administered on her Department’s behalf by the Arts Council for NI. This, Mr. Ball had pointed out, had built upon the Department’s earlier investment in the Fund and had allowed for further grants totalling £3.85m to be made to 1,089 people in the sector who contributed significantly to the economy and the lives of many people here. The Programme was open to all those working across the creative economy and in many other categories and he had provided examples of those who had benefitted from it.

Mr. Ball had concluded by providing details of a series of further allocations from the Executive’s funding package and by confirming that the Minister would announce shortly how the remaining £8m would be distributed.

The Minister of Finance, within his response, had referred to his lead role in liaising with the Treasury, and had addressed also another motion which had been passed by the Council on 1st October, calling upon the Minister for the Economy to undertake an investigation into how the Job Retention Scheme and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme could be retained at pre-October 31st levels, including the earmarking of funds to minimise the impact of job losses.

He had stressed that he fully recognised the significant pressures which many workers and businesses, including those from the arts and creative industries sector, were facing and accepted that those had increased further following the introduction by the Executive on 16th October of new restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19.

He had pointed out that, like the Council, he too was concerned about the shortcomings and gaps in the aforementioned schemes and that he had raised his concerns directly and repeatedly with the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary to the

Treasury and Michael Gove M.P. However, he had stressed those were Treasury schemes and, given the extent of the wage support involved and the fact that they were administered via the tax system, only the Treasury could put them in place. He had added that the Executive itself had implemented other steps to support those affected by Covid-19 through the rating system and a number of grant schemes which had been established.

The Minister had proceeded to point out that the new Job Support Scheme and an extension to the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme had been announced on 24th September, as part of the Treasury's Winter Economy Plan. There had been further announcements on the Job Support Scheme since then and he referred to the fact that it had been enhanced for businesses which had been forced to close or which had been significantly restricted, known as the JSS Closed. Until November, businesses which had previously used the furlough scheme could continue to do so. However, there were significant concerns that, in the transition between the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme coming to an end and the Job Support Scheme opening at the start of November, many would not receive the wage support which they desperately need. Therefore, he had written to the Chancellor to urge him to bring forward the start of the JSS Closed scheme till 16th October but, disappointingly, he had not heeded that call. As a result, wage support for those new employees who were ineligible under the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme would not be available until the JSS Closed scheme began on 1st November.

In addition, the Chancellor had, on 22nd October, announced some further changes to the JSS Open scheme, where there would now be a reduction in the employer contribution to employee wages and in the time required for an employee to be in work since the scheme had been first announced. This, the Minister had stated, was welcome and would ensure that employees would continue to receive at least 73% of their normal wages, where they earned £3,125 per month or less and where employers would now have to contribute 5% of employees' wages for hours not worked. Further to that, the Chancellor had announced a doubling of payments under the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme extension from 20% to 40% of average monthly profits, up to a total of £3,750, although the Minister had recognised that it remained lower than the levels provided previously.

The Minister, in conclusion, had stressed that the Executive would continue to examine ways in which to support businesses moving forward, including those from the arts and creative industries sector, which he pointed out had recently received an additional allocation of £29m for cultural recovery. He accepted that there were many businesses who had not benefitted from previous or current support schemes and confirmed that he had encouraged Executive colleagues to bring forward proposals for those sectors within their area of responsibility, with a view to supporting businesses and protecting livelihoods.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

### **Proposed Approach for the Strategic Consideration of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

The Committee deferred consideration of a report seeking approval to implement a proposed strategic approach for monitoring and tracking motions and issues raised in advance by Members to allow it to be considered in the wider context of a review of Standing Orders and the remit of the new Standards Committee.

### Review of Active Motions

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 25th October, 2019, it had considered the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Nicholl and which had been referred to it by the Council on 1st October:

“This Council notes that other councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion and agrees that the Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly update which will be brought to each Council Meeting, detailing the following:

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

The Committee had agreed that a report on the future management of motions be presented to the Committee at a future date.

The City Solicitor reported that, since 2016, the Council had considered over 300 motions and issues raised in advance by Members, over 100 of which had yet to be considered in terms of their resource implications. Typically, fifteen motions were now being presented each month to the Council.

He explained that, up to February, 2020, 101 motions were still open. Those had been reviewed by officers and had been categorised and numbered as follows:

1. Motions which contained an action which has been completed and were being recommended for closure – 39;
2. Motions which had been incorporated into Council policy and were being recommended for closure – 30; and
3. Motions which were continuing to progress – 32.

He drew the Committee’s attention to a list of motions which had been placed under each category and, in terms of future management arrangements, confirmed that a live database had been developed, which would be managed jointly by the Democratic Services and Strategy and Policy Units. The database would, on a quarterly basis, be filtered according to Committee and a report would then be presented to that Committee summarising the main issues and making recommendations regarding closures.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved the recommendations relating to those motions listed within categories 1 – 3 above and agreed, at the request of a Member, to move the motion under the heading “Belfast

Energy Transition Strategy” from category 2 to category 3, given that it remained an priority area for the Council; and

- ii. approved the arrangement for the future management of motions, as outlined.

**Motion: Belfast Leisure Centres - Proposed Redundancies**

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 2nd November, the following motion on Belfast Leisure Centres – Proposed Redundancies had been proposed by Councillor Matt Collins and seconded by Councillor Ferguson:

“This Council notes with deep concern recent moves by GLL to cut jobs in Belfast leisure centres through proposed redundancies.

The Council greatly appreciates the role of all leisure workers who have made a positive contribution to our services and our community over many years, and the need for fully staffed and funded leisure centres as a vital resource for the physical and mental health of communities emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the Council opposes the proposed job losses and calls on GLL to immediately cease any moves toward redundancies; tasks the Chief Executive and the Officer team to engage with relevant trade union representatives; seek an urgent meeting with GLL management to put firmly on the record the Council's opposition; and work toward a financial package that addresses the jobs under threat and ensures no leisure worker loses their job in the weeks and months ahead.”

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

Councillor Collins welcomed the extension of the furlough scheme until 31st March, 2021. He referred to the fact that GLL was in the process of implementing yet another voluntary redundancy scheme and highlighted at length the detrimental impact which that would have upon the terms and conditions of staff and service provision moving forward. He pointed out that the Committee had, during previous GLL voluntary redundancy schemes, sought the views of the Trades Unions and he stressed that it would be beneficial to do so again.

During discussion, several Members pointed to the fact that Elected Members on the Active Belfast Limited Board had been unaware of GLL's intention to implement a voluntary redundancy scheme and pointed to issues around communication and the operation of the Board generally. That led to a review of the Board being requested.

Other Members highlighted the need for information on, for example, the furloughing of staff, to be provided for specific categories, rather than on an overall basis, and deficiencies in GLL's marketing strategy, compared to other leisure providers, was raised.

The Chief Executive reminded the Committee that the relationship between the Council and GLL was set out in a number of agreements and that the formal contract needed to be respected. However, there was scope for a review of the Active Belfast Limited Board.

The Committee noted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the terms of reference for a review of the Active Belfast Limited Board, including its membership and governance arrangements.

### **Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues**

#### **Update on City Region Growth Deal**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 This report is to provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to note:**

- i. the programme overview, the update in respect of each of the pillars , the progress that has been made in Outline Business Case (OBC) development and the important stage that the programme is now approaching;**
- ii. the update in respect of the BRCD Council Panel and the minutes of the BRCD Council Panel held on 30th September 2020; and**
- iii. the recent successful bid to the Apprenticeship Challenge Fund and approve the approach to work in partnership with BRCD partners to deliver this collaborative project as outlined in section 3.14.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **Programme Overview**

**3.1 In September, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was advised of work completed by the BRCD partners to review their projects in the context of the Covid-19 crisis and also received an update on the work of the Executive and Advisory Boards to ensure that the Programme is aligned with the Economic Recovery Strategy. In addition, the Committee received an update on the digital task and finish group which had been set up to identify short-term measures to boost digital skills and support digital transformation as**

an immediate response to the crisis; a further update on this work is included in this report.

- 3.2** OBCs are now progressing towards completion. In light of the difficult financial climate facing all public bodies, and the importance of ensuring that the scale of ambition aligns with affordability and available finances, the focus at this stage is on resolving key issues and challenges particularly in respect of budget profiling and scalability. Robust financial planning will be critical and will need to include consideration of plans for long-term revenue financing, so that the transformative investments included within the BRCD can proceed with confidence.
- 3.3** As previously reported, the timeline for developing OBCs for all the capital projects that were outlined in the Heads of Terms has understandably had to be reviewed. Work on Draft OBCs is continuing at pace and will be considered by respective Advisory Boards in advance of consideration of the Executive Board in December. Partners remain determined to have a deal in place so that funding can begin to flow from 1st April 2021 and discussions are ongoing between Partners and the NI and UK Governments in relation to agreeing a 'phased' deal to enable a 'Deal Document' to be signed off by the end of the financial year.
- 3.4** Communication and engagement continues to be a priority both at a project and programme level. The Committee was advised in February this year that specialist support was being commissioned to assist with strategic engagement activity - including both business and political engagement. Although this work was delayed somewhat due to the Covid crisis it is envisaged that, given recent advancements, strategic engagement with key stakeholders will begin over the coming months.

#### **Investment Priorities**

#### **Tourism and Regeneration**

- 3.5** Intensive engagement has taken place with partners to consider and address the impact of Covid-19 on this programme of investment. With the exception of one project within Antrim and Newtownabbey, all tourism and regeneration projects remain on schedule to submit final OBCs by the end of November. Members are reminded that the OBC for the Belfast Destination Hub will be the subject of a separate paper at today's meeting. The OBCs for regeneration projects also continue to reflect and respond to the new challenges facing town and city centres in light of the pandemic. It is intended that a collective recommendation for this Pillar will be submitted to the Executive Board in December for review.

- 3.6 A strategic narrative for the Tourism and Regeneration is currently being finalised. Once complete, this will provide a strong communications tool for both the Pillar and the Programme.

Innovation

- 3.7 Final engagement workshops with the UK and NI Governments for the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Global Innovation Institute (GII) and Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (i-REACH) OBCs were held in October. The workshops were positive, demonstrating the significant progress made, with detailed feedback received from all parties. Feedback from NI Government departments on The Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology (CDHT) OBC has been received and further feedback from the UK Government is imminent. A first draft OBC for the Screen Media & Innovation Lab (SMIL) is progressing and is due to be submitted to the Innovation Pillar Board during November. The innovation projects have been significantly rescaled and are now broadly in line with the funding available to support this Pillar. Significant detailed work has been taking place in order to obtain agreed solutions to the initial revenue challenges of these projects and these solutions will be reported alongside the OBCs. Work has also taken place to ensure that any potential duplication is minimised and that projects both within the BRCD and across other NI City Deals is aligned as much as possible, recognising, for example, the very different stages of the deals.

Digital

- 3.8 Detailed development of the Digital Innovation Programme Business Case has been taking place during recent months. The business case will prioritise a flexible 'funds-based' approach with the increased use of Challenge Funds alongside an Infrastructure Enabling fund which will support connectivity infrastructure as well as physical enabling infrastructure towards the development of the Belfast Smart District. Detailed and complex work continues to look at a governance structure to manage and administer these funds. Significant industry and government engagement has also taken place in recent months, with engagement with DfE, Invest NI and a positive session with UK Government in October. In addition, engagement continues with the Industry Reference Group, created by the Digital Innovation Commissioner.

Infrastructure

- 3.9 Significant progress has been made in developing OBCs, for the Newry Southern Relief Road, Lagan Pedestrian & Cycle Bridge and Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2. OBCs/IOBCs have now all been reviewed by the Department for Infrastructure

**Economists. Both the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge and Newry Southern Relief Road have now been submitted to the Department of Finance for review. The Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 IOBC remains under review by economists and will be submitted to Department of Finance following review. Given the early stage of development of some of these projects there are very high levels of optimism bias included in the financial case, creating affordability challenges across the programme. The approach to Employability and Skills integration for all 3 projects has been incorporated in the OBCs/IOBCs and further information in relation to employment figures has been provided to the BRCD Team to inform the Employability and Skills programme.**

**Employability and Skills (E&S)**

- 3.10 The Employability and Skills Programme continues to be refined with proposals developed under the ‘employability’, ‘skills’ and ‘digital’ thematic areas. An overall proposition document which outlines the full ambition of the E&S pillar is also in development in draft form and includes details of the Programme and the role of partners in preparing for emerging employment opportunities and in promoting inclusive growth through their organisations. The Proposition will be further refined following additional engagement with partners across councils, colleges, universities and government departments which is planned for later this month. This will be followed by further industry engagement in early December. It is anticipated that a final E&S Proposition will be submitted for approval to the Executive Board in February.**
- 3.11 As previously reported to the Committee, in May the BRCD partners established a digital task and finish group to identify short-term measures that could boost digital skills and support digital transformation in light of the immediate impact of Covid-19. This group worked closely with industry and government to identify a small number of interventions that could help to improve digital literacy, skills and capability. Digital Futures was one of the resulting interventions emerging from this work. Funded by the Department for the Economy as part of the Skills Intervention Programme, and delivered by a number of FE Colleges across the region, more than 250 applicants applied for the 55 places available. Over the next 6 months the Programme will offer the successful graduates opportunities to explore career pathways in Cloud Computing, Data Analytics and Cyber Security. Each of the three programmes has now commenced and employer engagement is underway to match participants to internships which are expected early in 2021.**
- 3.12 Work to advance further interventions developed through the task and finish group is also continuing. This includes:**

- Enhancing existing digital transformation support for small businesses and exploring the potential to provide capital grant funding to enable them to invest in digital transformation through the NI Executive's Growth and City Deal Complementary Fund; and
- Improving access to digital literacy support for residents across the region and exploring innovative new approaches to employment pathways into the digital sector for non-graduates and those from under-represented client groups.

3.13 With ambitions for up to 20,000 new and better jobs over a spectrum of skill levels and across a range of sectors, work of the E&S pillar has included development of a skills programme to align with, and add value to, existing interventions. An emerging priority of this programme is to increase the awareness and accessibility of apprenticeships for both employers and individuals. One of the city deal ambitions in this area is to create an Apprenticeship Hub to establish a centralised resource to:

- Improve the visibility of apprenticeship provision; creating compelling content to stimulate employers to explore apprenticeship pathways; to support co-ordination across apprenticeship providers and to provide a virtual support environment for employers and apprentices;
- Facilitate the future proofing of apprenticeship provision by developing new apprenticeship pathways within priority growth sectors aligned to BRCD investment; and
- Develop new innovative models of delivery, in partnership with government departments, to address barriers to participation aligned to under-represented client groups, key sector needs and/or the needs of smaller employers.

3.14 A recent funding opportunity emerging through the Department for Economy's Apprenticeship Challenge Fund enabled a collaborative bid to be submitted on behalf of the BRCD partners to advance the development of this Hub. A successful funding application has now been secured with up to £100k of resources to undertake developmental work in the design of a virtual apprenticeship platform and enable exploratory work to be undertaken within high value sectors on the development of new apprenticeship pathways. The overall project will be managed by the BRCD Team, with delivery of the project undertaken directly through the Council as well as through Further Education and University Partners. On this basis, the Council will enter into legal agreements with our BRCD partners to deliver the

component elements of the contract they are best placed to deliver.

**BRCDC Council Panel**

- 3.15 Members will be aware that the BRCDC Council Panel provides a forum for members from all six partner councils to meet to jointly discuss issues, progress and benefits of the BRCDC. 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.
- 3.16 A virtual meeting of the Panel was held on the 30th September and hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (minutes attached at Appendix 1). At this meeting, the Panel received a detailed update on progress across the programme and Members considered how the programme might help support a sustainable, resilient recovery from the Covid crisis. Members also discussed key challenges facing the programme including the difficulty of communicating effectively in the current environment and how partners could help rebuild momentum and improve communications and engagement. The next meeting will be held on 25th November 2020 and will be hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

**Next Steps**

- 3.17 The completion of OBCs is now of critical importance in order to continue momentum for the Deal so that it can start to deliver, with a Deal Document being completed before the end of the financial year. To meet this deadline it will be essential to agree a phased deal, with those projects which are most developed being included in the first phase, allowing further time for other projects to undertake additional development work to enable them to demonstrate their value and impact. Work is also now ongoing in earnest with Department of Finance and partner Finance Directors to support profiling, affordability & deliverability across the Deal. This work will continue to intensify as OBCs are finalised and as the Financial Agreement and Plan elements of the Deal Document are drafted. Given the advanced stage of the programme and the finalisation of OBCs, strategic engagement with key stakeholders is crucial and core briefing material will be developed over the coming weeks.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.18 All costs associated with the BRCDC are within existing budgets.

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

- 3.19 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 Committee adopted the recommendations and noted that it would, at its next meeting, receive a detailed report on all of the projects which were being progressed through the outline business case process, including the advanced manufacturing innovation centre and other innovation strands alluded to within the report. It noted also that it would, on a future date, be briefed on new projects being delivered across the City generally.

**Inclusive Growth - Social Value Policy**

The Committee considered the following report:

**"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the development of a Social Value policy for the Council, as part of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- i. note the work in relation to social value that is currently being undertaken;
- ii. note the date for the forthcoming Members' Social Value Working Group engagement workshop (section 3.6); and
- iii. ensure that a representative is nominated from each political party to the task and finish Social Value Working Group for Members.

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 Members agreed a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Beattie in January 2019 on the development of a social value strategy to further social, environmental and economic goals

of Belfast City Council and subsequently in January 2020 to establish a task and finish Social Value Working Group.

- 3.2** Since Members received the last update in January 2019, work has been progressing, led by a cross departmental officer working group to develop a social value policy and supporting framework. Whilst seeking to achieve a best value outcome for the ratepayer, from our procurement activities, the policy also aims to maximise the impact of council's expenditure to get the best possible social outcome thereby making a positive difference to the people and communities in Belfast.
- 3.3** There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to deliver and achieve social value. Research shows that even in cities and regions where social value considerations in procurement have been applied for some time, providers and commissioners continue to learn about how best to achieve and evidence it. The emerging approach that officers have been developing includes a Toolkit to determine appropriate and proportionate social value criteria within a contract. The toolkit also provides a consistent approach to enable the measurement, monitoring and reporting of social value commitments within Council contracts and to, in as far as possible, deliver social value at scale. It is being designed to align with the five long-term outcomes or 'conditions of wellbeing' and associated commitments within the Belfast Agenda that people identified that they wanted by 2035.
- 3.4** The scope of the policy also reflects council's wide ranging role and recognises that social value can be delivered not solely through its procurement power. Other aspects to the policy, which will also contribute towards social value objectives include:
- **Transparency & pre-market engagement** - We will publish and regularly update our procurement pipeline to help suppliers prepare for future tendering opportunities;
  - **Supplier Guidance & Training** – We will develop detailed guidance for potential bidders to Council contracts so that they are better able to accommodate social value commitments and to identify ways in which they can increase the economic, social and environmental value of their work;
  - **Reserved contracts** – We will use reserved contracts, where appropriate, to support social enterprises and co-operatives;
  - **Economic development function** – We provide support to local businesses, particularly social enterprises whose primary objective is to achieve social and/or environmental benefit; and

- Physical development and built environment – We will consider social value at the design stage for future capital projects, seeking for example to maximise opportunities for energy efficiency and use of natural resources.
- 3.5 A draft Social Value Framework is being developed, which sets out the social value initiatives, linked to the Belfast Agenda outcomes, which may be applied to each tender. This will include a number of ‘social value points’ assigned for each social value initiative or measure. It is now timely that the Social Value Procurement Member Working Group is established to consider this policy. We are now seeking representation from all 8 political parties, before the draft Social Value Policy is brought to Committee. A workshop for the Working Group will be scheduled this month. It is hoped that the draft policy will be subject to public consultation in the new year.
- 3.6 Following Council approval, it is proposed to undertake a public consultation, targeting key stakeholders. It is also proposed that as the policy establishes meaningful criteria sitting at the heart of contractual relations which will have measurable/ reportable outcomes, monitoring reports will be brought to Committee on an annual basis.
- 3.7 Members will also be aware that the development of the Social Value Policy and the accompanying Framework is one strand of work designed to make a contribution to our Inclusive Growth ambitions. Work is also being progressed in relation to the Belfast Inclusive Growth City Charter and while the project is still within the engagement phase, it is intended that ‘social value procurement’ will be one of the three pillars to the charter. As such, the timing enables the council to demonstrate its leadership as an exemplar of progressive procurement.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

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

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

#### Final Resilience Strategy for Belfast

(Ms. G. Long, Commissioner for Resilience, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of conclusions arising from the public consultation and engagement on the draft Resilience Strategy, to outline the changes made to the document as part of the finalisation process and seek its approval for the document.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the changes made to the document taking account of the public consultation, and consider for approval, to enable it to proceed to full Council, in advance of a virtual launch in December.

(Members should note that as a city-wide document containing commitments from external partners, the document has already been considered and endorsed by the Resilience and Sustainability Board.)

**3.0 Main Report**

- 3.1 The Belfast Agenda commits the city to the development of a Resilience Strategy to ‘take a targeted approach to addressing those issues which pose the greatest risk to the city and its economy’. The commitment aligned Belfast with a number of cities globally, who are invested in long-term risk management. A highly inclusive process, involving over 1000 individuals was commenced eighteen months ago, and a draft Resilience Strategy was published for formal consultation in January 2020. Importantly, the workstreams arising through the strategy process were co-designed by city partners as part of their work on the Resilience and Sustainability Board.

- 3.2 An extension to the consultation was agreed due to the effect of Covid-19 on partner organisations and their staff. Between January 2020 and July 2020, a period of formal consultation was entered into, incorporating a number of elements:

- an online survey on the Belfast City Council consultation portal;
- standalone submissions forwarded to the Resilience Unit; and
- and a citywide and thematic engagement undertaken on our behalf by Urban Scale Interventions. This included on street engagement at a kiosk in Castle Place, workshops in local neighbourhoods, an interactive ‘resilience tree’ located in public places, and online thematic workshops with young people and older people.

- 3.3 Over 1,300 people took part, 75 written submissions were received. The consultation was almost complete when the lockdown began, at which point all engagement activity moved online, and the completion for the online consultation was extended.
- 3.4 Following the consultation, two workshops were held with members of the Resilience and Sustainability Board, with the aim of discussing feedback, shaping the strategy and aligning with member's programmes. Members of the R&S board met on 10th November and formally endorsed the strategy.

#### **Main Themes arising from the Public Consultation**

- 3.5 The draft Strategy was developed through an inclusive process, whereby we spoke with over one thousand people, and was based on huge amounts of publicly available data and evidence. Unsurprisingly therefore, the public consultation found a high level of agreement with the shocks and stresses identified;
- Consultees welcomed the principle of a resilience strategy; a document that sets out long term risks for the city, and agreed it should be kept 'up to date' and refreshed every two years;
  - Predictably, a large number of consultees felt the final document should reflect the impact of Covid-19 on the city, and should draw conclusions on what this could mean for our future;
  - It was also proposed that 'mental ill health' and 'use of prescription drugs' should be treated separately and that 'car dependency' should be included in the focus on 'carbon intensive systems';
  - There was substantial support for the principle of 'multiple problem solvers' and the suggestion that we need to find levers to solve several problems at once. Consultees agreed with the three areas of focus identified- there was particular support for the need to include children and young people more in the decisions that affect their lives;
  - Generally, there was a view that we need to separate out the 'assessment' of risks, from the 'solutions' and that the document should not try to do too much. Overall, consultees agreed that the biggest long-term challenge for the city was environmental/climate related. On this basis, they agreed that the three 'multiple problems solvers' should try to achieve a single 'resilience goal' and be narrowly focused on

the transition to a zero-emissions economy. That means, in practical terms, that the focus on children and young people should be directed towards their involvement in climate action. This was dealt with in detail in the workshops and there was general agreement with the approach;

- A significant number of respondents asked for the section on inequality to be drawn out further, and addressed as a ‘stress’ in its own right, rather than as part of ‘Economic Recovery Capacity’.

#### Changes to the Document

- Taking into account the feedback above, the strategy now encompasses two distinct sections: (1) a Resilience Assessment, an analysis of the strategic risks to Belfast, taking account of the views of citywide stakeholders and (2) an Ambitions Document: Climate Plan for Belfast, setting out the resilience goal and priorities being delivered by the Resilience and Sustainability Board. It is the intention of the Resilience and Sustainability Board (R&SB) that the Resilience Assessment be reviewed and refreshed every two years to ensure a proactive approach to the management of strategic risks. The R&SB will be the governors of this document along with support from the Belfast Climate Commission.
- The ambitions document will also need to be refreshed as new opportunities for multiple problem solvers (leavers that can respond to several risks at once) arise. This will be the responsibility of the R&S Board to update and deliver.
- As per feedback received, we have included ‘Poverty and Inequality’ as a ‘stress’ and worked directly with Belfast Health and Social Care Board to develop a new section on ‘Public Health Shocks’. We have merged ‘car dependency’ into the section on ‘carbon intensive systems’ and separated ‘Mental Ill-Health’ from ‘Use of Prescription Drugs’.
- The document has been updated to reflect statistical returns published in this calendar year (2020) to ensure the strategy is as up to date as possible.
- The ‘Resilience Assessment’ includes a ‘next steps’ section, which outlines the structure for focusing on the ‘shocks’ and stresses’ across the Community Planning Partnership Boards.
- Reference has been made in the document to digital inequality as a core issue emerging following Covid-19 and the transition to online platforms at scale, for

the delivery of services (including health and education services)

- 3.6 It is worth noting that a number of the ambitions, as stated in the draft version, are already under way. The One Million Trees project, the development of A Belfast City Council Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plan, the establishment of the Resilience and Sustainability board are a few of the 'multiple problem solvers' that are already well on track.

#### Further Engagement

- 3.7 There will be a further short document created in response to all those who took the time to engage during the consultation. Due to the transfer away from Citizen Space to the new Engagement Hub - consideration will need to be given on how to do this in an impactful way.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 The strategy contains a number of significant programmes which have been included as 'ambitions' for the city. Some of these programmes are already fully funded, and others are predicated on securing long-term finance. Approval of the document does not commit Council, or members of the Resilience and Sustainability Board to funding specific projects. On this basis, there are no direct additional financial and resource implications.

#### Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.9 Throughout this process, the Resilience Team, and the Resilience and Sustainability Board has taken account of obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability to promote good relations between the relevant groups as set out in the legislation. The team also ensured that needs and implications for residents living in rural areas were assessed throughout.

The purpose of the Resilience Assessment and the programmes in the Ambitions Document are to reduce inequalities in the city. Evidence from a number of cities globally has demonstrated the adverse impact which widening inequalities can have on a city's resilience.

The Resilience Assessment and the Ambitions Document were screened to assess their implications for equality categories under Section 75. More than 100 official (NISRA) datasets were reviewed throughout the process to understand the impacts of relevant policy interventions for each of the categories. The screening process did not identify adverse impacts for any specific equality categories;

however, we sought to test this further during comprehensive consultation with all equality categories during January – June 2020, and both the equality screening and rural needs impact were hosted on Citizen Space and comments sought during the formal consultation.

The consultation found one example where there was a *perception* that one group could be impacted differentially. Some responses suggested that a focus on children and young people could be at the expense of older people. We have addressed this issue in two ways in the document (1) by emphasising what the international evidence demonstrates, that positive urban planning for children impacts positively on the rest of the population (2) by emphasising that our focus on children and young people is to ensure their participation in decision on climate action in the city.

Importantly, we received a submission from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, which has strongly informed the final document.

In conclusion, no significant adverse implications for groups have been identified. Furthermore, each ‘Foundation Programme’ in the ‘Ambitions Document’ will themselves be screened for their equality implications and be subject, where required, to an Equality Impact Assessment.”

The Commissioner for Resilience informed the Committee that the Resilience Strategy sought to transition Belfast to an inclusive zero-emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation and pointed out that its delivery would be led by the Community Planning Partnership. The Resilience and Sustainability, Living Here, Working and Learning and Growing the Economy and City Development Boards would be responsible for progressing their respective elements. She went on to identify three key areas, namely, Climate Adaption and Mitigation, Participation of Children and Young People and a Connected Zero Emissions Economy, which would seek to build the City’s resilience over time and concluded by outlining the various steps leading up to the launch of the Strategy in December.

After discussion, the Committee approved the Resilience Strategy, commended the Commissioner for Resilience and her staff on the comprehensiveness of the document and noted that future reports on the outworking of the Strategy would make reference to upskilling and job creation.

### **Update on Consultation and Engagement**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress with deployment of the Council’s new digital civic engagement platform and the supporting framework for consultation and engagement.**

## **2.0 Recommendations**

### **2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- i. note the update on proposed civic engagement (with immediate emphasis on obtaining citizen input on city recovery from Covid-19) utilising the new online Engagement HQ platform;**
- ii. agree that the biennial doorstep resident survey planned for this winter, be deferred for at least 6 months; and**
- iii. agree the revised consultation and engagement framework.**

## **3.0 Key Issues**

### **Background**

- 3.1 The Local Government (NI) Act 2014 reinforced the Council's duty to consult, and since then the Council has been working hard to improve its approach to consultation and engagement and has made considerable progress in terms of capacity building and ICT. This work has included procurement of a new digital engagement platform and further development of a revised Corporate Consultation and Engagement Framework to support our approach.**

### **New Engagement Platform and Civic Engagement on City Recovery**

- 3.2 To enhance the Council's capabilities to utilise more innovative participatory tools using online/digital engagement with citizens, at earlier stages and on a more ongoing basis, we have invested in a new digital platform. The formal procurement stage has now been completed and the 'Engagement HQ' platform is currently being configured for Council use, (alongside development of necessary management and operational protocols) in advance of going live by early December 2020. This platform will provide a number of new tools to support early, transparent and ongoing dialogue, and will help address areas identified for improvement that have emerged from associated work on the corporate Consultation and Engagement Framework to underpin Council's approach.**

**Roles of Elected Members in supporting deployment of the new platform**

3.3 Elected Members are asked to note that the following support will be required in deployment and future development/roll out of the new digital platform:

- Fronting engagement projects through short introductory video clips/soundbites
- Promoting and profile raising of the platform and current projects through Members own networks and communication channels in communities
- Inputting to the design of engagement activities at development stages (e.g. via Party Leaders forum, Area Working Groups, SP&R Committee as appropriate)

**Proposals for Platform Launch and Next Steps**

3.4 The new platform will be launched publicly in early December, with the focus on the first engagements on the city's recovery from Covid-19 creating new opportunities for dialogue with citizens, to input their comments, ideas and views on what they think is needed for the city and its communities to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.5 The topics/areas of engagement, and tools for citizen participation, being worked up as part of the platform's early deployment include:

- A stronger future Belfast (city recovery)
  - A featured set of engagement activities will seek citizen participation and engagement on city recovery. This will form the main emphasis of communications activity promoting the initial launch of the new platform. The proposed tools/engagement activities being drafted will be framed to emphasise community/neighbourhood aspects of interest to residents. The tools that will be used for this initial engagement are:
    - Community stories (good news stories from within communities to highlight the positive experiences/learning from responses to Covid-19)
    - Ideas generation (ideas for current and future focus in city recovery)

- A covid-19 survey (to seek views of residents on Covid impacts and inform recovery planning)
- Quick poll (snap virtual poll on immediate Covid concerns)

Building on initial engagement above, it is intended that future engagement phases on city recovery will utilise the platform to support focused engagement work at area level (N, S, E, W) as part of work to develop area based recovery plans. This engagement process, and subsequent activities/methods of engagement activity will be designed in collaboration with key stakeholders over the coming months.

- **Climate/Resilience**
  - A hub on the work climate adaptation and mitigation to seek citizen input on relevant aspects of the programme. An early activity could include engagement on 1 million trees programme, potentially utilising the place mapping tool for residents to suggest possible locations around the city for tree planting.
- **VCSE Sectoral Panel and citywide network**
  - A dedicated portion of the site for VCSE stakeholders engaging with the city's community planning process. This will host key information on the work of the VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel and will include engagement tools to allow feedback from stakeholders across the wider VCSE sector network.

3.6 The areas above provide an indication of the engagement themes at initial launch and example screen shots showing what the platform will look like have been circulated. Over time, new engagement themes/topics will be added to support the engagement needs of the Council, and the Community Planning Partnership where appropriate, to promote earlier and more ongoing forms of participation and engagement with citizens.

#### VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel

3.7 Members will be aware that the recently established VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel plans to host an online sectoral conference on 30th November 2020, titled 'Putting community wellbeing at the heart of community planning'. Aimed at participants from across the city's VCSE sectors,

the conference agenda is being developed by the VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel, and will include:

- **Introductory comments from the Minister for Communities**
- **Presentations from keynote speakers including the Future Generations Wellbeing Commissioner of Wales, Scottish Improvement Service Chief Executive, and Suzanne Wylie, Belfast City Council Chief Executive and Chair of Community Planning Partnership.**
- **Breakout workshop discussions for VCSE participants to shape the VCSE Panel's approach and engagement with the sector over the coming year.**

- 3.8 The newly established VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel will also be engaged over the coming weeks to test and refine the engagement tools (while also providing opportunity to input their views) in advance of the wider public launch.**

#### **Resident Survey**

- 3.9 The Council undertakes a resident survey every two years, the primary purpose of which is to provide reliable and representative perception data to monitor progress and inform priority setting. Unlike online consultations, which are self-selecting, our resident survey uses a representative sample of Belfast residents based on age, gender and DEA and is collected via doorstep interviews. This ensures that the data is both valid and reliable, which enables consistency and accuracy for trend and performance comparisons. This data is used to help track direction of travel with respect to the Belfast Agenda and corporate plan; we also report a number of these indicators to the NI Audit office as part of our performance improvement duty. The survey was due to commence in November with results available by March 2021. However, due to Covid-19 we are proposing to delay the survey by approximately 6 months, in the first instance, and subject to further review thereafter. It is hoped that fieldwork will be undertaken around summer time so that these performance indicators can feed into the refresh of the Belfast Agenda. In the interim we will also examine the ongoing need for the survey. Ongoing engagement with residents around priorities will continue using the new engagement platform.**

#### **Revised Belfast City Council Consultation and Engagement Framework**

- 3.10 Last year, Members agreed to move forward with a public commitment to consultation and engagement in the form of a corporate consultation and engagement (C&E) framework.**

The framework is not a programme of engagement events or consultations, but instead provides the policy context in which we will do this i.e. how we will plan, deliver and utilise our C&E activity. It sets out our vision for engagement and the principles and standards that we will aspire to meet. It provides clarity and transparency, and will be supported by an ongoing action plan and officer toolkit designed to help improve the consistency, quality and value of our engagement.

3.11 The draft framework was subject to a 12-week public consultation between December 2019 and March 2020. Key results from this consultation are presented below:

- All respondents (100%) agreed that it was 'important that Belfast City Council has a clear policy on consultation and engagement'
- 90% agree with our definitions of consultation and involvement; three quarters (75%) agreed with our definition of engagement and 58% agreed with our proposed vision for consultation engagement
- On average, more than 80% agreed with each of our proposed standards
- On average, around three quarters (range 67% -83%) agreed with each of our proposed aims and aspirations, with value for money and keeping people informed attracting the highest levels of support.

3.12 We also sought feedback on the draft equality screening and rural needs assessment and invited any further comments. Suggested areas for improvement included:

- Creating a shorter and more concise vision
- Enabling ongoing conversations rather than just informing and consulting, with greater openness and transparency around decisions
- More emphasis on valuing engagement and in particular the input from the community
- One respondent highlighted the need for resources to support meaningful engagement, whilst another queried our use of the term 'people'. In relation to equality, one respondent suggested that if wanted to make our engagements more accessible, then we needed to look at the language we used and avoid 'jargon'.

**Finalising the C&E Framework and Next Steps**

- 3.13 We have revised the draft framework and updated our action plan to reflect public feedback. The finalised framework has been circulated. Next steps are summarised as follows:

<b><i>Framework</i></b>	Present to the SP&R for formal adoption. Promote new framework internally and update on website.
<b><i>Civic engagement</i></b>	Develop and implement options to enhance our community engagement, focussing initially on an online engagement platform
<b><i>Capacity building</i></b>	Develop continuous programme of support and capacity building for officers, including an officer toolkit, C&E champions and internal networking and professional development.
<b><i>Consultation</i></b>	Implement feedback protocol /process for all public consultations. Align citizen space consultations to new engagement platform and review ongoing use.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.14 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report. Costs associated with the implementation of the action plan, including the enhanced civic engagement platform and wider capacity building, have been factored into council budgets. Future and ongoing budget implications will be monitored as part of the action plan implementation and learning. Financial and human resource issues relating to ongoing C&E will be brought to CMT as they arise.

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

- 3.15 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report. An equality screening and rural needs assessment was undertaken as part of the framework development. Whilst, it is clear that some sections of the community face greater barriers to involvement, the framework aims to help address these and ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate. Equality and inclusion is an underlying principle within the framework and our action

plan, which includes steps to improve civic engagement and capacity building for officers, will seek to mitigate any barriers to participation. The enhanced participant management and analytical tools of the new platform will also help us understand better who is engaging with us and where we may need to target our efforts.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**EU Successor Funding Northern Ireland –  
Position Paper for SOLACE NI**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**

1.1 To update Members on a position paper produced for the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in Northern Ireland (SOLACE NI), in relation to EU Successor Funding in Northern Ireland and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- a) note this update on the Ekosgen/SOLACE NI position paper on EU Successor Funding; and
- b) promote this work across Political networks supporting the need for a partnership approach, which involves local government, in co-designing and shaping the SPF, which will address local needs.

**3.0 Main Report**

3.1 Ekosgen was commissioned in early 2020 by SOLACE NI to undertake a research study to explore the future of EU Successor Funding in Northern Ireland. The purpose of this study was to develop a local government sectoral position, to use as a basis for discussion and influence with central government departments, regarding the local introduction of the SPF.

3.2 Alongside the full report, a stand-alone Executive Summary has been produced, a copy of which has been circulated. This document sets out the key principles and recommendations identified by local government, and will be used to engage the NI Executive Ministers, MLAs, MPs and relevant departments in terms of the future local design of the SPF.

- 3.3 As the UK has left the EU, the UK Government has begun the process of developing a replacement investment mechanism for the EU Structural Funds. The SPF will address regional disparity and structural economic challenges, and drive innovation, productivity, and sustainable economic development.**
- 3.4 Northern Ireland has been a net beneficiary of the EU Structural funds and their impact on economic development has been significant – indeed in Northern Ireland we receive approx. 5% of the total UK allocation, while only representing 2.8% of the population. It is crucial that the spending power provided by EU funding is preserved through the SPF, and that the UK Government respects Northern Ireland’s previous status as a transition area for the purposes of EU funding in this new funding regime. This will ensure that our proportionate allocation of funding will continue and can be concentrated in areas to increase productivity and lessen economic inactivity. Such a commitment would also acknowledge and support Northern Ireland in moving forward as a post-conflict society.**
- 3.5 The future scope and operation of the SPF as EU successor funding, will be crucial in shaping the future economic and social prosperity of Northern Ireland – by providing funding to support the foundations of prosperity, and contributing to eliminating inequalities and promoting inclusive growth for our local communities.**
- 3.6 Members should note that, during engagement with local EU funded delivery organisations who manage and deliver programmes across our council areas, extreme concern exists regarding the lack of information and engagement undertaken to date in relation to the SPF. However, they were appreciative of the fact that local government are undertaking this work, and engaged them on this critical issue of successor funding.**
- 3.7 It is intended to use this paper as a basis for councils having a role with central government in designing the SPF, using a place-based approach, to address local area needs. It is crucial that this new funding regime maintains alignment between the priorities of the NI Executive and those set out in local community plans to ensure that inequalities are being targeted and that local intelligence is used to focus the funding to plans and programmes that are needed.**
- 3.8 Members may also be aware that the Chief Executive recently attended an evidence session hosted by the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on the SPF, on behalf of SOLACE NI and NILGA. It was notable during this session the lack of local consultation and work which has taken place in relation to**

the SPF in comparison with the other devolved administrations.

- 3.9 During this session, the Chief Executive emphasised that for local government and local organisations the regime which is going to succeed EU structural funding is of critical importance. The design of this new funding programme if undertaken in a collaborative way between central government, local government and local delivery organisations, can create a new effective funding regime which will be transformative for our local areas and the region, aligned to the current growth and city deals and other current funding packages.

#### Principles for a New Approach

- 3.10 The principles identified within the Ekosgen work which are necessary for designing a new approach to funding through the SPF are set out in the table below. These principles should be viewed as an integrated package of measures that work as a whole, rather than a menu of options.

Principles and Recommendations for a New Approach in Northern Ireland	
Principle	Commentary
National Framework	SPF should set a national framework defining <i>high level</i> strategic direction, objectives and priorities and alignment with UK strategies.
Regional and sub-regional priority setting	There must be a commitment and processes at regional level to set strategic priorities. These should be developed in partnership and based on an evidence-based assessment of need. At a sub-regional level, there must be scope to identify and invest in activities that will address local priorities and reflect the local context. This must be an underpinning principle that all stakeholders sign up to. Ownership of sub-regional funded activities should rest with local partners.
Outcomes based	Progress and achievements should be measured as outcomes and impacts, rather than activities and outputs. KPIs should be set that capture progress as well as final outcomes e.g. progress towards employment.
Flexible, single pot	There must be an assumption of trust so that monies can be disbursed with as few restrictions as possible, balanced with the right degree of scrutiny.  Monies should be provided in Northern Ireland with no restrictions on capital and revenue allocations or prescriptive allocations by theme. Spend should be based on identified need and a holistic approach covering, for example, investment in skills, business support, infrastructure, innovation and so forth.  There should be a strategic approach to spend, combing all available funding sources to maximise value for money.  Business support (including social enterprises) should be business-led and include support to invest in the workforce, in equipment, in processes, as well as advice, and specialist business development support.
Maximum devolution of management and delivery	Northern Ireland should work towards devolving management and delivery to sub-regions where there is sufficient capacity and capabilities.

	<p>For some activities, there will be a rationale for clusters of areas and partnerships who could act as intermediate bodies, and a regional approach with flexibility for distinctive local need.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the approaches used successfully through the city and growth deals could be replicated.</p>
Attitude to risk	<p>Being overly risk averse can inhibit impacts and limits the opportunity to test and learn from new and innovative approaches.</p> <p>SPF at UK and regional levels should set an attitude to risk that allows for innovation and moves away from simply funding 'more of the same'.</p>
Fit for purpose systems and processes that are actively used	<p>Management, appraisal, monitoring and verification processes should be fit for purpose, not overly complex and proportionate to the level of funding and scale of activities. They should be used to review and drive performance.</p> <p>Additional layers and processes should not be added over time unless there is a clear rationale and demonstration of added value.</p> <p>Management and monitoring systems and processes should be, as far as possible, harmonised with those of other funds and their activities. This will make for a more efficient use of project management and administration time and generate consistent data.</p>

**Financial and Resource Implications**

**3.11 None associated with this report.**

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

**3.12 None associated with this report.”**

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on Community Planning Partnership**

The Committee considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on the recent meeting of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership held on 27th October.**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1** The Committee is asked to note the key areas of work currently being progressed by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), as outlined in the attached note of the CPP meeting.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background**

**3.1** The Belfast CPP (Strategic Board), chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, comprises the Council and its Community Planning Partners including a range of statutory and support partner organisations, including VCSE and business sectors. The Partnership's strategic level board provides joint oversight and leadership for the community planning process in the city, and for the delivery of the Belfast Agenda with partners.

**3.2** Focused work on progressing action plans and their delivery is jointly managed with partners through 4 delivery sub Boards, namely:

- Growing the Economy and City Development Board
- Living Here Board
- Working & Learning Board
- Resilience & Sustainability Board.

**3.3** Belfast City Council is currently represented on the Partnership (at strategic board level) by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, along with Elected Members nominated from each party (who are also members of an internal Council Community Planning Working Group), and the Council's Chief Executive, who chairs CPP meetings.

**Belfast Community Planning Partnership meeting  
27th October 2020**

**3.4** Following the postponement of a scheduled CPP meeting in March 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, the Community Planning Partnership met in an online meeting format on Tuesday 27 October 2020. This was therefore an especially important meeting at a crucial time in the community planning process, particularly in light of the Covid-19 impacts on the city and the publication of Council's Recovery Framework. A summary note of the meeting, outlining the

items discussed and the decisions taken, is attached. Important points for Members to note from the discussion include:

- i) Aligning focus on city recovery from Covid-19 alongside longer term Belfast Agenda Outcomes**

**3.5 Partners were briefed on the evolving context for City Recovery, including the Council's recent work to develop the Belfast: Our Recovery Framework. The Partnership agreed to progress key city priorities through the Delivery Boards and relevant task groups. Members will recognise that many of these areas of focus reflect the Belfast Agenda priorities that were previously identified for immediate focus in the Statement of Progress published by Council in November 2019. These key areas of work are now being adapted to take account of the impacts and new context due to the Covid-19 Pandemic i.e:**

- Health inequalities – including drugs, alcohol and mental health, and work to address excess winter deaths (Warm and well programme)**
- Educational inequalities**
- Employability and skills**
- Neighbourhood regeneration – including focus on local area planning and engagement to support community recovery**
- Housing**
- Sustainability and resilience, including addressing climate challenge**
- Creating a shared, safe and inclusive city, including development of an inclusive growth city charter**

- ii) Enhancing Partner involvement in the Community Planning Partnership**

**3.6 Partners agreed that the Partnership's Delivery Boards should adopt a Co-Chair model to build the sense of co-ownership and collaborative working at all levels of the Partnership. This model has to date been adopted by the Resilience and Sustainability Board, and will now be considered by the other Boards for adoption going forwards.**

- iii) Establishment of new Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectoral Advisory Panel**

**3.7 The Partnership received an update from the Chair (Irene Sherry) and Vice Chair (Jim Girvan) of the newly established VCSe Sectoral Advisory Panel, noting the work, commitment and contribution of the Panel to date, and in particular the Panel's plans to build engagement across the city's VCSE sectors in the near future. Plans for the VCSe Panel's upcoming Community Conference on 30th November, titled 'Putting Community Wellbeing at the Heart of Community**

Planning' were outlined and Partners were encouraged to support this online event. Both the VCSe Panel and Community Planning Partners present at the meeting stressed the importance of the VCSe Panel and wider sector engagement model as key to the success of the city's community planning process, and ensuring inclusive involvement of communities in the future.

#### City recovery from Covid and refresh of Belfast Agenda

- 3.8 Members will be aware of the Councils recently published Belfast: Our Recovery framework, setting out Council's proposed areas of focus for driving economic, social/community and environmental recovery over the next 1-2 years. While this framework does not replace other key city strategies (such as the Belfast Agenda) it is helping to frame engagement with partners and communities as we review our plans, to bring focus to what is needed to help the city recover and move forward.
- 3.9 Members should note that the Belfast Agenda will be updated and refreshed during 2021, to reflect the current city context, and to set an updated framework of priorities and shared goals for collective focus of city partners. This will build on the planned early engagement with communities due to take place over the next few months. Members will be engaged in this process as it develops in early 2021.

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 There are no direct financial implication arising from this report. Costs associated with the implementation and facilitation of the Community Planning Partnership are currently being met within existing council budgets.

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

- 3.11 There are no direct equality implications contained in this report."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

#### Physical Programme and Asset Management

##### Update on Area Working

The Committee considered the following report:

##### "1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's approval of the minutes of the most recent round of AWGs and any additional recommendations to this Committee arising from those meetings.

## 2.0 Recommendations

### 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- AWG Minutes - Approve the most recent round of AWG minutes (South – 26th October, West – 29th October, East – 5th November);
- Physical Programme – Agree the recommendations on allocations under the BIF Programme from the South AWG to three projects as laid out below in 3.2; and
- Locality Planning - Agree the recommendation that the remaining budget in West Belfast is allocated to two projects as laid out below in 3.3.

## 3.0 Main Report

### KEY ISSUES

#### Area Working Group Minutes

- 3.1 Members agreed in June 2016 that the Area Working Group minutes would be taken into the SP&R Committee for approval going forward, in line with the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and to ensure a consistent approach with other Member-led Working Groups. Members are asked to approve the most recent round of AWG minutes (*South – 26 October, West – 29 October, East – 5 November*) as attached.

#### Project Updates

- 3.2 South AWG - Members are asked to approve the following allocations as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 26th October.

#### BIF Programme

Allocation of the ringfenced BIF allocation for projects within the Sandy Row area (£1.35m) that had been previously aligned to Gilpins to the following project proposals:

- *Café Culture* project in partnership with Urban Villages,
- *Sandy Row Open Space* project and;
- *BSCR IT Exam Centre* project.

The AWG recommended that these three projects are added to the BIF Programme as *Stage 1 – Emerging*.

- 3.3 **West AWG** - Members are asked to note the following project updates and agree the movements as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 29th October.

**BIF Programme**

Note the update provided on the Greater Shankill Community Council - Royal British Legion project proposal.

**Locality Planning Pilot Project**

Allocation of the remaining budgets within the Whiterock Locality Planning Pilot Project as follows:

Project	Group	Amount
Access to Hills Scoping Exercise	Upper Springfield Development Trust	£15,000
Housing Social Innovation Scoping	Falls Community Council	£15,000

- 3.4 **East AWG** - Members are asked to note the following project updates as recommended by the AWG at its meeting on 5th November.

**BIF Programme**

- *Lisnasharragh and Cregagh Community Schools project* - Note the progress to date from the Education Authority and that the project can be progressed.
- *Castlereagh Presbyterian Church* – Note the progress to date and that a report will be brought to a future meeting in relation other funding streams, project outcomes and community benefits and congregation fundraising towards the project.
- *Strand Arts Centre and Bloomfield Community Association* – Note that an update report will be submitted to a future meeting to include details on when DfC can make a funding decision and other possible funding streams for both these projects.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.5 Financial – BIF Programme – all projects already have in-principle ring-fenced allocations agreed by Committee

Resources – Officer time in working with Groups

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

**No implications.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Assets Management**

The Committee approved the following:

**i. Ormeau Park – Contractor’s Compound**

the granting of a lease to GEDA Construction for a contractor’s compound in Ormeau Park in connection with the Flood Alleviation Project works being carried out on the Ravenhill Road and surrounding areas;

**ii. Local Full Fibre Network Programme – Transfer of Fibre Ducting Assets**

the transfer of additional fibre ducting assets/infrastructure from the Department for Communities to the Council to enhance the existing ducting network as part of the Public Sector Asset Reuse project under the overall Local Full Fibre Network Programme;

**iii. Grant of lease to Northern Ireland Electricity Networks**

the granting of a lease to NIE Networks for c.24 square metres of land at Templemore Baths, for a term of 99 years from the date of the agreement at a peppercorn rent of £1 pa. The lease will also grant NIE Networks a right of way to carry out installation, repairs and maintenance works at the substation site;

**iv. Port Health Unit, 5 Corry Place – Licence for Works**

a Licence for Work at the Port Health Unit to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). The Licence is required to facilitate DAERA’s proposed construction works to the building to accommodate food checks required under NI protocol contingency plans.

The Committee noted that the Director of Physical Programmes would, at the next meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group, provide further information on the proposal to place a construction compound in the Ormeau Park.

**Finance, Resources and Procurement**

**Update on Contracts**

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, detailed in Appendix 1 - Table 1 of the report;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Appendix 1 – Table 2 of the report; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Appendix 1 – Table 3 of the report; and

**Table 1 – Competitive Tenders**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Proposed Contract Duration</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Value</b>	<b>Senior Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Short description of goods/ services</b>
Development of a virtual apprenticeship platform for the Belfast Region City Deal	Up to 16 months	£65,000	A Reid	Development of a new online platform for apprenticeship provision across the Belfast City Region
Receipt, stock control and delivery of waste containers (T2134)	Up to 4 years	£520,000	S Toland / R Black	Support waste management section with distribution of bins and waste containers to rate payers.
Removal, transportation and emptying of skips and hooklift containers (T2074)	Up to 5 years	£1.2M	S Toland / R Black	Support service required at Council amenity sites.

<p>Appointment of food samples Public Analysts. (Multi council framework contract)</p>	<p>Up to 4 years</p>	<p>£1.3M (covers all 11 NI councils)</p>	<p>S Toland / R Black</p>	<p>Legislative requirement for the purpose of examining and analysing food samples to determine compliance with food safety, compositional and labelling requirements.  Current estimated BCC spend £300,000 however this may significantly increase due to Brexit.  Other council estimated spend is £1m.</p>
<p>Research to undertake business surveys to support and influence future policy interventions across arrange of stakeholders</p>	<p>Up to 3 years</p>	<p>£150,000</p>	<p>A Reid</p>	<p>This is a longitudinal survey of businesses in Belfast to take place every six months. This work is being brought forward in conjunction with the Business Improvement Districts and Belfast Chamber who are making a financial contribution to the research. The survey will provide empirical data to understand what challenges Belfast based businesses are facing. The survey will also ask Businesses to provide a measure of their confidence</p>

				around future investment and recruitment to gauge Business Sentiment. The fact that it is longitudinal allows to test broadly establish the efficacy of policies and interventions that have been brought to bear in the relevant timeframe.
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**Table 2- Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Action)**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
Provision of home security/ hazard assessment and repair service for elderly & vulnerable (fully funded)	Bryson Energy	£120,000
Provision of a case management system for City and Neighbourhoods Department	Civica UK Ltd	£113,878

**Table 3 Retrospective Direct Award Contracts (Single Tender Actions)**

<b>Title of Tender</b>	<b>Supplier</b>	<b>Total Value</b>
Consultancy support for Innovation and Inclusive Growth commission Growth report	MCE Public Relations	£5,000
Occupational Health Service Software upgrade	Digital Scanning Services Ltd	£5,430
Continued hire of temporary accommodation, toilets and associated electrical generators and cabling at Roselawn Cemetery	Nospace	£109,852

Provision of animation as an alternative to the traditional Christmas market	Lumiere Ltd	£29,500
Provision of animation as an alternative to the traditional Christmas market	AM Lighting Ltd	£29,500
Provision of de-icing and snow clearance at various BCC sites/ locations (retrospective)	Patterson Outdoor Cleaning Solutions (McQuillan Outdoor)	£96,000

### **Commercial and Procurement Service - Pricing Policy**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or summary of Main Issues**

The 3-year Transformational Strategy prepared by the Commercial and Procurement Service (CPS) is due to be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources (SP&R) Committee in November.

1.2 This Strategy includes details of our first Commercial Plan, which formalises our future ambitions relating to commercialisation and income generation.

1.3 To support our specific ambition to generate additional income, the Commercial team within the CPS has developed:

- A corporate Pricing Policy; and
- A framework document, 'Setting Prices - Getting it Right', to guide Council officers when introducing pricing or increasing/decreasing prices.

1.4 The above policy and framework was presented to the SP&R Committee on 23rd October.

1.5 At that meeting, the Committee agreed to defer any decisions relating to the above in order to allow the policy and framework to be considered alongside the Commercial Plan.

1.6 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide members with an update on the pricing policy and framework;

- provide further details on the rationale for selecting the four priority projects in order to support the decision-making process; and
- obtain approval on related actions (detailed below).

## 2.0 Recommendations

### 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. approve the Commercial Plan and Pricing Policy, as detailed in Appendices I – III; and
2. agree that the following priority areas be researched in line with the above policy and framework (all findings and proposals to come back to the SP&R Committee).
  - a. Malone House - explore possible alternative commercial uses for the building to maximise asset and reduce annual operating costs;
  - b. Events - develop a Council-wide events policy & procedures to include establishing transparent, fair and consistent pricing options;
  - c. Bulky waste - explore potential pricing options for the bulky waste service to reduce annual operating costs; and
  - d. Pest control - explore potential pricing options for the pest control service to reduce annual operating costs.

## 3.0 Main Report

### Introduction

- 3.1 The Commercial Plan detailed at Appendix I formalises our future ambitions relating to commercialisation and income generation.
- 3.2 Fundamentally, this is about integrating commercial activities and a commercial mind set into the core of how we operate as an organisation.
- 3.3 The overarching aim of our Commercial Plan is to generate a greater financial return that contributes to the Council's investment plans and its efficiency programme, and assists to safeguard services that are delivered in our local communities.
- 3.4 To support our specific ambition to generate additional income, the Commercial team, in partnership with relevant

individuals/departments, has commenced a strategic programme of work that includes (amongst other things):

- Preparing a Corporate Pricing Policy and associated procedures;
- Developing a Council-wide Advertising and Sponsorship Strategy;
- Supporting the development of an agreed Asset Management Strategy;
- Identifying commercial best practice across other local authorities and organisations; and
- Creating a framework to identify, develop and deliver existing and new (and innovative) income generating opportunities across the Council's commercial operations.

3.5 Alongside this, work has also commenced to enhance our commercial culture and competency, including the roll-out of a competency training programme and commercial awareness raising sessions.

**Corporate Pricing Policy**

3.6 The charges and fees levied for our services represent an important source of income each year, which is used to support the delivery of our corporate objectives. Whilst charging for services is, therefore, a recognised feature within the Council, some demand-led services are provided at little or no direct charge to the user. The provision of services at low, or no, charge (or fee) means that all ratepayers are subsidising the cost of delivery.

3.7 The recent financial uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic and 'Brexit' have now made it essential that the Council makes best use of pricing and charging opportunities and to recognise the importance of using pricing as a means of recovering the costs of delivering our services.

3.8 To support this, the Commercial team has developed:

- A corporate Pricing Policy; and
- A framework document, 'Setting Prices - Getting it Right', to guide Council officers when introducing pricing or increasing/decreasing prices.

3.9 The key aims of the policy include:

- Promoting consistency and fairness in the treatment of service users; and
- Striking a balance addressing the financial needs of the Council through optimisation of income and the social needs of customers.

3.10 Any decision to vary or introduce charges must be aligned to strategic priorities and financial objectives. Council officers must adhere to the following principles set out in the policy:

- Efficiency – charges are simple and not cumbersome to administer.
- Transparency – the nature and use of the service are understood by users
- Effectiveness – the charges provide value for money.
- Clarity – users are clear about when and how charges apply.
- Equity – the charges are fairly applied across a range of users.
- Ethics – users with special needs are charged appropriate fees.

#### Priority Projects

3.11 We currently provide many discretionary services (i.e. those that are not required to be provided by law but are provided at our discretion) that all ratepayers are subsidising the cost of delivery. The table below provides some examples<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Based on budget figures for the 2019/20 financial year.

Service	Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure i.e. cost to the Council
Events <sup>2</sup>	£1,464,026	£89,700	£1,374,326
Bulky Waste	£993,851	£19,534	£974,317
Zoo (including Shop)	£2,842,409	£1,902,035	£940,374
Pest Control	£289,702	£5,137	£284,565
Bike Scheme	£478,594	£245,254	£233,340
Belfast Castle	£450,397	£256,000	£194,397
Malone House	£332,626	£186,000	£146,626
Mary Peters Track	£137,040	£0	£137,040
Consumer Advice	£106,725	£0	£106,725
Home Safety	£178,976	£82,610	£96,366
Catering Services	£463,917	£399,280	£64,637
City Hall Tours	£53,400	£18,850	£34,550

3.12 If approved, it will not be possible, in the current circumstances, to review all of the Council's services and activities (such as those set out above) at this point in the context of the policy.

3.13 That being the case, it is recommended that the following four projects be examined in the first instance:

- **Malone House** - explore possible alternative commercial uses for the building to maximise asset and reduce annual operating costs;
- **Bulky waste** - explore potential pricing options for bulky waste service to reduce annual operating costs;
- **Pest control** - explore potential pricing options for pest control service to reduce annual operating costs; and
- **Events** - develop a Council-wide events policy and procedures to include establishing transparent, fair and consistent pricing options.

3.14 Further details on each are included in Appendix IV.

<sup>2</sup> Includes Events unit, Major Events, Sports Events and Grants.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.15 This programme of work will be managed as part of the CPS's annual revenue budget.

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

- 3.16 No implications at this stage.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Long,  
Seconded by Alderman Dorrian and

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations set out within the report and agrees also that Party briefings be held, once more detailed proposals are worked up, to allow for them to be considered in advance of a future meeting.

**Equality and Good Relations**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership held on 9th November, including the recommendations:

**Peace IV**

To submit a request to SEUPB to:

- i. reduce the contact hours for all projects as outlined in the modifications in Appendix 2, with no impact on the allocated budget;
- ii. extend the Letters of Offer for all themes to 31st December 2022, with an extended delivery timeframe for project activity to September 2022;
- iii. reduce participant numbers as outlined and to delegate authority to Good Relations Manager and PEACE IV Manager to agree appropriate targets and proportionate budget amendments for projects; and
- iv. realign KPIs and budgets in line with modifications requested.

**Good Relations Action Plan 2020/2021**

- i. that a budget of up to £10k be set aside for a diversionary programme in North Belfast and a budget of £5k for citywide initiatives which seek to inspire people from across the city to

transform it for the peace and prosperity of all and need to move online with authority on spend in regard to the programmes being delegated to the Director of Neighbourhood Services or his nominee; and

- ii. that the budget of £5,000 would be set aside in relation to the Clean Space and Green Initiative

#### **Refugee Transition Guide**

- to approve the update, reprint, translation and digital upload of the Refugee Guide along with the associated expenditure of £15,000.

#### **Notice of Motion – Racism Free Zone**

- that a report on the motion be submitted to a future meeting.

#### **Equality and Diversity - Equality Screening and Rural Needs Outcome Report**

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided a summary of equality screenings and rural needs impact assessments for the period from July till September, 2020.

#### **Diversity Action Plans**

The Committee was informed that the Council's Equality and Diversity framework, which ran from April, 2017 till March, 2021, set out the way in which the organisation would tackle inequalities and promote diversity in the City. The framework had been built around four key priorities, namely, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment, understanding our communities through data and consultation, delivering services accessible to all and developing a skilled and diverse workforce. In terms of the leadership, partnership and organisational commitment key priority, the Council had committed to developing and delivering a Gender Action Plan, an LGBT+ Action Plan and a Race Action Plan.

It was reported that, in May, 2018, the Women's Steering Group had agreed a three-year Gender Action Plan, to be delivered between April, 2018 and March, 2021. Refinement of the 2020/21 Action Plan had, however, been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing recovery. As a result, the Steering Group had drafted a scaled back version of the plan, which was being presented to the Committee for approval. Those elements of the 2019/20 plan which had yet to be delivered, such as the joint senior officer and Elected Member leadership programme and an event to bring together male and female staff to discuss gender issues in the workplace and how those might be addressed, had been carried forward into 2020/21. It was hoped that these would, where feasible, be delivered remotely.

It was reported further that the development of an LGBT+ Action Plan for 2020/21 had also been delayed as a result of Covid-19. A draft plan had now been developed by the staff network, "Proud" and was also being presented to the Committee for approval.

The cost of delivering the Gender Action Plan was approximately £30,000, whilst the LGBT+ Action Plan would cost £5,000 to deliver. Those costs would be met from the existing Organisational Development budget.

The Committee approved the Gender Action Plan and the LGBT+ Action Plan for 2020/21, as set out hereunder, together with the associated costs.

**GENDER ACTION PLAN 2018 – 2021**  
**Year 3 (Year 2020-2021)**

<b>WOMEN IN THE COUNCIL</b>		
-to ensure that BCC organisational culture, policies and practices empower talent development at all levels, for elected members and officers and remove any form of discrimination		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Hold annual IWD event / celebrations for staff	HR IWD working group WNG	£6000
Deliver Women Leaders Programme (members and officers)	WSG HR External facilitator	£12000
Participate in NI Gender Diversity Charter assessment against annual targets and activities to obtain Silver accreditation	CX HR	£2500
Develop/ agree transgender guidance document for staff	HR LGB&T Network	Staff resources
Ensure effective promotion of BCC as an employer that values and supports equality and diversity (external website, job info to potential applicants, press releases etc.)	HR MarComms Staff network	Staff Resources
Develop and agree Menopause guidance for staff	HR WNG	Staff resources
Hold event/ workshop for both male and female staff to jointly explore/ discuss gender issues and identify any issues to be addressed	HR Staff networks	£1000
Retain ' platinum level' status of the Onus Domestic Violence charter by continuing to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse issues, support staff experiencing domestic violence and abuse and ensure employees know what support is available	HR	£2000
Review, update and communicate maternity, paternity, and other parental-related guidance for staff as part of the review of the Work Life Balance Handbook	HR	Staff resources

<p><b>WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY</b> -with the purpose of increasing the representation of women in leadership positions throughout communities across Belfast by ensuring that processes are in place to increase women's involvement in decision making in communities</p>		
Fund annual external IWD event.	Equality Unit	£6500
Hold Transgender remembrance event	Head of HR LGB&T network	LBGT+ budget
Explore potential for mainstreaming Grow Lead Change programme with potential partners	HR Economic Initiatives	Staff resources
<p><b>WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY</b> -to ensure all council policies and strategies influence and facilitate the active and fair participation of both women and men in the economy</p>		
Identify opportunities for pre-recruitment programmes targeted at females furthest removed from the labour market	HR	Staff resources
Identify employability partners to deliver employability/ outreach initiatives for women.  ( Link to City Deal proposals )	HR/OD Economic Initiatives	Staff resources
The Northern Ireland Female Enterprise Challenge - A collaborative programme between the 11 Local Councils, Invest NI, and Women in Business NI (WIB) to promote and support female enterprise. . This programme also includes sponsorship for the WIB conference.	Economic Development	£6,200
Enterprise and Employability support for underrepresented groups – Belfast City Council programme of support to enable underrepresented groups (including females) to overcome the barriers to starting a business or accessing employment opportunities.	Economic Development	£90,000

<b>WOMEN IN THE CITY</b>		
-to ensure that the needs of women across the city are identified and used to influence and impact upon the regeneration of the city including social infrastructure design and community facilities provision		
As part of the ongoing baseline audit of all Council assets determine if Council assets are 'fit for purpose' in terms of the needs of all genders and that gender needs are looked at as part of the development of any new council asset	Property and Projects Department C&NS Place & Economy Dept	Staff resources  Potential cost if additional works required
Support the Raise your Voice Project against sexual harassment	HR Elected Members	Staff resources
As part of the ongoing area working /place shaping work and the Physical Investment Programme look at opportunities of how the needs of women can be better met across the city	Property & Projects Department Place and Economy C&NS A Strategic Hub External stakeholders	Staff resources Potential associated costs for future GAP
Work with City Partners on achievement of Onus Safe City status	BCC ONUS External partners	Staff resources

**TOTAL APPROXIMATE COSTS - £ 30,000k for year 3 (excl. ED funded initiatives)**

**N.B. Where ongoing COVID 19 restrictions limit planned activity, online / remote delivery will be explored and used where possible.**

**LGBT+ Action Plan 2020-21**

<b>Theme - Training and Development</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Increased awareness of LGBT+ bias	Source and deliver inclusion and awareness training	2020-21	HR/ Network Chair	£1000 total For 3 sessions
	Source and deliver awareness training on Trans and Bi issues	2020-21	HR/ Network Chair	£700 total For 2 sessions

LGBT employees feel comfortable to be their whole selves  Line managers understand key issues and their responsibilities	Deliver revised diversity induction training to ensure LGBT+ issues covered with all new staff and managers	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource
Better mental health	Deliver Mental Health First Aider course	2020-21	HR	LGTG funded programme

<b>Theme – Promoting positive attitudes</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
All relevant policies are inclusive and use gender neutral language where possible  Clear processes in place for staff to raise issues around discrimination/bullying/harassment based on gender and sexual orientation	Review staff policies.	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource
Guidance available for trans employees and their managers and for staff delivering services to the trans community	Agree Transgender policy / guidance	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource

<b>Theme – Promotion and ensure visibility of Network including senior champions</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Increased awareness of and participation in network	Promote Proud via Interlink/ Email	2020-21	Network Chair	Staff Resource/ Comms
Increased awareness about staff network and senior support	Articles profiling senior champion and allies	2020-21	Chair / Network	Staff Resource/ Comms
	Continue to distribute promotional material	2020-21	Network	n/a
Potential applicants aware BCC is an employer that values and supports equality and diversity	Ensure up to date info on external website, job info to potential applicants, press releases etc.)  Send all external job opportunities to NI LGBT+ organisations for circulation	2020-21	HR Comms Staff network	n/a
Visibility/Collaboration with other Networks	Joint Webinar involving all 3 Networks and their aims	2020-21	HR/Network	Staff Resource

<b>Theme – Community Engagement</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Bigger and better participation in Pride and more visibility of BCC support for LGBT+	Virtual participation in Pride - to be agreed how	2020-21	Network	n/a
	Build participation with network members and staff	2020-21	Network	Staff Resource
		2020-21	HR/Network	

community  Visible support for LGBT Community	Fundraiser for Pride – possible collaboration with WNG and Disability Network  What does Pride mean to me? – visual display via pictures and videos of what Pride means to Network members	2020-21	Network/ Chair	Staff Resource  Comms/ Staff Resource
Increased awareness of issues faced by Trans community and awareness of need for remembrance	Hold annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event if possible or mark on line if necessary.	2020-21	Network/HR	£600
Improved awareness of issues faced by Trans Community	Celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility Light City Hall on Transgender Day of Visibility in March 2021	2020-21	Network/HR	£300

<b>Theme – Social Networking</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Improved visibility, learning and positive outcomes	Facilitate an event between NI Stonewall organisations	2020-21	Network	£800

<b>Theme – Employee Lifecycle / Organisational Analysis</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Feedback from staff re LGBT issues	Carry out voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff ( when feasible )	2020-21	HR	Staff Resource/ Comms
Position in national benchmarking exercise	Annual Membership in Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme  Stonewall Equality Index - While Index not happening in 20/21 due to Covid 19 - take the opportunity to get familiar with new criteria and action plan for improvement	2020-21	HR and Staff network	£2500
Areas for improvement identified	Consider 19/20 Stonewall feedback and action plan for improvement	2020-21	HR / Network	Staff resource
Ensuring comprehensive info on staff is available and up to date.	Carry out voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff ( when feasible )	2020-21	HR	Staff resource
	Update application monitoring forms	2020-21	HR	Staff resource

<b>Theme – Inclusive Workplace</b>				
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Timing</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Indicative costs</b>
Gender neutral facilities for staff	Consider feasibility of gender neutral toilet in city centre offices.	2020-21	HR/Facilities Mgt	Corporate Maintenance Budget approval if work necessary
			<b>Total</b>	<b>£5900</b>

**Operational Issues**

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 12th November.

**Illuminate Process**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 31st July, it had agreed not to accommodate a request from Councillor Nicholl to illuminate the City Hall in red on Tuesday, 1st December to mark World Aids Day, on the basis that it would coincide with the Christmas lighting and that other requests covering December/early January had, in the past, been refused for that reason.

A Member highlighted the significance of World Aids Day and urged the Committee to reconsider Councillor Nicholl's request on a one-off basis.

The Committee agreed to accede to the request and agreed further that a review be undertaken of the current policy of declining requests to illuminate the City Hall in December/early January, with the potential for illuminating other Council facilities, such as Belfast Castle, to be considered.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 9th November.

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Active Belfast Limited Board**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 9th November.

**Schedule of Meetings 2021**

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2021, with all meetings to commence at 9.30 a.m:

- Friday, 15th January (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday, 22nd January
- Friday, 19th February
- Friday, 19th March
- Friday, 23rd April
- Friday, 21st May
- Friday, 18th June
- Friday, 20th August
- Friday, 24th September

- Friday, 22nd October
- Friday, 19th November and
- Friday, 17th December

The Committee approved also the holding of any additional meetings which might be required as part of the rate setting process, with the dates and times to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson.

### **Change of Date of Council Meeting**

The Committee approved the change of date of the Council meeting in January from Monday 4th to Thursday 7th, with the meeting to commence at the usual time of 6.00 p.m.

### **Governance**

#### **Appointment of Members to the Council/ Belfast Harbour Commissioners Joint Consultative Forum**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 21st June, 2019, it had granted approval for the Council to enter into a strategic partnership arrangement with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, through a Memorandum of Understanding, to realise their shared ambitions for the strong growth, regeneration and prosperity of the City.

The City Solicitor reported that a Project Board, chaired jointly by the Chief Executive of each organisation, had been established and that it had met for the first time in January. However, due to the ongoing difficulties arising from Covid-19, it was unable to meet again until December.

In addition, both parties had agreed to establish a Joint Consultative Forum in order to inform projects and test the collective willingness to explore projects at the concept stage. The Forum, which would consist of four Elected Members and four Harbour Commissioners, would not be a decision-making body, and decisions would only be taken through each parties' formal governance arrangements. It would be responsible for appointing its Chairperson and secretariat arrangements for both the Project Board and the Joint Consultative Forum would be shared. The place of any member on the Forum could be taken by a nominee of that member.

In terms of the Council's representation on the Forum, the Committee had, in approving the Memorandum of Understanding, agreed to use the d'Hondt process, which was based upon the overall strength of the Political Parties immediately following the 2019 Local Government Elections. The application of the d'Hondt or the Sainte-Laguë process on a one-off basis had resulted in the following order of choice:

1	SF
2	DUP
3	ALLIANCE
4	SF

The Committee agreed that Members be nominated to the Joint Consultative Forum on the basis of the order of choice set out above.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Illumination of Belfast Castle**

The Committee agreed, at the request of Councillor Murphy, to illuminate Belfast Castle in blue on Sunday, 29th November, as part of a series of events being held over that weekend to mark the 15th birthday of Noah Donohoe.

**Other Business**

**Casement Park – Notice of Opinion**

The Committee was reminded that the planning application for the redevelopment of Casement Park, which had been submitted to the Council initially, had in 2017 been called in by the Department for Infrastructure, on the basis that it was considered to be of regional significance.

The City Solicitor reported that the Minister for Infrastructure had, on 13th October, announced her intention to recommend that planning approval be granted for the project. As part of that process, her Department had served on the Council a Notice of Opinion, which allowed the Council to request that the application be determined by the Planning Appeals Commission or another person so appointed.

He explained that the Council had informed the Department for Infrastructure previously that it had no objections to the planning application being approved and he drew the Committee's attention to a proposed response to the aforementioned Notice of Opinion. That response had stated that the application had been subject to a full and considered assessment by the Department for Infrastructure and that there was, therefore, no reason for it to be referred elsewhere.

The Committee approved the response for submission to the Department for Infrastructure and agreed, given the limited timeframe for submissions, that, in accordance with Standing Order 47 (a) (2) (c), the decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest.

Chairperson