

Council

ADJOURNED MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 7th December, 2020
at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor
(Alderman McCoubrey) (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston,
Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Matt Collins, Michael
Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn,
Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading,
Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle,
Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McCabe,
McAllister, McAteer, McCullough, McKeown,
McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland,
Murphy, Newton, Nicholl, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth,
Spratt, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors Baker and Long.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Copeland declared an interest in relation to the item 4.c) Funding for Palliative and End-of-Life Care, in that she was employed as a counsellor for a Hospice in Belfast and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed; and

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item 4.c) Funding for Palliative and End-of-Life Care, in that he was employed by the Health Service and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed.

Motions

Establishment of an External Independent Review of Educational Provision

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McReynolds proposed:

“This Council encourages and supports reconciliation in our community; congratulates the Integrated Education Fund and the integrated schools movement on being nominated for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize; will write to the NI Executive to show our support for the very early implementation of the agreement to establish an external, independent review of educational provision and the prospect of moving towards a single

education system; and will invite a representative from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education to join the Community Planning Partnership to ensure Belfast is equipped to ensure that education is inclusive for all.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAllister

The proposer acceded to a request from Councillor Walsh that his motion would provide that the Council invite a representative from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, to join the Community Planning Partnership, and the motion be amended as follows:

“This Council encourages and supports reconciliation in our community; congratulates the Integrated Education Fund and the integrated schools movement on being nominated for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize; will write to the NI Executive to show our support for the very early implementation of the agreement to establish an external, independent review of educational provision and the prospect of moving towards a single education system; will invite a representative from the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, and a representative from Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta, to join the Community Planning Partnership to ensure Belfast is equipped to ensure that education is inclusive for all; and, within the context of the 2021 review of the Belfast Agenda, will add ‘Integrated Education’ as a project on Your Say Belfast to inform how we may include Integrated Education within the Belfast Agenda.”

After discussion, the motion, as amended, was put to the Council and passed.

Privatisation of or within the Housing Executive

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Ferguson proposed:

“This Council recognises the length of housing waiting lists across Belfast, the damaging impact on people and families waiting for a home, and the need for many more public houses to be built to address their need.

“The Council welcomes the launch of NIPSA’s ‘21st Century Housing for NI’ report earlier this year; agrees with the call from NIPSA for the Housing Executive to be safeguarded as a ‘lynchpin of public housing policy’; and, accordingly, agrees to write to the Minister for Communities to state the Council’s opposition to privatisation of or within the Housing Executive.

“Finally, the Council agrees to invite NIPSA representatives involved in producing their report to address the Council on the deleterious impact of privatisation of the Housing Executive, including moves towards a mutual/co-operative model, would have on the production of social housing, tenants’ rights, workers’ rights, and accountability.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

The proposer acceded to a request from Councillor Heading to include the following wording after the final paragraph of the motion: **“Finally, this council recognises any decision to move the NIHE to a mutual/co-operative model should only be done by consent of the existing NIHE tenants and staff and therefore requests the Minister explores a consultation process that includes a vote on such matters by each existing tenant and staff member.”**

After discussion, the following motion, as amended, was put to the Council:

“This Council recognises the length of housing waiting lists across Belfast, the damaging impact on people and families waiting for a home, and the need for many more public houses to be built to address their need.

The Council welcomes the launch of NIPSA's '21st Century Housing for NI' report earlier this year; agrees with the call from NIPSA for the Housing Executive to be safeguarded as a 'lynchpin of public housing policy'; and, accordingly, agrees to write to the Minister for Communities to state the Council's opposition to privatisation of or within the Housing Executive.

The Council agrees to invite NIPSA representatives involved in producing their report to address the Council on the deleterious impact of privatisation of the Housing Executive, including moves towards a mutual/co-operative model, would have on the production of social housing, tenants' rights, workers' rights, and accountability

Finally, this council recognises any decision to move the NIHE to a mutual/co-operative model should only be done by consent of the existing NIHE tenants and staff and therefore requests the Minister explores a consultation process that includes a vote on such matters by each existing tenant and staff member.”

On a recorded vote, twenty-two Members voted for the motion, as amended, and thirty-four against and it was declared lost.

<u>For 22</u>	<u>Against 34</u>
Councillors Matt Collins, Michael Collins, De Faoite, Ferguson, Flynn, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, Hutchinson, M. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons, McAllister, McKeown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Nicholl, O'Hara, Smyth and Whyte	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); The High Sheriff (Councillor Verner); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Beattie, Black, Bradley, Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Corr, Donnelly, Garrett, Gormley, Hussey, T. Kelly, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McCullough, McLaughlin, Murphy, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt and Walsh

Funding for Palliative and End-of-Life Care

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Whyte proposed:

“This Council recognises that hospice care is a vitally important part of our care system; considers it necessary that people approaching the end of life, their families and carers get the right care and support where and when they need it; notes that hospice staff deserve recognition for the world-class medical care and emotional support they provide, not just to patients but also to their families; and looks forward to the hospice movement going from strength to strength in years to come.

Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, calling upon him to ensure fair and transparent funding in line with demand, and continued high quality palliative and end-of-life care.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Lyons.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Disability Strategy

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor McMullan proposed:

“That this Council notes that 25 years ago, on 8th November 1995, the Disability Discrimination Act received Royal Assent; recalls that this landmark piece of legislation was the result of a hard-fought campaign by disabled people, with up to 100,000 disabled activists taking part in direct action, campaigning for equal rights and an end to the kind of societal discrimination that saw wheelchair users regularly banned from bars, cinemas and theatres under the guise of health and safety; records that, under this Act, for the first time, it became unlawful to discriminate against disabled people, as employees, customers and citizens using public transport or getting an education; considers that the Act was an important milestone and a recognition of disability equality and disability rights, but notes that many felt it did not go far enough; recognises that, despite it now being against the law, disabled people are still discriminated against, in work, in public places, for example by assistance dog owners being refused access to restaurants and taxis, and with huge swathes of public transport still inaccessible; and joins disability campaign groups in calling for a fresh look at the future of disability equality and what needs to change in all aspects of society, including what steps are needed to ensure that anti-discrimination laws are backed up by meaningful enforcement.

Accordingly, the Council calls on the Minister for Communities to bring forward the Disability Strategy that will improve enforcement, provide sustainable funding and enable the voices of people with disabilities across NI.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Smyth.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

World Environment Day

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Garrett proposed:

“We commend the progressive steps and actions that this Council, its partners and community have begun to take in challenging the existential threat facing the planet through what we recognise as the climate emergency.

In recognising this crisis, it is our duty as a Council to take proactive steps in educating, supporting and resourcing our communities to do whatever we can to face down the emergency.

The United Nations World Environment day takes place on 5th June 2021, with the theme this year focused on Biodiversity. The UN has also proclaimed 22nd May the International Day for Biological Diversity to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

To support biodiversity and positive actions in tackling the climate emergency, we call on this Council, working with partners to develop a similar initiative that other authorities have successfully developed, to freely distribute wildflower seed packs for city residents, schools and community and voluntary organisations.

In building on this initiative, the Council will also mark World Environment Day on June 5th by illuminating the City Hall green, animating our social media channels with awareness raising content and developing a programme of digital or physical events within health guidance to support our citizens in challenging climate change.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McLaughlin.

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

Lord Mayor