

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th June, 2021

## MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

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

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor McDonough-Brown.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 21st May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st June, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillors Beattie and Lyons declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2f – Assets Management, on the basis that they were on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, which was seeking to lease a portion of land at the North Foreshore from the Council, and left the meeting whilst that part of the report was being considered.

Alderman Kingston declared an interest in relation to agenda item 5f - Update on Research into the Response of the Council, Community and Statutory Partners during the first Covid-19 Lockdown, in that he worked on a part-time basis for the Forward South Partnership, which had been mentioned within the appendix to the report, and left the meeting whilst the report was being presented.

### Restricted Items

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following eight items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the meeting during discussion of these items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

### Finance Update

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report on the year-end financial position for 2020/21. He provided details of the available balances and the areas of expenditure which had been identified for 2021/22 and confirmed that, when those had been taken into account, £5.4 million would be available for re-allocation.

He went on to remind the Committee that, in 2018, it had agreed to establish a Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme, with £500k being set aside for its delivery. The Programme was targeted at activities taking place in July and August and the application process, which involved an open call, took between three and four months to complete. He reported that, given that the uncertainty around the Covid-19 restrictions, an open call had not been advertised for this year and that it was the intention that the funding be retained, with a view to delivering the Programme later in the year, restrictions permitting.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:

- i note the contents of the report and approve the 2021/22 balances;
- ii agree that the year-end surplus of £5.4m be made available for re-allocation; and
- iii retain the annual allocation of £500k for the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme, with a view to delivering the Programme later in the year.

The Members of the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Non-Recurrent Re-Allocations**

The Director of Finance and Resources reminded the Members that they had, earlier in the meeting, agree to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree that the year-end surplus of £5.4m for 2020/21 be made available for re-allocation, to progress emerging projects and essential projects which did not have a recurring budget.

Accordingly, he submitted for the Members' approval the following proposals and confirmed that, if approved, specified reserves would be set aside to ensure that the funds were available for each proposal and would be managed by the relevant Responsible Officer:

**Non-Recurrent Re-Allocations**

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
City Hall Minor Works	£276,482
Connectivity	£100,000
Cyber Security	£413,750
Essential Fleet Maintenance	£994,000
Essential Maintenance Fund	£776,000
Feasibility for Potential External Funding	£150,000
Recovery	£1,250,000
Sustainability Fund	£1,000,000
Sustainable Transport Belfast Bikes	£480,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,440,232</b>

**Proposal 1**

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin,  
Seconded by Alderman Kingston,

That the Members of the Committee agree, in principle, to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to reallocate the £500,000 which had been set aside for Reimaging Public Space under the Recovery investment proposal to the Belfast Bikes scheme and that a report on the revenue implications of that decision upon the rate-setting process be submitted to a future meeting.

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

**Proposal 2**

Moved by Councillor Lyons,  
Seconded by Councillor Heading,

That the Members of the Committee agree to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to defer the proposed refurbishment of the Waterfront Hall Toilets to enable a review to be undertaken of public toilet provision in the City centre and the Council's parks.

On a vote, nine Members voted for the proposal and nine against.

As there was an equality of votes, the Chairperson exercised her second and casting vote against the proposal and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the proposals for the re-allocation of the year-end surplus of £5.4m, as amended to reflect, in principle, the additional funding for the Belfast Bike Scheme, and:

- i. to examine the potential for making available additional funding for open space and playground provision; and
- ii. to write to the Department for Infrastructure to request that it intensify its programme of grass cutting and weed spraying across the City.

**Recruitment of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reported that Ms. Christine Robinson, the current Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty, would be leaving the Council on 30th July.

The Members of the Committee paid tribute to Ms. Robinson for the contribution which she had made during her time in the Council and agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree:

- i that the post of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty be recruited on a permanent basis, using targeted and timely executive search;
- ii that the selection panel comprise the Chairperson of the Committee (or her nominee), together with Councillors McLaughlin and Pankhurst, the Chief Executive (or her nominee) and another Council Director; and

- iii that the Council introduce exit interviews for officers leaving the Council, with a report on how that process might be managed to be submitted to a future meeting.

**Appointment of Director of  
Planning and Building Control**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note that, following a recent recruitment exercise, Ms. Kate Bentley had been appointed to the post of Director of Planning and Building Control.

**City Hall - Proposed Recovery Plan**

(Mrs. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Governance and Compliance Manager submitted for the Members' consideration a report which provided an overview of plans for the operational recovery and preparation for a phased re-opening of the City Hall, following the latest relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions by the Northern Ireland Executive, which had come into effect on 24th May.

She pointed out that, whilst the relaxations would allow front-line services in the City Hall to re-open, key factors such as staffing resources and recruitment, prioritising the delivery of critical services and the fact that the building was a multi-purpose venue affected decision-making, planning and implementation.

She explained that, in order to work towards the full re-opening of the City Hall, it was recommended that Members adopt a phased approach, which would balance public safety, management, planning, compliance and adaptability. With that in mind, she submitted the following timeframe for approval, which would provide Senior Officers with time and resources to consult with the Corporate Health and Safety and Continuous Improvement Units to plan recovery for each service and the City Hall overall:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Proposed Action</b>
July onwards	Permit outdoor events in the City Hall grounds
August onwards	Host some functions in the City Hall's three function rooms in August then re-open fully for functions from September
August/September	Bobbin opens on a trial basis
September	Visitor Exhibition reopens
September	City Hall building fully reopens
Under review – potentially not reopening until 2022	Reopening of public and private tours

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve, in principle, the timeframe for the re-opening of the City Hall, subject to those elements relating to the visitor exhibition and public and private tours being kept under review to determine if they could be opened earlier than planned and to an update report being submitted to the Committee on a monthly basis from August onwards.

### **Assets Management**

The report and minute for this item will become unrestricted when the contract process has concluded.

### **Belfast Destination Hub – Acquisition of Site**

The report and minute for this item will become unrestricted when the contract process has concluded.

### **City Centre Property – Targeted Acquisition**

The report and minute for this item will become unrestricted when the contract process has concluded.

## **Matters referred back from Council/Motions**

### **Motion: Waiting Lists for Diagnosing Autism in Children – Response from Minister of Health**

The Members were reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th May, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McAteer and seconded by Councillor Magennis:

“Autism can cause significant social, communication and behavioural difficulties. The number of school age children with autism has soared in recent years. A total of 2,562 children were diagnosed as on the autistic spectrum last year across the north of Ireland. Five years previously the figure was 1,472. Children from social and economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have autism - with boys three times more likely to be diagnosed than girls.

However, in Belfast thousands of children with suspected autism are waiting up to two years to get a diagnosis from the Belfast Trust. Early diagnosis and intervention is key to the future of these children and parents are distressed that valuable time is being lost while their children remain on waiting lists.

Many parents have had no option but to pay for private assessments which cost circa £1,400. All 5 of the norths health trusts now accept private referrals and this is leading to concerns about a two-tier health system that will see children from disadvantaged backgrounds left further down the waiting lists.

This Council asserts that, whilst the pandemic has affected autism services, all children with autism deserve to have timely assessments and the vital support they need at the earliest possible stage in their development. This Council will write to the Minister for Health to ask him to take all steps necessary to immediately tackle the unacceptable waiting lists for diagnosis of autism in children and to provide the necessary supports and interventions for their development.

Furthermore, the Council also commits to doing everything it can to ensure that we play our role in providing safe, appropriate and inclusive services and facilities for children with autism”.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that a response to the motion had been received from Mr. Robin Swann MLA, Minister of Health.

The Minister had stated that he was acutely aware of the extensive waiting lists for autism assessments and the challenging circumstances which this presented for children, their families and carers. He recognised that this could have an impact upon their emotional health and wellbeing and on their personal development and education and acknowledged that this was unacceptable.

He had pointed out that he had publicly expressed concern that, in light of these waiting lists, families had felt the need to seek private assessment. Whilst this was a personal decision for some families, it was a prohibitive solution for many and he did not want systems and services where families felt that they must take this route. However, this was not a situation which was unique to autism assessment and there was much work to be done to improve waiting lists to access services across Northern Ireland generally.

The Minister had explained that he had, in recent months, taken a number of steps to address the need for early intervention and greater support, in response to the challenges being experienced by individuals and families who had an autism diagnosis, or who may be waiting for an assessment. On 8th March, he had published a cross-Departmental Autism - Interim Strategy, which had set out the key priorities to be addressed in 2021 and 2022, with a focus on early intervention and improving pathways of care. The interim strategy would be supported by a range of outcome-based actions across Government departments and the health and social care sector and aligned to the Programme for Government.

As part of this interim Strategy, the Minister was committed to listening to those who matter, particularly autistic people, their families and carers. In support of this, the Department of Health had established an Autism Forum, comprised of people with lived experience, as well as representatives from community and voluntary sector organisations who represented them. The Forum would be tasked with informing and co-producing a longer-term autism strategy and work on this would commence later this year.

However, improving support for autistic people and those waiting for an assessment was, he had pointed out, a collective responsibility for everyone involved.

The Minister had gone on to state that he was aware that, in each Trust area, multi-agency autism forums worked in partnership to enhance understanding of autism within communities and wider society, to enable social inclusion for all. He was also aware that Mid and East Antrim Council and Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council had both been working closely with representatives from autism services within their Trust areas to create autism-friendly services within their boroughs. He understood that the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust had invited the Council to participate in its multi-agency autism forum and encouraged the Council to avail of this opportunity to examine how, through partnership working, services and support could be improved for all.

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

**Motions: Equality for LGBTQI+ Community/  
Ban on Conversion Therapy – Response from  
Department for Communities**

The Members were reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th May, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Maskey and seconded by Councillor O'Hara:

**Equality for LGBTQI+ Community**

“This Council recognises the struggle for equality by generations of people who identify as LGBTQI+, acknowledges the successful work of LGBTQI+ activists in eradicating elements of institutionalised discrimination and condemns the continued inequalities experienced by those who identify as LGBTQI+.

We endorse in full the recommendations of the LGBTQI+ advisory panel and welcome the timeframe for the LGBTQI+ strategy (December 2021).

The Council calls on all Ministers and Departments with responsibility to proactively and robustly implement all elements of the LGBTQI+ strategy, including with adequate resourcing and funding.

We call on the Executive to commit to equality, respect and human rights for all sections of our society in its actions, words and deeds.”

The Members were reminded further that the Council, at the same meeting, had also passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor De Faoite:

**Ban on Conversion Therapy**

“This Council supports calls for a ban on the harmful practice commonly referred to as conversion therapy.

The Council acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the Ban Conversion Therapy NI coalition, made up of LGBTQ+ organisations, mental health charities and faith groups which are united in calling for this ban.

The Council notes the 'Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK' which describes this practice as unethical, potentially harmful and not supported by evidence.

The Council further notes the Association of Christian Counsellors' stance regarding conversion therapy, which states that Reparative (or Conversion) Therapy does not fit within the ACC Ethics and Practice framework.

The Council agrees that it is fundamentally wrong to view minority sexual orientation or gender identity as something that needs fixed or cured and that any practice, including religious practice, that is conducted with a specific pre-determined outcome, such as changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, is harmful and denigrating, and must be banned.

The Council will, therefore, write to the Minister for Communities as follows:

- to support a legislative ban on conversion therapy in all its forms, before the end of the current assembly mandate;
- to state that there should be no special exemptions for religious organisations in implementing a ban on conversion therapy; and
- to state that any ban should clearly distinguish from safe and supportive therapies, delivered by suitable qualified and regulated professionals, that assist people to explore and better understand their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression."

The Members were informed that a response had been received from Mr. C. Savage, Head of Equality and LGBT Policy Unit, which had addressed both motions on behalf of the Minister for Communities.

Mr. Savage had pointed out that the Department for Communities was responsible for taking forward the development of the Northern Ireland Executive's LGBTQI+ Strategy under the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

He reported that, in October 2020, a Sexual Orientation Expert Advisory Panel had been appointed to identify the themes and key actions which the Strategy should include and the gaps in provision which it should seek to address. The Panel's Report had been published on 5th March, 2021 and can be accessed here: <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/report-sexual-orientation-strategy-expert-advisory-panel>

The Strategy was being developed further using a co-design approach, with meaningful involvement from those within the LGBTQI+ communities and officials across other Departments.

In addition, a Ministerial Steering Group, comprising all Executive Ministers, would monitor the development of the four Social Inclusion Strategies and consider the funding and resourcing implications for their respective Departments.

Mr. Savage had explained that actions under the LGBTQI+ Strategy would aim to make a significant contribution to protecting the rights and equal treatment of LGBTQI+ communities and reducing discrimination throughout the duration of the Strategy and beyond.

The draft Strategy would, he confirmed, be subject to public consultation later this year, which would allow for comment and input from all stakeholders, including councils. Subject to Executive agreement, the final Strategy would be published in December, 2021, with more details to be found on the Department's website here: <http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/sexual-orientation-strategy>

Mr. Savage had gone on to confirm that the Minister had put on record her opposition to the practice of so called 'conversion therapy' and her determination that it should end as soon as possible. The Expert Advisory Panel's Report referred to above had included recommendations aimed at ending conversion therapy. The Minister wished to explore all legislative options to ensure that any legislation would be fit for purpose and sufficiently robust. Officials had commenced work to inform the drafting of the legislation, in the context of the work which the Department was doing on the wider LGBTQI + Strategy.

He then stated that ending conversion therapy would engage a range of Ministers' interests and that it was one of a number of cross-cutting matters for consideration by the Executive in the development of the LGBTQI+ Strategy. Officials were working with stakeholders and colleagues in other Departments and jurisdictions to learn from experience and to identify gaps in the law.

He provided an assurance that the points which had been raised by the Council would be considered when dealing with this matter and that there would be further opportunities to engage during policy development.

Mr. Savage had concluded by stressing that the Minister would continue to work with her colleagues in the Executive to develop and deliver the first LGBTQI+ Strategy in Northern Ireland and that she acknowledged the Council's support for her work in improving the lives of LGBTQI+ communities, including action to end conversion therapy, and looked forward to its contribution to the development and implementation of the LGBTQI+ Strategy.

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

## Governance

### Arrangements for Future Council/Committee Meetings

The Members considered the following report:

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

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Committee on the proposed arrangements for the holding of Council/Committee meetings in the short to medium term.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

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

1. agree the arrangements for the holding of the Special meeting of the Council on 1st July (Somme Anniversary);
2. consider and agree one of the two options for the monthly meeting on 1st July;
3. note the arrangements for the holding of Committee meetings from June to August; and
4. consider the proposal to commence full hybrid meetings from September.

#### **3.0 Main Report Key Issues**

3.1 The legislation is still currently not in place for the holding of remote Committees and it is anticipated that it will not be in place until just before the Assembly recess begins on 3rd July. Therefore, the Council will need to continue with the current arrangements, with Members meeting as a Committee and making recommendations to the Chief Executive to use delegated authority to implement those recommendations.

3.2 However, direction is sought from the Committee on the arrangements it wishes to put in place for the hosting of these meetings in the short to medium term, that is, in-person, remote or hybrid.

**Council Meetings**

- 3.3 The next Council meetings are scheduled to be held on 1st July:

**Special Council - 1st July at 10.45 a.m. – Somme Anniversary**

- 3.4 It is proposed that the Special meeting is held in-person, using the same arrangements as last year, with Parties attending using the previously agreed proportionality arrangement, with up to 18 Members in attendance in the Council Chamber based on Party strengths.

SF	5	Green	1
DUP	4	PBPA	1
ALL	3	PUP	1
SDLP	2	UUP	1

- 3.5 The meeting would be broadcast on the Council's website, to allow other Members, the press and the public to view. It would not be a hybrid meeting. Accordingly, there would be a requirement for a minimum of 15 Members to be in attendance for the meeting to be quorate.
- 3.6 It should be noted that it may also be necessary for this special meeting to agree on a number of items of other Council business relating to the transaction of land, as this cannot be delegated.

**Monthly Meeting – 1st July at 6.00 p.m.**

- 3.7 There are two options:
1. revert to same arrangements that have been in place over the previous year, that is the meeting is hosted in the Lavery Room by the Lord Mayor, with the remainder of the Members attending remotely via Teams: or
  2. use the same arrangements as the Special Council meeting held on 1st June, that is, hybrid, with simultaneous attendance in the Chamber (proportional representation) and online via Teams.
- 3.8 There would be no requirement for a quorum to be present in the Chamber for the meeting to proceed. However, Democratic Services would still need the names in advance of those who proposed to attend.

**Committee Meetings**

**June – August**

- 3.9 The meetings for the month of June are already in progress and these will continue this month using the arrangements which were agreed by the Council on 4th May, that is, Members of the Committee meeting remotely and making recommendations to the Chief Executive.
- 3.10 The Council will be in recess during July and it is proposed that the remote format continues during the resumption of meeting in August.

**September onwards**

- 3.11 From September, it is proposed that the Committee meetings move to a full hybrid arrangement.
- 3.12 These meetings would be held in the Great Hall / Banqueting Hall, City Hall and would allow all Members of a Committee to attend in-person if they so wished. The meeting would also be held jointly via Teams to allow Councillors the choice to attend, participate and vote in the meeting remotely also.

**In-Person Meetings Only**

- 3.13 Members will be aware that full in-person meetings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee have been/will be arranged to deal with bonfire-related issues to allow any decisions which may need to be taken at short notice to be implemented using the Committee's delegated authority.
- 3.14 It is proposed that full in-person meetings at this stage are the exception to deal with these issues and that these arrangements are not extended to any other meetings, except in the cases of emergency, at this time.

**Working Groups**

- 3.15 It is proposed that Working Groups continue to meet remotely.

**Review of Arrangements**

- 3.16 Any agreed arrangements would be kept under review and further reports brought to the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as required.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.17 There will be financial and resource implications associated with this report. Funding for City Hall Minor Works (to include any work required in City Hall for the provision of hybrid meetings) has been allocated in the non-recurrent funding which is subject to a separate report to Committee.**

**Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs Implications**

- 3.18 Any equality, good relations or rural needs implications will be identified as part of the Council's usual screening process."**

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

- i that the special meeting of the Council taking place at 10.45 a.m. on 1st July to mark the 105th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme be held in-person, using the same arrangements as last year, that is, up to eighteen Members being admitted to the Council Chamber, using the previously agreed proportionality arrangement based on Party strengths;
- ii that the special meeting of the Council to deal with acquisitions and the disposal of land be held at 5.45 p.m. on 1st July, with the arrangements for attendance being the same as those for the earlier meeting;
- iii that the monthly meeting of the Council taking place at 6.00 p.m. on 1st July to deal with decisions taken by Committees, take the form of a hybrid meeting, with the arrangements being the same as those for the special meeting on 4th June, that is, simultaneous attendance in the Council Chamber, using the previously agreed proportionality arrangement based on Party strengths, and online via Microsoft Teams;
- iv to note that Committee meetings being held during June and August would operate in line with the arrangements which had been agreed by the Council on 4th May, that is, Members of the Committee would meet remotely and make recommendations to the Chief Executive for approval under her delegated authority;
- v that, from September, Committee meetings move to a full hybrid arrangement, with meetings being held in the Great Hall/Banqueting Hall, allowing Members the choice of either attending in person or joining remotely via Microsoft Teams.

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

#### **Corporate Plan – Annual Delivery Plan 2021-22**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reminded the Members that, at the Committee meeting on 28th March, 2020, it had agreed a new four-year Corporate Plan, in line with the corporate planning process.

He explained that, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, all work on the Corporate Plan had been suspended for 2020/21 to enable resources to be redirected to the response effort. That work had now recommenced and an Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22 had been drafted, a copy of which can be accessed here: <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s92513/Corporate%20Plan%20-%20Draft%202021-2022%20Delivery%20Plan.pdf>

The Plan reflected the in-year deliverables against the priorities which had been agreed as part of the four-year Corporate plan, plus some additional priorities which had arisen in response to the pandemic, and had been structured around the following themes:

- Our Services
- Economic Recovery
- Community Recovery
- Environmental Recovery
- Strategic Planning Frameworks and
- Organisational Foundations

He confirmed that a series of priorities had been identified for each theme, with each of those having a number of committed deliverables for 2021/22, and pointed out that, in addition to being provided with in-year reports on a number of priorities, the Committee would receive an overall progress report against all commitments in October, 2021 and a year-end report in April, 2022.

After discussion, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the draft Corporate Annual Delivery Plan for 2021/22 and to examine the potential for including within the key deliverables investment in those independent recreation centres which were still under the ownership of the Council.

#### **Belfast Agenda – Continuing the Conversation Engagement**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Members that the Belfast Agenda – Continuing the Conversation engagement process had been launched on 9th June to formally commence the review of the Belfast Agenda. The proposed engagement plan for this initial phase had been shaped by the sub-group of the Community Planning Partnership which was co-designing plans to review the Belfast Agenda.

He reported that the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning, which included a representative from each of the Political Parties on the Council, had on 20th May, received an update on the reconfiguration of the Delivery Boards, as well as the areas on which they were currently focussed. Members had, at that meeting, highlighted the fact that they would welcome greater participation in the community planning process and that they wished to formalise the aforementioned working group.

With that in mind, he drew the Members' attention to draft Terms of Reference which stated that the purpose of the Working Group would be to support, influence, monitor and challenge the development of community planning in Belfast and related programmes and projects. Members were clear, however, that all significant decisions affecting the future direction of Community Planning in the City would be taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Director went on to state that the initial phase of engagement sought to agree the short-term priorities which would form the focus of community planning activity over the four-year period from 2022-2026. An engagement plan which had been drafted had highlighted four flagship area-based, online workshops, as well as a further event which would seek to engage 'seldom heard' groups and communities of interest. It was anticipated that these events would be delivered in weeks commencing 26th July and 2nd August and, in the run up to them, officers from the Strategic Hub would also be delivering on line briefings outlining the background to the review and highlighting different ways for the public to get involved and have their say. They would also, subject to resources and availability, provide outreach support targeting specific communities.

He pointed out that, given the current restrictions, most of the engagement activities would be taking place online, with face-to-face engagement being introduced only if the regulations allowed. Libraries NI had agreed to encourage their users to complete a short postcard survey and it was hoped that Council facilities could be used as an additional channel for engagement. Officers were continuing to explore options to target child and young people through the planned Department of Education funded summer school schemes and a forthcoming regional event with the Common Purpose

The Director confirmed that Members would continue to be engaged throughout the engagement programme, through the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning, and a workshop would take place on 4th August via Microsoft Teams to allow them to reflect the views of their constituents from different areas of the City. Members had also have also been provided with a communications toolkit, containing resources and links to promote and raise awareness of the review of the Belfast Agenda and were being encouraged to use their social media profiles to direct people to the featured engagement on Your Say Belfast.

After discussion, during which the Director of City and Organisational Strategy undertook to expand the target groups to include community-based summer schemes and family support providers in Belfast, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the contents of the report and adopt the following Terms of Reference for the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning:

1. Role and Responsibilities

The role of the All-Party Working Group on Community Planning will be to support, influence, monitor and challenge the development of community planning in Belfast and related programmes and projects.

2. Terms of Reference

Specifically, the All-Party Working Group will:

- Provide recommendations on the strategic direction and political input to the community planning process within Belfast.
- Act as a reference panel in the wider development of the Council's community planning function.
- Consider actions and interventions which the Council may wish to propose to the Community Planning Partnership to contribute to the vision and outcomes set out in the community plan.
- Enable elected members to receive regular updates on the progress of the Delivery Boards, who drive the implementation of programmes and projects that seek to realise the vision and outcomes of the community plan.
- Ensure that elected members within Parties are kept informed on community planning activity and relevant programmes of work.
- Champion a cohesive approach within the Council to Community Planning.
- Develop and maintain expertise in the field of community planning.
- Collate and consider best practice from other cities and local authorities from the UK, Ireland and internationally.
- Make recommendations for the continuous improvement of the community planning function.
- Whilst not having a decision-making function, it will make recommendations and report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis through reports and minutes of meetings. All significant decisions affecting the future direction of Community Planning in Belfast will be taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

3. **Membership**

The All-Party Working Group on Community Planning will comprise of one member from each of the Political Parties on the Council.

4. **Chairperson**

In line with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of 19th August 2016, a Chairperson will be appointed on an annual basis. This item of business will be placed on the agenda for the first meeting of each Working Group following the Annual Council meeting each year.

5. **Frequency of meetings**

The All-Party Working Group on Community Planning will meet on a quarterly basis unless otherwise required.”

**Council Improvement Plan 2021-22**

The Members considered the following report:

“1.0 **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update Members on the results of the public consultation on the draft Council improvement objectives and to present the draft Council Improvement Plan 2021 - 2022 for Committee approval and publication.

**Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the draft 2021-22 Council Improvement Plan, a copy of which can be accessed here:

<https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s92530/DraftImprovmentPlan20212022.pdf>

As the Council is legally required to publish its improvement plan by 30th June, Members are also asked to authorise its publication on the Council’s website, subject to formal ratification by Council on 1st July.

### 3.0 Key Issues

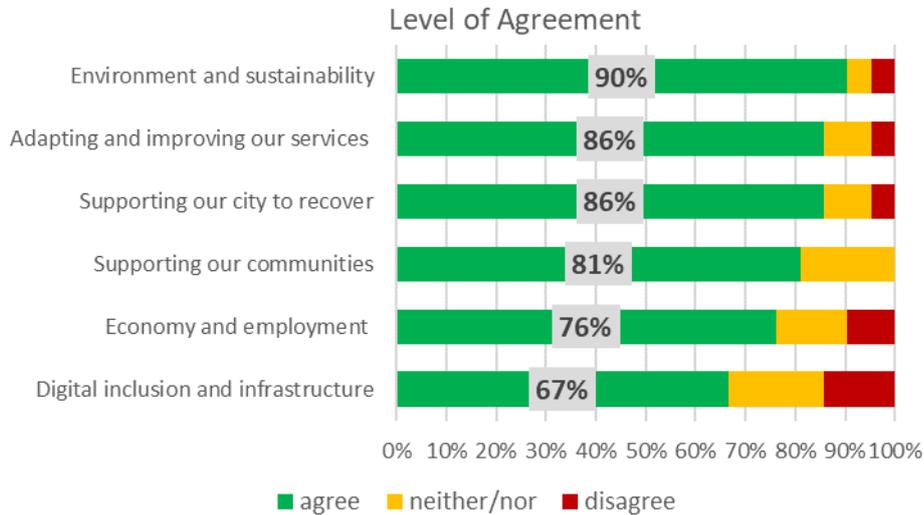
We have a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan by 30th June each year. The Improvement plan does not include everything that the Council plans to do that year, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. In March, the Committee approved six draft improvement objectives, aligned to the Belfast: Our Recovery plan, which we issued for public consultation:

<b>Our city</b>
We will support our city to recover by helping to restore the social and cultural vibrancy of our spaces and places in a safe and sustainable way
<b>Our services</b>
We will take steps to ensure our services adapt and improve in the short and longer term.
<b>Our communities</b>
We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
<b>Our economy</b>
We will work in collaboration with others to protect and create jobs and support people into employment.
<b>Our environment</b>
We will take action to protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
<b>Our digital innovation</b>
We will improve digital inclusion and enhance our digital infrastructure to support job creation and our economy

### Summary of Consultation Responses

3.2 The consultation ran for a period of eight weeks and was hosted on our Your say Belfast engagement platform and promoted through the council's social media channels. 21 responses were received with key results summarised

below. (Note: we do not normally receive a large response to consultations of this nature.) The majority of those responding to the consultation supported the proposed improvement objectives as set out in the graph below.



**3.3 Respondents were also given the opportunity to make comments and suggestions or to suggest other areas that they felt should be included as improvement objectives. Around half of all respondents submitted comments, which related in general to:**

- Enhancing our green and public spaces
- Revitalising the City centre (including the need for pedestrianised streets)
- Improving public Transport
- Improving cycling provision
- Supporting and enhancing our culture, arts and heritage
- Supporting local businesses
- Improving dereliction and cleanliness

**3.4 Although some of the issues raised by respondents are not the responsibility of council, we will forward all feedback to the Belfast Agenda Boards and incorporate it into the upcoming review of the Belfast Agenda.**

**Improvement Plan 2019/20**

- 3.5 Given the high levels of support, as evidenced by this consultation, we did not feel that it was necessary to make changes to the proposed improvement objectives. As required by the legislation, we have now drafted a detailed Improvement Plan, which sets out related improvement actions and targets. This is attached for approval. Members of the Committee are asked to approve the attached plan and to authorise its publication on the council website by 30th June. In order to meet our statutory deadline, the plan will therefore be published, subject to formal ratification by full Council on 1st July.

**Financial and Resources Implications**

- 3.6 The Improvement Plan has been reflected in the formal planning and budgeting processes of council; there are no resource implications contained in this report.

**Equality and Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs**

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

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

**Update on the Development of the  
Inclusive Growth City Charter**

The Members considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 In March 2020, the Council’s Commitments to Inclusive Growth document was published. One key commitment was the development and implementation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for Belfast. Since then a cross-Council team led by Strategy, Policy and Partnerships has been progressing the development of this charter, alongside an external business working group and the council’s Social Policy Working Group.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress to date and note the proposed key next steps.

1.3 The draft charter and suggested next steps outlined in this report, were discussed at the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group on 25th May 2021.

## 2.0 Recommendations

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

a) Note the progress to date in relation to the development of the Charter following a period of extensive engagement, including the suggested:

- Charter pledges and associated evidence requirements
- Charter membership model - tiers, core pledges and accreditation
- Charter membership resources and support

b) Note the proposed key stages of work going forward, including the following timescales proposed for delivery of the next key steps outlined below:

- Charter name / brand development and marketing plan - 14th June – 7th July
- Digital content / website development - 7th July – 16th August
- Second stage of engagement - 7th July to 7th September
- Charter launch October/November 2021

c) Agree to the revised Inclusive Growth cohorts and note the next steps in disseminating this work across the organisation.

## 3.0 Main Report

### Inclusive Growth City Charter

3.1 As highlighted in section 1.0 of this report a key commitment of the Council in working towards its aim of a more inclusive city was the co-creation of an Inclusive Growth City Charter for employers across the city – setting a city wide standard in relation to procurement, employment and civic/ neighbourhood engagement.

3.2 Engagement with businesses to date has shown that there is a strong appetite for such an initiative, which holds organisations to high standards in relation to adopting business practices which bring about added value to society. Research has shown that consumers and employees are

increasingly making decisions based on business performance in these areas with some charters reporting an increase of up to almost 30% in registration applications over the last 6 months. This is thought in part to be due to the impact of Covid 19.

- 3.3 The Charter's potential is reflected in it's prominence within the city's Recovery Document and it's focus on working together to create a more inclusive Belfast underpins the Belfast Agenda and the Lord Mayor's focus, of ' Our Belfast – a more inclusive, forward thinking and kinder city'.
- 3.4 It is closely aligned to other strands of work across the Council, focusing on creating more community wealth and adding social value through business/organisational activity. This includes the Anchor Network on Commissioning and Procurement; BCC Social Value Policy and Framework; Social Enterprise Action Plan and BCC Employment Academies.
- 3.5 We have a window of opportunity to lead the way for Belfast, building on the successful engagement we have carried out to date, to implement the Charter to help achieve our aim of creating a stronger, more resilient, and fairer city economy and society for Belfast.

**Inclusive Growth City Charter Business Working Group and Internal Steering Group**

- 3.6 An external working group of 16 businesses and organisations have been working on the development of a draft charter for the last 12 months and the members are:
- Aflac NI
  - Belfast City Airport
  - Belfast HSC Trust
  - BT
  - Datactics
  - NIC/ICTU
  - NOW Group
  - Social Enterprise NI
  - Allstate NI
  - Belfast Harbour Commissioners
  - BITCNI
  - CIPD
  - FSB
  - NIHE
  - PWC
  - Weavers Cross
- 3.7 Feedback from the working group has been extremely positive in terms of support for the charter. They feel that that given the Covid-19 crisis and the significant impact on the economy, the charter is an opportunity to demonstrate a collective commitment to an inclusive recovery.

- 3.8 This work is also being completed in partnership with officers from Place and Economy and Finance and Resources and an internal steering group was set up to ensure the charter fully reflects corporate priorities and ambition associated with, amongst other things, employment, procurement, young people and skills progression.

**Engagement to Date**

- 3.9 We have carried out extensive engagement to date with over 130 individuals across approximately 25 organisations, reflecting a wide range of employers.
- 3.10 Initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with many consultees seeing this as an ideal opportunity for the council to work in collaboration with employers and position the Charter as an innovative initiative between businesses, government and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. To create, reward and support a community of business and organisational leaders who want to use their powers as employers, procurers and community members to create positive impact for employees, the local economy, communities and the environment.
- 3.11 In particular, they stressed the need for the Charter to be ambitious in its thinking, open to all employers and to grow and adapt as it develops, based on a process of feedback and evaluation. Other key themes are that consultees want the charter to:
- Focus on raising general employment standards (based on the principles of ‘Good Work’), create opportunities into employment, support local businesses and create better links with local communities and citizens;
  - Be bespoke for Belfast, with a unique, compelling USP, which highlights business benefits;
  - Have a clear branding and communications strategy, which is supported by a strong on-line presence;
  - Facilitate better collaboration amongst businesses and organisations and improved sharing of best practice information;
  - Have a tiered structure which takes businesses on a journey to better inclusive business practices – adopt a ‘Carrot’ rather than a ‘Stick’ approach;
  - Find the right balance between incorporating mandatory elements against the importance of flexibility to encourage businesses to sign up; and

- Recognise the difference between smaller and larger businesses and not penalise those with less resources.

**Societal and Business Benefits**

3.12 Through our research of other charters and direct engagement the potential societal benefits for Belfast through the Charter community include:

- More secure, high quality jobs based on the principles of ‘ Good Work’
- Reduced inequality
- More resilient, sustainable local economy
- Lower levels of poverty
- Stronger communities
- More effective and efficient use of organisations and resources that currently exist to achieve Charter aim - NIUSE; community and voluntary groups; Equality Commission;

3.13 In addition the potential benefits to Charter members include:

- Sharing best practice and participation in working groups
- Alignment with organizational CSR goals/brand profile
- Collaboration/partnering with other charter members
- Better links to citizens and target groups
- Access to better networks and business contacts and support of local economy
- Alignment with Charter community on issues
- Engaging employees in the company vision and improving productivity and employee health and well-being
- Attracting employee talent, investment, clients and customers and connecting to Charter suppliers
- Better signposting to other existing organisations that can support members in achieving accreditation – employability organisations’; social enterprises; BITCNI; CIPD

**Draft Pledges, Membership Model and Membership Support**

**Draft Pledges**

- 3.14 Based on the engagement to date, we have drawn up a draft Charter. Our Charter focuses on good employment, procurement and the role of businesses in their community through 8 Charter Pledges and businesses will be expected to provide evidence of excellent practice in these areas.
- 3.15 The draft pledges we are asking businesses to sign up to are outlined in Figure 1 below. Further detail about the required commitments within each pledge is attached.

**Figure 1. Draft Pledges**

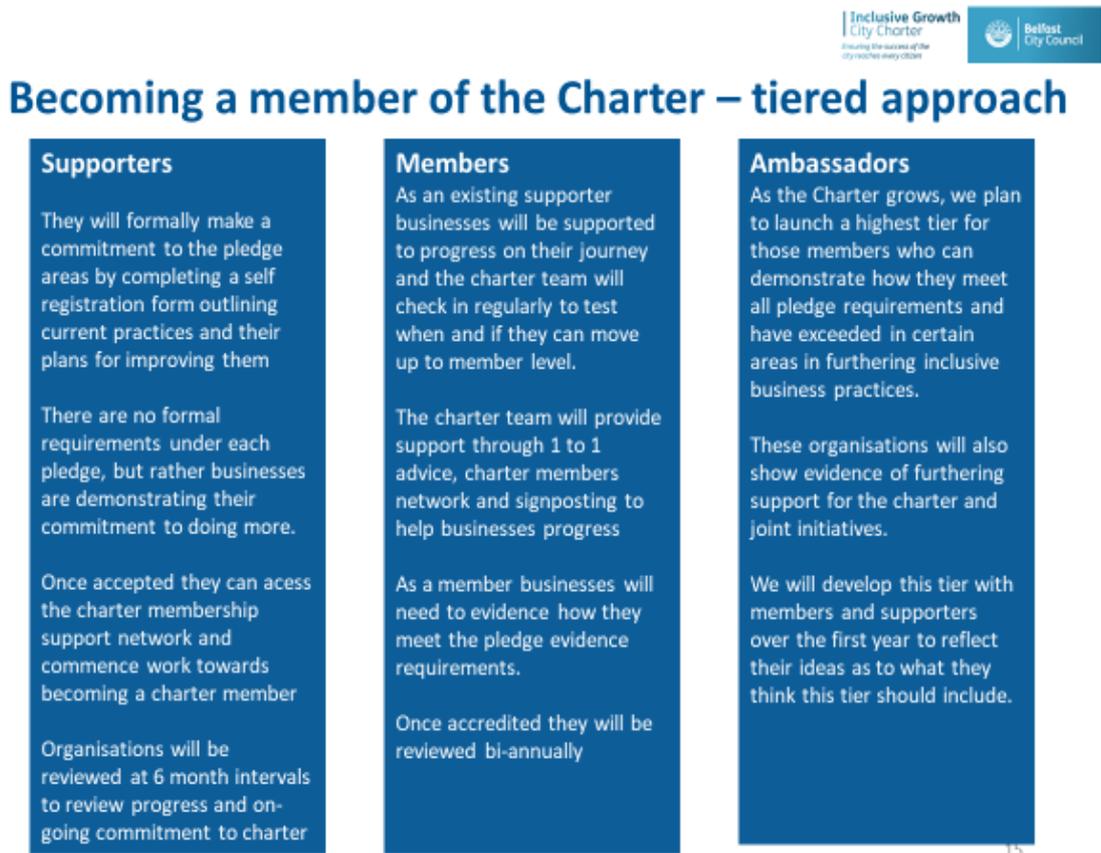
**Our pledges in more detail**



**Membership Structure**

3.16 There are currently three anticipated levels of membership/tiers, as outlined in Figure 2 below:

**Figure 2. Draft Membership Model**



3.17 We are proposing that, initially, our Charter membership requires businesses to meet three core charter pledges and an additional three further charter pledges which they can choose from the remaining five. As part of our engagement, we gathered information around which pledges could be considered core and the following pledges were seen as being particularly important:

- Provide fair wages and contracts
- Offer opportunities into work
- Support the local and social economy
- Protect our environment

3.18 We then propose that to achieve the ambassador level of accreditation businesses must meet all eight pledges

- 3.19 It is worth noting that the pledge around fair wages and contracts was seen as the one that could potentially stop some businesses from signing up to the Charter if it was a core pledge, especially given the pressure on businesses due to Covid-19. We, therefore, propose exploring during the next stage of engagement, consultees wider views on this and potential options.

**Membership Package**

- 3.20 The engagement to date has emphasised the importance of the Charter being clear as to what it can offer members in terms of support and added value. The key elements that businesses have identified to date, which we have incorporated as part of our initial package, include:

- Promotion of new sign ups as appropriate
- Signposting and availability to best practice advice and information – CIPD resource site; NIUSE; BITCNI etc.
- Interactive and engaging private members forum/network, supported by a strong on-line facility
- Access to a members programme of activity to help them meet the pledges and improve their practices eg webinars/meet the buyer days/ links to the Youth Forum and Migrant Forum/ access to BCC employment academies
- Improved links through the charter team and other members to communities and target groups of citizens
- Opportunity to develop new business relationships and improve business to business collaboration and networking
- Access to a list of charter members and their business profile to identify who they many want to do business with going forward
- Potential links in the future to using Charter accreditation to access public procurement
- Ability to ‘measure’ the social value they have contributed through their activities as a member of the Charter

**Proposed Next Steps**

**Delivery Timescales**

3.21 We propose the following timescales for delivery of the next key steps outlined below:

- Charter Mark development and marketing plan - 14th June – 7th July
- Digital content / website development - 7th July – 16th August
- Second stage of engagement - 7th July to 7th September
- Charter launch - October/November 2021

**Charter Mark Development and Public Relations / Marketing**

3.22 All consultees highlighted the importance to the success of the Charter of the creation of a dynamic, unique and strong identity and a compelling accompanying narrative. One which communicates clearly and succinctly the aim and desired impact of the Charter and one which communicates clearly the benefits to businesses of being aligned with the Charter eg being a Charter member can act as a selling point for businesses, helping them stand out and appeal to customers and employees. In addition, it must be able to differentiate itself from other charters and accreditations that currently exist.

3.23 Feedback to date from the external working group members and some consultees is that it must be business focused and not just seen as a Council brand and should appeal to businesses in both the language and imagery used.

We will develop

- a position statement/ 'elevator pitch' for the Inclusive Growth City Charter and it's desired aim
- a mock up of a landing page for the website with accompanying imagery

3.24 In addition, this will be supported by the development of an initial range of marketing collateral, adopting the Charter Mark and narrative developed e.g. Charter Mark for each tier; short videos to promote and sell the Charter; supporting PR and social media graphics etc for use when we are launching and promoting the scheme.

- 3.25 The proposed draft Charter Mark, narrative and key marketing collateral will be market tested with a range of businesses, along with feedback from the external business working group and Social Value Working Group.

**Charter Website Content Development**

- 3.26 As outlined earlier, a key component of the Charter model and membership package is a strong on-line presence. Consultees saw this as vital to encouraging sign up and ensuring the Charter facilitated interaction amongst members, shared best practice and signposting information, offered publicity for members and offered one space where all the Charter information could be accessed easily, minimising unnecessary calls/administration.

We are currently working to finalise the approach for digital presence.

**Second Stage of Engagement**

- 3.27 We have made great progress in the development of the Charter and are now at the stage where we need to carry out further targeted engagement with businesses/organisations and citizens on the detailed draft that has been co-developed.
- 3.28 This will enable us to meet our commitment of the charter being accessible to all employers and make final changes to help ensure that the launch and early implementation is as successful as possible. This engagement plan is being developed with the internal steering group to ensure we make use of existing relationships and deliver a consistent message.
- 3.29 As part of this second stage of engagement we will ensure we engage with a wider number of SME's and those citizens who often face additional barriers to economic growth eg. those with a disability, those with dependants, those from a migrant community. In addition, a public consultation will be carried out using the council's Your Say platform.
- 3.30 We also want to use the engagement as an opportunity to promote the Charter and encourage early adopters prior to our anticipated launch date of Autumn 2021. Many consultees are already exhibiting areas of best practice across the pledges and have agreed in principle to be part of early marketing and promotional activity. This is an ideal opportunity for us to start building membership, whilst also offering publicity for our Belfast businesses.

- 3.31 Feedback from businesses and the working group is that this next stage of engagement should not commence prior to the identity and accompanying narrative being developed and agreed.

#### Charter Launch

Following the 2nd stage of engagement and the finalisation of the Charter and website, we will plan a pilot and hold a business event to launch the Charter. This will involve the design of a delivery plan, materials and a communications plan, with the identification of Charter partners to take part. Members of the external working group have agreed to co-facilitate this event, reinforcing our commitment to ensuring the Charter is not just seen as a council initiative but as a Charter for Belfast.

#### Inclusive Growth Cohorts

- 3.33 Within the March 2020 'Commitments to Inclusive Growth' (IG), four cohorts were identified to help shape targeted IG-related interventions to those most vulnerable throughout the city. The existing cohorts are:

1. Unemployed residents
2. Residents with low skill levels
3. In work, low earning individuals
4. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

- 3.34 In light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the collaborative agreement with Queen's University Belfast (QUB), there was an opportunity to review these cohorts, both in terms of their present appropriateness and exploration of possible alternatives. As part of the Social Policy Working Group meeting on 25th May, Professor Chris Lloyd (QUB) presented his recommendations for a new set of IG cohorts, which are as follows:

1. Unemployed residents:
  - a. Long-term
  - b. Post Covid-19 lockdowns
2. Residents with low skill levels
3. In work, low earning individuals
4. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
5. Young people without benchmark qualifications (less than 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C)
6. People living in multiply deprived neighbourhoods
7. Economic Inactive

- 3.35 It is important to note that when developing further information on the cohorts across the city, we will also include consideration of individual personal characteristics in relation to age, gender and ethnicity.

**Proposed Next Steps**

- 3.36 Following the 25th May 2021 meeting of the SPWG, the proposed cohorts will be adjusted to reflect the discussions and decisions of the group (i.e. inclusion of 'economic inactivity' and demographic sub-categories). Detailed guidance detailing each of the cohorts, as well as a revised decision-making framework will be developed for use by officers across the organisation.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 As outlined in this report there are key areas of work that will require the procurement of external specialist services, however there are no additional financial or resource implications as this has already been accounted for within the current Inclusive Growth budget.

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

- 5.1 As agreed within the initial Inclusive Growth Commitments equality screening, a separate screening will be undertaken as part of the draft charter design process. The findings from the initial screening are already being utilised to inform the engagement design and content.”

After discussion, during which it was stressed that key anchor institutions and the licensing and hospitality sectors within the City needed to become early adopters of the Charter, the Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

**Social Value Procurement Policy**

The Members considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 To seek approval from Members on the proposed Social Value Procurement Policy prior to it going for public consultation in July/ August 21.

## 2.0 Recommendations

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

- approve the content and approach set out in the draft Social Value Procurement Policy, a copy of which can be accessed here:

<https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s92531/Draft%20Social%20Value%20Procurement%20Policy.pdf>

and

- agree with the next steps set out in section 3.3 of this report, noting that officers will commence a process of targeted consultation to test the approach with the market – bringing final recommendations to the SPWG and Committee in September, 2021.

## 3.0 Main Report

### 3.1 Introduction/ overview

In line with the Belfast Agenda and Inclusive Growth Strategy the Council has defined social value in procurement as:

*‘A commitment to using our influence and procurement power to help deliver the Belfast Agenda; to drive inclusive economic growth, improve the local environment and support vulnerable people – while ensuring the best possible value for money when purchasing goods, services and works for the people of Belfast’*

In 2019/20, the Council spent circa £120 million on good, works and services. This level of expenditure can provide a boost to our local economy by (amongst other things):

- Supporting businesses and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector;
- Providing employment opportunities; and
- Generating additional money that can be spent in our neighbourhoods, high streets and local shops.

A lot of the services which we provide as a Council are statutory. However, there are many that are not, such as our ongoing investment in both local community and city landmark projects, our commitment to supporting our older, younger and vulnerable citizens and promoting our city to visitors through city events.

With this level of annual expenditure the Council recognises it should do more through our procurement related expenditure to deliver social value benefits.

In January 2016, the SP and R Committee adopted the Council's social clause policy, which committed the Council to scope out all upcoming tender opportunities (focusing on those with a value of at least £250,000) to explore opportunities for securing social value returns by introducing social clauses.

Members have recognised the limitations with the current approach and agreed that it would be prudent to review the Council's social clauses policy to consider moving towards greater alignment with the 'Buy Social' approach adopted by central government departments in June 2017.

Some of the current limitations of the Council's current approach to social value include:

- Need for better alignment of social initiatives with Belfast Agenda and Inclusive Growth outcomes;
- An inconsistent adoption of the current policy with social value clauses predominantly used for construction works contracts with limited use in service contracts and no use in supplies contracts;
- A focus on employment clauses rather than wider community social considerations and/or environmental considerations;
- Social value not scored as part of the tender evaluation process on a consistent basis with it being considered a mandatory contractual requirement;
- Limited pre-market engagement with the market to discuss social value consideration in procurement exercises and ensure they are proportionate and achievable;
- Limited contract management, monitoring or reporting on delivery of social value clauses. No central records of delivered benefits or upward reporting;
- Contract clauses not normally included in contracts to incentivise suppliers to deliver on their social value commitments e.g. social value key performance indicators 'KPIs' and associated performance deductions/ service credits when not delivered.

### 3.2 Social Policy Working Group

Considering the above a new Social Policy Working Group was formed in January 2021 to provide input into a new Social Value Procurement Policy as well as considering other social value initiatives being undertaken in the Council i.e. City Charter and community wealth building

Invitations were issued to all Parties for participation in the Social Policy Working Group which subsequently held four Workshops between January and May 21.

At these meeting productive discussions were held on the following key issues which have been considered and incorporated in the new Social Value Procurement Policy:

- Benchmarking of other GB councils and NI public sector approaches to include social value in their procurements
- Maximising the social value that be obtained from the Council's procurement spend whilst considering the legislative framework the Council operates under and the current economic climate and COVID recovery of the local market
- Encouraging the use of Reserved Contracts for the VCSE sector, where possible
- The organisation behaviours (selection criteria) that the Council expects of its suppliers
- The social value weighting that should be applied for evaluation of bids to ensure best value for money is obtained
- The social value initiatives (award criteria) that the Council will request suppliers offer in their tender bids
- How to reward suppliers who pay the real living wage and do not use zero-hour contracts
- Including a minimum social value threshold/ pass mark so that suppliers must provide a viable social value offer as part of their tender bid.

There was agreement at the Social Policy Working Group that the new Social Value Procurement Policy would apply to tender valued at £250k and above during 21/22. This was to allow time to fully develop internal and external guidance, the monitoring system with SIB and to review the overall impact of the new policy. This value would then be reviewed ahead of 22/23 to assess if the £250k value threshold should change.

For tenders at £30K and above in addition to the current requirements regarding probity and ethics additional requirements will be put in place relating to the prompt payment of suppliers, suppliers' policies regarding their ethical procurement and fair treatment of supply chains, environmental policies and procedures including ISO 140001 environmental management systems or equivalent, policies relating to the reduction of single use plastics, policies regarding the donation or recycling of equipment to VCSE sector and HR policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity in the workplace, development, health and wellbeing of employees.

As part of award criteria it is our intention to reward suppliers if they offer to:

- *'Pay all employees engaged in delivering the services under the contract the Real Living Wage (as updated and published by the Real Living Wage Foundation) throughout the Contract Period'. This would support our ambitions whilst offering flexibility to suppliers to offer the RLW where they could and be rewarded for doing so, without being too restrictive.*
- *'Not use zero hours contracts for any employees in delivering services under the contract during the Contract Period'.*

It is important to understand that what is intended is essentially an iterative process and that as we emerge from the economic impact of the pandemic that capacity is built in supply chains and that time is permitted to allow suppliers to adjust to a procurement regime in which social value is a central theme.

### 3.3 Next Steps

Further to work by the Social Policy Working Group, we are aiming to start to implement the Social Value Procurement Policy during Q4 21/22. This should be in line with wider roll out of a new social value policy/approach in NI by the Procurement Board.

To support implementation, we request that Members agree the following next steps:

- Approve the current draft of the Social Value Procurement Policy prior to public consultation
- Public consultation of the Social Value Procurement Policy during July – Sept 21. Noting that as well as setting out the ambition of the Council, in line with best practice, the consultation will also presents options and solicit the views of a wide range of stakeholders
- Report public consultation findings back to the SP and R Committee in September / Oct 21 and seek approval of final Social Value Procurement Policy
- Phased implementation of new Social Value Procurement Policy during Q3 and Q4 21/22 including finalising contract management arrangements, in-house training, and supplier engagement.

**3.4 Financial and Resource Implications**

No finance or resource implications. Consultation process only – all financial implications will be considered when consultation is complete.

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

**4.0 No equality or good relations implications.”**

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

**Update on Research into the Response of the Council, Community and Statutory Partners during the first Covid-19 Lockdown**

The Members considered the following report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the research that was undertaken over the last 6 months to capture the work by the Council and others to the initial lockdown and subsequent response to COVID-19.**

## **2.0 Recommendations**

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

- consider the contents of this report and make any comments on the findings;**
- note that the report will be referred to the Living Here Board after approval from Council; and**
- suggest to the Shared City Partnership what areas Members may wish to prioritise within the next steps section of the report, taking into account that £10,000 has been set aside within the Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22**

## **3.0 Main Report**

### **Background**

**3.1 Members will be aware that the Revised Good Relations Action Plan was agreed by Council at its August 2020 meeting and subsequently by The Executive Office. Within this revised plan, approval was granted for the Good Relations Unit to lead on the development of a piece of consultation and research on the successes of the response to COVID-19. Specifically, the research sought to capture how the response contributed to peacebuilding and to identify how this could be built upon.**

**3.2 Following a competitive quotation process, Blu Zebra LTD was appointed to carry out this project, working closely with Council officers and others within the community and statutory sectors. Extensive consultation and engagement was undertaken with a range of stakeholders, the list of which is contained within the report on pages 49-50. The full report is attached.**

### **Report Findings**

**3.3 The research was undertaken within the context of the Council's Good Relations Strategy, Resilience Strategy and the Community Plan, the Belfast Agenda. In summary, the report locates the response to COVID-19 within these strategies and explores how the intention of these strategies was borne out during the emergency response to the pandemic.**

- 3.4 For example, the vision of our Good Relations Strategy is: 'A Shared City - a city re-imagined, connected and resurgent delivering inclusive growth that leaves no-one behind'. In the response to COVID-19, the evidence shows that this was borne out in the response by the Community infrastructure across the City, an infrastructure that has been carefully built up over the past 25 years in a City emerging from Conflict. The relationships and inter-community networking meant that despite our continued physical division, people worked across boundaries to ensure that no-one was left without, or behind in the initial response.**
- 3.5 The research looks at the response to COVID-19 through the lens of the themes within the Good Relations Strategy:**
- Theme 1: Strong, Positive and Transformative Civic Leadership - Inclusive Governance with local community change makers**
  - Theme 2: Shared and Connected Spaces - a smart, connected city driven by inclusive and transformative place making**
  - Theme 3: Shared Services - focusing on prevention, co-design, co-creation and social innovation**
  - Theme 4: Structured collaboration, partnerships & resourcing**
  - Theme 5: Respectful cultural expression within the rule of law**
- 3.6 This approach has enabled us to locate the response within a Good Relations lens, while also highlighting the next steps that should be developed to maintain peacebuilding as a core component of what the Council does in general service delivery.**
- 3.7 The next steps identified within the report include the following:**
- The importance of continued investment in community infrastructure to supporting the recovery. There is never time for complacency. We are often affected by outside influences like Brexit and the fallout from political differences in which the most vulnerable in our city lose out**
  - There is a need to continue to cultivate integrated services at a local area-based level building on the new area based working model, while not forgetting the importance of thematic approaches. This type of model has the potential to really help all of the city's stakeholders to take a strategic view of the needs of the city at an area basis, to help the city break down**

barriers that stifle progression and to identify projects and programmes that can help areas recover. The gains made during the COVID response cannot be allowed to disappear and move back into a business-as-usual scenario.

- Investing in neighbourhoods and creating that sense of belonging, trust, confidence and hope among residents to move across the city freely is important from a good relations perspective.
- Taking a whole systems approach means including all sectors in investing in conversations about how the city can start to retain and create good well-paid jobs right across the city, that everyone feels comfortable and safe in accessing and that help people out of poverty and onto a more sustainable household footing.
- Building the capacity of the community and working with the sector and other partners to create a new community support framework based on the new agile working methods that have emerged as a result to the pandemic response process should be pursued. This should have at its heart a good relations golden thread, recognising that a city at peace with itself can become a thriving and prosperous one.
- It can build on the tacit knowledge, skills and capacity of all players but particularly those in the community and voluntary sector whose capacity has been built up over many years both during and after the years of conflict and community rebuilding. We should remain cognisant of the aging nature of those individuals who have travelled the journey towards a more peaceful society and the need to cultivate and embed new relationships within and between our communities. Many of these human assets within our communities will retire eventually. It is important to ensure that their knowledge is shared before they move on and that succession planning becomes a top priority with our young leaders.
- Knowledge of key workers in CVS organisations and their contacts also play an important role in the future of networking for the city. This needs to be built on and shared constantly to ensure continuity in service.

- Developing our young volunteers and leaders is vital for the future relationships across the City.**
  
- There is a strong drive for the city to examine the concept of community wealth building. In order to achieve this there is a need to keep building on the relationships between organisations and the new ways of working. There is a need to continue to keep collaborating and being imaginative, agile and resourceful and remembering what has been accomplished in such a short period of time in terms of how things are done from a service delivery perspective, during the pandemic response. Above all citizens need to be placed first in terms of the recovery.**
  
- Good, plain English communication is very important so that people understand what is being planned and how they can engage in decision making moving forward. Investing in good communication methods and channels is vital. Sharing but yet protecting data in particular about those who are most vulnerable is essential. Developing the right processes for all organisations in the community and voluntary sector around data management and handling is essential.**
  
- A transformational journey has started – there is now a new connectedness within local areas and between local areas and between local areas and the statutory and the private sector. It is now time to continue to grow capacity and bring partners and collaborators together.**
  
- Integration across sectors is crucial as is mainstreaming of policy thinking into the everyday lives of people. The community and voluntary sector is connected on a day-by-day basis with local communities. They are and need to be recognised as the lynchpin that makes integration work. The community and voluntary sector faces both the community and government agencies and other public bodies and needs to be seen as a solid trustworthy delivery partner by all stakeholders. More traditional habits of doing things needs to change among all stakeholders and new pathways with positive views taken. If the whole system is seen as one coherent unit working for local citizens, then co-design and co-production of services will work effectively. Investing in staff support and training among all stakeholders will build trust.**

- While facing new challenges, the Belfast Community Planning Partnership, should continue to deliver on The Belfast Agenda’s ambitions, while the council should continue to build on the Corporate Plan, the Inclusive Growth Strategy, the Resilience Strategy, the Good Relations Strategy and other city plans and strategies that can drive forward transformative change across the city.
- Building business resilience, community capacity and digital innovation with a focus on public safety and developing people skills is key to recovery. Working in collaboration with partners to regenerate and reshape the city centre and increase community connectivity between the city and arterial routes will play a role in reducing poverty and increasing good relations through cohesion and cultural connectedness.
- Increased focus on sustainable economic development must take account of impacts on the environment and deliver on quality of life and wellbeing within our communities. It is the shared responsibility of communities, the NI Executive, its departments and Council city partners to sustain a positive, solution focussed approach, proactively, co-designed and engaged to deliver and improve on the outcomes for Belfast and its citizens who live, work and harmoniously engage together.
- Recovery plans should seek to maximise and harness benefits from new strategic investments, emerging developments and funding opportunities. Immediate, medium and long-term opportunities exist to create and shape economic opportunities. A recovery framework which is mindful of minimising the human cost, providing relief to communities and delivering essential day-to-day services should be the focus.
- The pandemic will further intensify existing inequalities and create significant economic and social challenges for our communities in the coming years. The impact of COVID-19 on health inequalities, mental health and wellbeing, social isolation and vulnerability and financial worries including income, food and fuel poverty are all too obvious. Council will need to work with government to scale up projects to help address these issues. Leadership at all levels is vital and decision makers will need to engage with communities, evolve and deliver, ensuring a thread of good relations runs through everyone’s business. The good relations commitments within Together, Building a United Community are outlined against four key strategic priorities.

- 3.8 The report concludes that the journey ahead will not be easy, but the infrastructure in communities, the relationships across the city, the focus on the common good which exists across the community and the spirit of hope which focuses on a prosperous future for all, demonstrates that as a city emerging from conflict, we have more in common than divides us. With one of the youngest populations in Europe, Belfast has youth, innovation and the creativity to drive it forward positively, leaving no one behind.

**Next Steps**

- 3.9 Members are asked to comment on the findings of the report. Following any subsequent approval of the report from Council, it would be proposed that the report be considered by the Living Here Board and also launched and made public on the Council's Website, for download and publicised through the Council's usual social media channels.
- 3.10 In addition, it is also proposed that engagement begins with other stakeholders on the proposals contained within the 'next steps' section of the report, as a key part of the Council's Recovery agenda.
- 3.11 Members should also note that within the Council's current Good Relations Action Plan, agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 19 February and at Council in March, provision has been set aside for £10,000 to develop actions arising from this report. Members may wish to suggest to the Shared City Partnership what areas within the above 'next steps', they may wish to prioritise.

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

- 3.12 The report is part of the revised Good Relations Action Plan, which was screened for Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs and was screened out.

**Financial and Resource Implications**

- 3.13 The costs of this report were £11,649. £12,000 was included in the revised Good Relations Action Plan, 75% of which will be recouped by the Council from The Executive Office under the District Council's Good Relations Programme."

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

### **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

#### **Update on Area Working Groups**

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meetings of the South Belfast Area Working Group of 24th May, the North Belfast Area Working Group of 26th May and the West Belfast Area Working Group of 27th May.

#### **Update on Physical Programme**

The Members considered the following report:

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

**1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes 140 capital projects with investment of £100m + via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report provides:**

- An overview of recently completed capital projects**
- Movements recommended under the Capital Programme**
- An update on construction industry supply shortages, implications and actions**

##### **2.0 Recommendations**

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

- Physical Programme overview - Note the update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently in construction**
- Move ‘IT Programme - Server and storage technology refresh’ to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme**

- Move 'IT Programme – Replacement Hardware for NIHE System' to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme
- Issues affecting the construction industry – Note the update and mitigating actions being undertaken
- Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund – Note that a report will be brought forward in August
- Community Renewal Funding – note that an application for feasibility funding is being submitted under Communities and Place theme

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Physical Programmes Update: June 2020 to June 2021

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme - a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as BIF, LIF and SOF, as well as numerous capital programmes that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include NHLF, SEUPB Peace IV, the Executive Office via Social Investment Fund and Urban Villages, DfC, DfI, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages and others. Over the past year, despite the pandemic, a large number of capital projects have been delivered successfully with a significant number started.

3.2 Recently completed projects include:

- *Community projects:* Launch of Grace Family Centre, a new facility for childcare and counselling support, Cancer Lifeline – new headquarters for Cancer Lifeline in North Belfast, upgrades to Knockbreda Parish Church Hall, improvements to Greenway Women's Centre and North Belfast Women's Initiative and Support Project, Alleygates Phase 4 – over 180 alleygates across the city, St James' Community Farm and allotment works at Ballysillan
- *Open spaces, tourism and heritage schemes:* Springfield Dam Park, Entries projects in the city centre, environmental improvements at Eastside Greenway Ballymacarrett, a new Changing Places facility and range of upgrade works at Belfast Zoo

- ***Leisure, sports and play facilities:*** Renovations at Tullycarnett and Shore Road pavilions, new MUGA at John Paul II Youth Club, new changing facilities at Willowbank, improvements to the running track at Paisley Park and to pitches at Cregagh, Shaftesbury and Grosvenor centres, playground refurbishments at Clonduff, Grosvenor Recreation Centre, Blackmountain, McClure Street, Sandy Row, Short Strand, Glenbryn and Reverend Robert Bradford Memorial Park.

3.3 **Projects underway or commencing shortly:**

- ***Colin Glen Trust*** – new tourism and recreation facilities totalling £4m at the forest park including Ireland’s first Alpine Toboggan and the longest zipline in Ireland at nearly 700m – due for completion summer 2021
- ***Lagan Gateway Greenway*** – major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections – due for completion Summer 2021. Work underway to develop Phase 2
- ***LTP Avoniel*** - £8m new facility at Avoniel focused on outdoor leisure provision – due for completion Autumn 2021
- ***City Cemetery Heritage Project*** - £2.3m scheme to protect, enhance and promote the cemetery's rich heritage
- ***St Comgall’s*** – £7m restoration of former school to create a multi-use community hub
- ***LTP Templemore Baths*** – £17m restoration of Templemore Baths with a focus on heritage and spa provision
- ***Forth Meadow Community Greenway*** – an ambitious and transformational £5m scheme which will see the development of a new 12km urban greenway in West Belfast
- ***Boodles Dam*** – works to the Dam and environmental improvements
- ***Sports, leisure and tourism projects*** at H&W Welders FC/Blanchflower Playing Fields, TAGIT Boxing Club, Berlin Swifts FC changing pavilion, Roddy McCorley Heritage Centre

- **Community projects** at Belfast Orange Hall – refurbishment and upgrades, Belfast Islamic Centre, VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) – refurbishment and upgrade, Sailortown/St Joseph’s upgrades, Star Neighbourhood Centre refurbishments, Holylands environmental improvements, Mornington Community Centre upgrades, upgrades and refurbishments at Woodvale Cricket Club, St. Matthew’s Parish Hall and West Belfast Orange Hall, Lisnasharragh Community Schools project
- **Corporate projects** – range of IT projects to ensure business continuity and ongoing Fleet replacement programme.

3.4 This overview does not include a number of additional projects either in early stages of development, Planning or procurement, neither does it include all of the activity on maintenance projects or all the legacy projects which still require resource. Photos of the projects recently completed or underway are attached in Appendix 1. When appropriate, as per Covid 19 public health guidance, the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

**Proposed Movements - Capital Programme**

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

Project	Overview	Stage
IT Programme: Server and Storage Technology Refresh	Procurement and commissioning of new servers and storage in the Council’s two data centres at 9 Adelaide and Duncrue.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed (Hold at Tier 0 – Scheme at risk pending tender return)
IT Programme: Replacement Hardware for NIHE System	The Council has a major contract to support systems on behalf of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. This project is to update IT hardware for that system.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed (Hold at Tier 0 – Scheme at risk pending tender return)

**3.6 IT Programme – Server and Storage Technology Refresh**

Under the Council's IT Programme, this project has been identified as being business critical and required to ensure continuity of service provision. Many of the Council's ICT systems and information reside on Council owned servers and data storage units in two datacentres. The hardware is now five years old and must be replaced in order to ensure continuity of service and support, reduce risk of failure, and to avoid escalating support costs. Members are asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. It is however recommended that this project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* but held at Tier 0 – Scheme at risk pending a satisfactory tender return. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

**3.7 IT Programme – Replacement Hardware for NIHE System**

Under the Council's IT Programme, this project has been identified as being business critical and required to ensure continuity of service provision. The Council is contracted to provide ICT services to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The system itself is large, and delivery of the service is extremely complex. In addition, new legislation means that new functions are moving to the NIHE in April 2022. As with the Council's own servers, this hardware is also now five years old and needs to be replaced because the age of the hardware means that is more susceptible to failure, the increase in workload means that the hardware needs to be futureproofed, and to avoid escalating support costs. Members are asked to agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver. It is however recommended that this project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* but held at Tier 0 – Scheme at risk pending a satisfactory tender return. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

**Issues impacting the construction sector –  
Cost increases and supply shortages**

- 3.8 Members may be aware that there has been a significant increase in costs throughout all sectors of the construction industry in recent months. Significant challenges with Covid and Brexit have resulted in unprecedented supply and demand issues and significant price increases. Projections indicate that product availability is worsening, and that strong demand will continue for at least the next six months. This pattern is emerging worldwide as countries all experience a surge after lockdowns. Many items have increased exponentially in recent months in cost terms (for example steelwork prices have risen by 30+%, plastics by 15-30% with similar price increases for timber and other costs increases across all areas). It is currently unknown whether these increases will be short term or more permanent. Availability and lead in times are also a key issue particularly around timber, steel, pitched roofing, plastics and paints/coatings, electronic components and cement. The surge in demand across the construction industry may also exacerbate other existing issues such as shortages of labour and drivers.
- 3.9 For the Council, this is already beginning to affect existing measured term contracts and is likely to impact on current and future capital and maintenance projects in terms of costs and potentially timescales for delivery. Contingency planning and communication are critical to enable existing and pipeline projects to continue. Officers from Physical Programmes Department will continue to work with contractors and suppliers to understand upcoming issues and reduce the risks to the Council. At this stage this is being highlighted for Members as an emerging issue with updates on any consequential impact on projects to be brought back for Member's consideration as required.

**Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund**

- 3.10 Members will be aware that the new £8m Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is a fund for capital development in, and with, communities. Members will also recall that earlier this year they agreed the principles, allocation model and thematic areas for the fund. The Fund forms an integral part of the Council's Recovery Framework with themes that reflect the city's recovery priorities:
- Neighbourhood tourism – aligned to the emerging ten year tourism plan

- Social enterprise – aligned to the Social Enterprise Action Plan 2019-2024
- Environmental and sustainable projects – aligned to the Resilience Strategy

There is a minimum threshold of £250,000 to target substantial and transformational proposals. A report will be brought to Members in August on proposed engagement and roll out, application process, clinics, assessment and outcomes, with an open call process to follow in Autumn.

#### UK Community Renewal Fund – Bid

- 3.11 Members will recall that at Committee last month they agreed a number of submissions under the Community Renewal Fund and noted that the closing date for applications for this Fund was 18th June. At this time Members further agreed *‘to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to adopt the recommendations and to approve any eligible projects which might come forward in relation to the investment in communities and place category, in advance of the submission date’*.
- 3.12 Members are asked to note that officers have reviewed further the opportunities under the Communities and Place category and will be submitting an application for revenue funding to commission a feasibility study that would examine the potential to connect up the city using existing and new greenways, urban greenways and existing and enhanced green spaces allowing the ability to connect the North, South, East West of the city using the existing and new greenways and via the city centre and capitalising on one of the city’s best assets in terms of access into the Hills. This could provide an opportunity for Belfast to be a unique exemplar in terms of accessibility and connectivity with the ability to access all areas of the city in an active and sustainable way. This links with the aspirations which have already been put forward by Members including access to the hills, active travel and biodiversity gain and links with other initiatives underway including Belfast Urban Greenway (BUG), BOSS (Belfast Open Spaces Strategy). It will provide an opportunity to further enhance existing projects (CCG, Forth Meadow Community Greenway etc.) and to further develop partnerships with DFI, National Trust etc. The feasibility output would help prepare for, and inform future funding opportunities to support delivery, and identify potential priority interventions for other partners as part of an overall partnership approach to enhanced city and community connectivity and alignment with other partner programmes of work and will help to identify short and medium ‘quick wins’ as well as longer term projects.

3.13 It is understood that successful applications under this stream will be advised from the end of July and if successful the feasibility will be completed within this financial year. Members will be advised on the outcome of the application.

3.14 **Financial and Resource Implications**

**Financial –**

- The final budgets for the *IT Programme: Server and Storage Technology Refresh project and Replacement Hardware for NIHE System project* will be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation that they are within the affordability limits of the Council upon receipt of the tender returns.
- The financial implications of the issues affecting the construction sector in terms of costs are not yet quantifiable but will be kept under review

**Resource – Ongoing support costs for the IT projects to be confirmed on return of tenders**

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

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

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

**Finance, Procurement and Performance**

**Audit and Risk Panel  
Annual Report to Committee**

The Members considered the following report:

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

1.1 The Audit and Risk Panel is constituted as a working group of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The purpose of the Panel is to provide an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council’s risk management framework and associated control environment. The Panel also oversees the Council’s financial reporting process.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a summary of the key issues that have been considered and discussed by the Panel during the 2020/21 financial year, the assurances received and the areas requiring attention.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the annual report of the Panel during 2020/21, as set out at Section 3, and approve the minutes of the meeting of 8th June.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

Summary of the work of the Audit and Risk Panel in 2020/21

3.1 Considering the importance of receiving independent assurance over the Council's changed risk, control and governance frameworks during the Covid-19 pandemic, in September 2020 the Panel agreed the revised audit plan to ensure that audit work was focussed on the areas where assurance was most valuable. The revised plan covered:

- Key financial systems / income generating activity / expenditure controls
- Key programmes / projects
- Management of key corporate risks
- Meeting external grant funding requirements
- Governance arrangements

3.2 During 2020/21, the Panel met three times via MS Teams. The Panel did not meet in June 2020, as all meetings of working groups were cancelled from mid-March 2020 to August 2020, as part of our organisational response to the impact of Covid-19.

3.3 During 2020/21, the Panel considered audit plans and issues arising from audit activity, such as the findings, assurance levels and recommendations arising from audit work and the progress being made to implement audit recommendations. It also received regular updates on:

- the Council's financial position, as set out in its financial statements
- reports from the Council's external auditors

- risk management
- business continuity
- fraud, financial irregularity and whistleblowing investigations
- governance related matters
- financial control
- health and safety
- performance management
- staff attendance.

**3.4 The key assurances that the Panel received are as follows:**

- the Council's financial statements and annual governance statement, as prepared by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources and his team; this provided a management assurance on the Council's financial position
- the audited accounts and the associated external audit annual letters for 2019/20 (providing an opinion on the accounts) and report to those charged with governance (setting out control issues arising from the annual external audit), as prepared and presented by the Northern Ireland Audit Office. This provided an external assurance on the Council's financial position for 2019/20. (The accounts for 2020/21 are to be prepared by the end of June 2020)
- the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Service's annual assurance statement on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements, based on the findings of audit work completed throughout the year.

**3.5 The usual assurances from the NIAO on the Council's performance management arrangements, specifically in reference to the Improvement Duty, placed upon the Council by relevant legislation, has been affected by the pandemic, with the NIAO audit and assessment of BCC's Improvement activity 19/20 due to be reported to the Panel in June 2021. Discussions are ongoing with the Department for Communities and the NIAO regarding the new arrangements.**

**3.6 Where areas for improvement have been identified, these have been reported and implementation of agreed recommendations is actively monitored and reported back to the Panel. The Panel has, on occasions, raised issues where either audit reports have identified significant issues or progress against recommendations has not been satisfactory, with Directors asked, where necessary, to attend the Panel and provide further explanation. The key areas considered during 2020/21 included:**

- internal audits of key areas such as temporary expenditure controls out in place to manage the impact of the pandemic, committee decision making under delegated authority, accounts payable, cash flow forecasting, and performance management
  - audits of the management of corporate risks such as the sustainable development / preparing for climate change, city risks and the local development plan
  - assurance and advisory work over key programmes including the SAP replacement, HR Payroll, Planning Portal and the customer Focus Programme
- 3.7 The Audit and Risk Panel has also received updates during the year on the Council's risk management arrangements, including reports on the management of the Council's key corporate risks.

**Consideration of the Annual Governance Statement by the Audit and Risk Panel**

- 3.8 The Council has a statutory responsibility to prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) as part of the Financial Report. The Annual Governance Statement will be incorporated into the unaudited statement of accounts and certified by the Chief Financial Officer by 30th June, 2021. It is subject to review by the LGA (NIAO) as part of its annual audit. The Audit and Risk Panel has considered both the basis for preparation of the Annual Governance Statement ,along with the content of the statement. The minutes of the Panel's meeting of 8th June have been circulated for approval.
- 3.9 As required, the Statement for the year 2020/21, has been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2020/21 accounts and is consistent with the principles of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016 edition).
- 3.10 The Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has complied with requirements of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland 2015) in relation to the publication of an annual governance statement.
- 3.11 The Annual Government Statement sets out:

- **The scope of responsibility of the Council in relation to governance**
- **The purpose of the governance framework**
- **The governance framework in place**
- **The review of the effectiveness of the governance framework**
- **An update on the significant governance issues disclosed at year-end 2020**
- **The significant governance issues to be disclosed for year-end 2021 and the action proposed to address them.**

**3.12 The Annual Governance Statement has been updated to reflect key changes to our governance arrangements due to the pandemic, including the interim committee decision making process which was delegated to the Chief Executive in March 2020 and May 2021, development of Covid-19 recovery plans, Covid-19 corporate risk assessment and change management processes over any amendments to financial processes during the pandemic. The statement also outlines significant governance issues that have arisen as a result of the impact of Covid-19.**

**3.13 The Annual Governance Statement should be approved by the Chair of Strategic Policy and Resources, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources.**

#### **Financial and Resource Implications**

**3.14 None**

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

**3.15 None.”**

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

#### **Update on Contracts**

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

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

- approve the modification of the contract term, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 3 below;
- note the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 4 below;
- approve the award of a contract, which had been omitted from the report, in relation to the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor, to work up areas of focus, including research and development hubs and skills programmes, with the Council's contribution being £29,400; and
- note information which had been provided on historical spend for the hire of minibuses and coaches for Council events, which had been requested by the Committee at its meeting on 23rd April;

**Table 1: Competitive Tenders**

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Demolition, securing and repair of dangerous or ruinous properties	Up to 3 years	£166,500	A Reid	The safe and competent demolition and/or securing of unsafe commercial, industrial and residential properties, carrying out repairs to properties following demolition or to ensure that a safe environment is maintained and controlled around or within existing properties.
Hire of mini buses/coaches for Council events	Up to 4 years	£400,000	R Cregan	Corporate wide contract - hire of transportation for Council run events. Supplementary information provided below.
Provision of catering for events and retail services at Belfast Castle and Malone House	Up to 5 years	£5,000,000 (Anticipated revenue of Contractor) over 5 years). £60k p.a. income for Council (Pre-Covid)	S Toland / R Black	The contract requires a service provider to provide catering and bar services at both venues to cover events (i.e. weddings, conferences and celebratory events) and retail services (onsite restaurants and cafes). The service provider then pays the Council a % commission on any sales. Re-tender due to French Village going into administration and withdrawing from contract in April 21.

**Table 2: Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Total Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
Phase 2 - Purchase and installation hand sanitiser stations for main arterial routes and play parks	£45,000	S Toland / R Black	Play and Leisure Services Ltd
Seasonal/ contentious waste removal	Confidential	S Toland / R Black	Confidential

**Table 3: Modification to Contract Term**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Modification</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
T1963 Tender for the delivery of the Social Enterprise and Cooperative Programme	Additional £45,000 and 5 month extension	A Reid	Work West Enterprise Agency

**Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions**

<b>Title of Contract</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>SRO</b>	<b>Supplier</b>
Use of BCCM's wayleaves for the installation of the City Centre Christmas Lighting Scheme	One off payment	£14,500	A Reid	Belfast City Centre Management
Support programme for businesses and destination within the tourism and hospitality sector in Belfast	Up to 2 years	£60,000	A Reid	Green Tourism
The provision of bar services at Belfast Castle and Malone House (interim provision)	Up to 3 months	£50,000 (revenue for contractor from bar sales)	S Toland / R Black	Nightcap Event Group Ltd
T1770 – Contract extension of hire of mini buses/coaches for Council events	Up to 6 months	£50,000	R Cregan	Belfast Bus Company

**Equality and Good Relations**

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 7th June, including the recommendations:

- i. that a workshop be convened in August to allow the Partnership to consider further the outcomes of the Members' discussion on sectarianism within the City;
- ii. that the initial key actions and next steps identified in this discussion be brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for noting;
- iii. to endorse the responses made by the Refugee and Asylum Forum to the consultation on the Home Office's Plan for Immigration;
- iv. to agree the proposed 'next steps' as outlined in the report on groups aligned to those mentioned under the Good Relations Duty and the following 'Hate Crime Categories' - Disability, Transgender Identity and Sexual Orientation;
- v. to note that a report would be submitted to a future meeting examining the possibility of extending the membership of the Shared City Partnership;
- vi. to endorse the appointment of Ms. Ashley Roberts as the Community and Voluntary Representative on the Shared City Partnership, representing the East of the City; and
- vii. to agree that the discussions and necessary approvals on the mitigations required by the projects, as part of Project Recovery, be progressed by the Programme Board and the SEUPB.

**Diversity Action Plans and Achievement of  
Diversity Chartermark NI - Silver Accreditation**

The Members considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 **To agree the budget and appropriate resources for the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and LGBT+ Action Plan Year 1 activities.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1** The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to agree the proposed diversity action plans and associated year 1 costs.

**3.0 Main Report**

**Background and Context**

**3.1** Our Equality and Diversity Framework outlines how we will tackle inequalities and promote diversity in our city. It is built around four key priorities:

- A. Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment**
- B. Understanding our communities through data and consultation**
- C. Delivering services accessible to all**
- D. Developing a skilled and diverse workforce**

**3.2** It includes a series of actions to be delivered to help achieve these priorities and under Priority A, Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment, the Council has committed to developing and delivering a Gender Action Plan, LGBT+ Action Plan and a Race Action Plan.

**Gender Action Plan (GAP)**

**3.3** Gender inequalities are deeply embedded in our social, economic and cultural systems. There is overwhelming evidence that women disproportionately experience disadvantage and discrimination, a reflection of historical unaddressed inequality, but also that inequalities have been exacerbated by austerity, welfare reform and by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics affirm the persistence of gendered inequalities, which continue to inhibit women's life opportunities in Northern Ireland. Men will benefit from gender equality as they too face gender-specific issues such as lower life expectancy, bad health, lower education levels and are impacted negatively by rigid gender norms.

**3.4** The proposed GAP 21-24 in Appendix 1 has been developed following consultation with the Women's Steering Group (WSG), the Women's Network and the wider group of staff that attended a Gender Inequalities workshop in January 2021. The purpose of this workshop was to have a discussion involving staff of all genders around gender inequalities, including how we can act as allies for each other and to feed into future action planning.

- 3.5 The feedback from the consultation process has been incorporated into the draft 3-year plan and also influenced the revision to the themes of the GAP to:
- Promoting gender equality in the council
  - Promoting gender equality in the community
  - Promoting gender equality in the economy
  - Promoting gender equality in the city
- 3.6 Some actions from the 20/21 plan put on hold because of the pandemic, have been carried forward into the new plan, most notably the joint senior officer and elected member leadership development programme. WSG held a virtual workshop to review the programme for future delivery, particularly in light of the impact of Covid 19 and this will be delivered in the autumn of this year.
- 3.7 In addition to the financial resources required, the plan also identifies the role that individual business units and departments have in delivery of the plan. Chief officers are asked to allocate the necessary resources to ensure delivery of the actions or ensure where appropriate that actions are incorporated into existing projects and work plans. Year 1 of the proposed GAP has been costed and is being presented to the Committee for approval.

#### LGBT+ Action Plan

- 3.8 This plan sets out our proposed activity for 2021-24 and has been developed jointly between HR and the LGBT+ staff network which has grown considerably in size and visibility in recent years. Actions include our second participation in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, a national benchmarking exercise that will assess our continued commitment as an organisation to LGBT+ equality and show us where we need to improve; more LGBT+ awareness raising training and activity and increased community activity in particular, the staff network's annual presence / participation in Belfast Pride. The proposed plan is attached at Appendix Two. Year 1 of the proposed LGBT+ action plan has been costed and is being presented to the Committee for approval.

#### Disability Action Plan

- 3.9 The Committee should also note that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ('DDA') Section 49 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons, and to the need to encourage participation by disabled persons in public life.

Our current Plan runs, approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and reported on annually, runs from 2019 until 2022.

### The People Strategy

- 3.10 Due to the pandemic, key elements of the draft People Strategy were put on hold. One of the key themes in the emerging People Strategy will be Diversity and Inclusion and it is hoped that a more strategic approach to the management of our people and workforce development planning will ensure a that our diversity and inclusion activity is fully aligned to our corporate priorities and delivery of the Belfast Agenda, in particular our Inclusive Growth Strategy. Included as an action in the draft strategy is the development of a race action plan. While the delay with implementation of the HR review and realignment of resources to other priorities during Covid have prevented this work been taken forward, the intention is to have a plan agreed by December 2021.

### Diversity Mark NI - Award of Silver Accreditation

- 3.11 The Council was one of the first organisations to sign up to this diversity charter when it was launched in 2017. It measures the progress of organisations on their journey to improve diversity and inclusion, and accreditation at Bronze, Silver and Gold level is awarded to companies following an assessment process as they reach the required standard of commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion. Having held the bronze accreditation since our initial assessment in 2018, the council was recently awarded silver accreditation, having demonstrated the progress required by Diversity Mark to achieve the silver level accreditation. We are now one of only seven organisations (out of a total of ninety member organisations) to attain the Silver award and the first public sector organisation to do so. To date no other member has achieved Gold accreditation.

### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.12 The cost of delivery of the proposed Gender Action Plan year 1 activities is estimated at £43,000. Please note this includes £12,000 of approved activity carried over from 2020/21 which could not be progressed because of the pandemic. The cost of delivery of the LGBT+ Action Plan year 1 is estimated at £13,050. Both plans will be met from the existing Organisational Development budget.

- 3.13 It should be noted that social distancing restrictions, should they continue, will impact on delivery of some activity, for example delivery of some may not be feasible or will only be feasible on a smaller or remote basis. It is envisaged that this may reduce costs overall. The plan also identifies the role that individual business units and departments have in delivery of the plan.

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

- 3.14 The delivery of the Gender and the LGBT+ Action Plans will result in positive outcomes. The promotion of equality and diversity entails more than the elimination of discrimination, it requires proactive action. The actions contained within both plans will not only impact on internal operations but also have a positive impact externally on women and the LGBT+ community in our city.”

**Appendix 1**

**GENDER ACTION PLAN 2021 - 2024 - DRAFT**

Gender inequalities are deeply embedded in our social, economic and cultural systems. There is overwhelming evidence that women disproportionately experience disadvantage and discrimination, a reflection of historical unaddressed inequality, but also that inequalities have been exacerbated by austerity, welfare reform and by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the twenty years since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement’s commitment to the ‘full and equal participation of women in public life’, statistics affirm the persistence of gendered inequalities, which continue to inhibit women’s life opportunities in Northern Ireland. Men will benefit from gender equality as they too face gender-specific issues such as lower life expectancy, bad health, lower education levels and are impacted negatively by rigid gender norms.

**PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE COUNCIL**

-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

Action	Year	Who	Cost
Review Terms of reference / structure for Women’s Network Group and develop a programme of events and activity.	1	WNG	£5000
Hold annual IWD event / celebrations for staff	1, 2, 3		£6000
Deliver a mentoring programme for staff of all genders	2	HR	£5000
Encourage all staff to work together	1, 2 3,	HR	Staff

to understand and champion gender issues through joint events, communications, workshops, outreach programmes etc		Depts	resources
Review and delivery Women's Leadership Programme for members and officers to include a focus on resilience and in particular around social media.	1	HR	£12000
Participate in NI Gender Diversity Charter assessment work towards attaining Silver level accreditation	1	HR	£2500 pa
Review "on boarding " for senior staff and all staff to include leadership responsibilities around equality, diversity and inclusion and responsibilities of all staff	1	HR	Staff resources
Develop/ agree transgender guidance document for staff	1	HR Proud Staff network	Staff resources
Explore and challenge existing culture / perceptions around "presenteeism" , flexible working at a senior level, long hours culture etc. and develop actions to help address / change culture	2	HR WSG CMT	£1000
Ensure effective promotion of BCC as an employer that values and supports equality and diversity (external website, job info to potential applicants, press releases, City Matters article etc.)	1	HR MarComms Staff networks	Staff resources
Develop and agree Menopause guidance for staff	1	HR Women's Network Group	Staff resources
Review frontline job opportunities including apprenticeships, and associated working arrangements and facilities, to make these opportunities more attractive to female applicant and promoting BCC role models deliver targeted employability outreach to get more women into work	1, 2, 3	CNS HR Place and Economy	Staff Resources
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	1, 2, 3	HR	£2000
Review, update and communicate maternity, paternity, and other parental / caring related guidance for staff and managers , including flexible working, as part of the review of the Work Life Balance Handbook	2	HR Depts	Staff resources

Allocate a specific Lactation Room for breastfeeding mothers	1	L&CS	FM budget
Develop a communications plan, both internal and external, to engage everyone, not just women, on gender issues.	1	Marketing and Communications HR	Staff Resources
Deliver career planning workshops for staff	2	HR	£3000 pa
<p><b>PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY 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.	1, 2, 3	Equality Unit	£6500
Recognise Transgender Remembrance Day and Transgender Day of Visibility	1, 2, 3	HR Proud Staff network	LGBT+ Action plan
Increase awareness and understanding of the gender spectrum including "non binary"	1	HR HR Proud Staff network	LGBT + action plan
Working with BCC staff networks and external groups, hold a workshop to explore and identify "intersectionality issues" where women experience multiple barriers and identify actions to address	2	HR WSG	£1000
Explore potential for mainstreaming Grow Lead Change programme with potential partners linking with the Community Provision Team to explore opportunities for potential collaboration on community and voluntary sector capacity building	1	P&E CNS	Staff resources
Hold an event for WSG to engage with the Youth Forum and to identify opportunities for future collaboration gender issues	2	HR WSG CNS / YF	£1000
Explore the potential to deliver an external mentoring programme ( BCC senior managers / women in communities) and deliver as appropriate	1, 2		£3000 (Yr 2)

<b>PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY 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			
Identify opportunities for targeted employability outreach, ring fencing, employment academies etc. for women furthest removed from the labour market including City Deal opportunities	1,2,3	HR/ED Depts	Staff resources / Employment Academies
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.	1	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.	1, 2, 3	Economic Development	£90,000
Establish link with Area Partnership Boards where relevant, and other stakeholder groups to consider particular needs of women wishing to start their own business.	1, 2, 3	ED	Staff resources
Work with city partners to deliver a STEM employability event for girls.	3	HR ED External partners	£5000
<b>PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY 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. In particular link in with the Clean, Green and Safe survey.	1, 2, 3	Property and Projects Department C&NS Place & Economy Dept	Staff resources  Potential cost if additional works required
Support and raise awareness of the Raise your Voice Project to help address misogyny, sexual harassment and violence, in particular consider engagement with all stakeholders in particular, males.	1	HR External partners	£3000

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	1, 2, 3	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 to retain Onus Safe City status included continued internal training and support and awareness raising. Explore the Safe Haven initiative and its potential link to Safe City activity.	1, 2, 3	HR CNS ONUS and other external partners	£3000 + PCSP Resource
Explore how the council can support and raise awareness around period poverty and agree actions that the Council can undertake to help alleviate period poverty in our city .	1	CNS WSG	Staff Resources
Develop an Anti-Harassment Policy for all Council facilities and Council-run events ( linking in with Safeguarding Policy and relevant training )	Year 1	HR CNS P&E	£3000

**TOTAL APPROXIMATE COSTS Year - £43000 (excl ED funded initiatives)**

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

**Appendix 2**

**Belfast City Council – LGBT+ Action Plan 2021-2024 - DRAFT**

Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
Increased awareness of LGBT+ issues including bias and its impact on staff and service delivery.	<i>Training and Development</i>	<p><b>-Source and deliver LGBT+ inclusion and awareness training.</b></p> <p><b>Include a specific session designed for senior leaders every year.</b></p> <p><b>Source and deliver specific training in</b></p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	HR/ Network Chair	£1000

Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
		relation to Corp Procurement Team.					
Increased awareness specifically around Trans and Bi identities.	<i>Training and Development</i>	<b>Source and deliver awareness training sessions focused specifically on Trans and Bi identities.</b>	✓	✓	✓	HR/ Network Chair	£650
LGBT+ employees feel comfortable to bring their whole self to work.  Line managers supported to better understand key issues and their responsibilities and how to provide support to their teams.	<i>Training and Development</i>	<b>Deliver revised Diversity and Inclusion training to ensure LGBT+ inclusivity with all new staff and managers entering The Council. (This follows consultation with Proud in 2019-20 on the content of the training.)</b>	✓	✓	✓	HR	Staff Resource
Better mental health awareness.	<i>Training and Development</i>	<b>Allocate 5 places each year on Mental Health First Aider course to Proud members and offer spaces to the wider organisation.</b>  <b>Participate in Mental Health Awareness Week each year (cross sectional with other Diversity Networks).</b>	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	HR  HR	LGTC funded programme 21/22  £300
Inclusive policies with appropriate language.	<i>Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours</i>	<b>Review any relevant existing policies in terms of language, terminology and gender neutrality (Removal of term transsexual/transsexuality).</b>	✓	✓		HR	Staff resource

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Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
Guidance for employees and managers around Trans issues and identities. Increased awareness and understanding of issues affecting Trans individuals and service users. Better service delivery	<i>Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours</i>	<b>Agree and complete Transgender policy/guidance and include non-binary identities.</b>	✓			HR	Staff Resource
Increase Proud Membership Improve awareness and accessibility to Network Senior leaders engaged in promoting equality and participation	<i>Visibility and Network Growth</i>	<b>Continue to use online and Intranet as channels to promote Proud activities and membership.</b>  <b>Identify a new senior champion and profile using Interlink.</b>  <b>Provide promotional materials e.g. pens, lanyards and reusable water bottles for example.</b>	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	Network Chair  HR/ Senior Champion  All	Staff Resource  Staff Resource  £200
Awareness of BCC as an inclusive employer to potential new applicants at the application stage. Attract a wide and diverse range of applicants.	<i>Visibility and Network Growth</i>	<b>Distribute relevant posts and revised application info to NI LGBT+ organisations for wider circulation and dissemination.</b>	✓	✓	✓	HR	Staff Resource
Collaborate with other Diversity Networks in BCC to promote the wider Diversity and Inclusion message	<i>Visibility and inclusive growth of all Networks</i>	<b>Joint event (online or physical) addressing a cross-sectional issue or event e.g. Disability Awareness Day or Human Rights Day.</b>	✓	✓	✓	Network Chairs	£200

Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
Fully participate in Belfast Pride demonstrating BCC as an inclusive service provider and employer in the community	<i>Community engagement and visibility</i>	<b>Participate in Belfast Pride including BCC vehicles and staff as part of the official parade. Internal comms and Interlink article to promote. Flying of LGBT+ flag on City Hall.</b>	✓	✓	✓	ALL	£3000
Visible and practical support for local LGBT+ charity/organisation. Communication of positive impacts	<i>Community engagement and visibility</i>	<b>Build participation with Network members and wider workforce.</b>	✓	✓	✓	Network Chair	
		<b>Hold a fundraiser internally to support LGBT+ organisations bake sale or sponsored event. Internal comms and Interlink piece to promote. Social media platforms. Feedback from charitable cause on how the fundraising is used to improve LGBT+ lives.</b>					
Increased awareness of issues specifically affecting Transgender community. Celebration of LGBT+ contributions.	<i>Community engagement and visibility</i>	<b>Continue hosting the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance event in November each year. Use of City Hall for the event. Flying Trans flag to demonstrate support.</b>	✓	✓	✓	HR/ Network Chair	£600
Visible and tangible support for Trans community.		<b>Celebrate and promote Transgender Awareness Week internally and using external BCC social media to promote relevant local events and programmes.</b>	✓	✓	✓	Network	Staff Resource
		<b>Celebrate Transgender Day of Visibility Light City Hall on Transgender</b>	✓	✓	✓	Network	£600 + Staff Resource

Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
		Day of Visibility in March each year including flying the Trans flag. Internal comms and external social media.					
Explore option for expansion of gender neutral facilities in BCC buildings.	<i>Visible inclusivity in the workplace and as a service provider.</i>	<b>Determine if feasible to expand existing provision. Comms around APUs around Belfast as they are gender neutral and designed for users with disabilities (could cross with Disability Network)</b>	✓			HR/ Facilities /F&R	Existing PMU budgets
Improved visibility, networking and learning.	<i>Social Networking and community engagement.</i>	<b>Contribute to an event facilitated by local LGBT+ service providers and other Networks across NI</b>	✓	✓	✓	Network Chair	£600
Explicit commitment to LGBT+ inclusion.	<i>Training and development.</i>	<b>Review corporate induction process – explicit statements to LGBT+ inclusion from a senior leader</b>	✓			HR	Staff Resource
Improved knowledge of workforce mobility and demographics	<i>Monitoring /Organisational analysis</i>	<b>Carry out a voluntary monitoring exercise for all staff when feasible.</b>	✓	✓	✓	HR	Staff Resource/ Comms
Attracting talent and diversity	<i>Diversity and Inclusion</i>	<b>Advertise relevant roles on LGBT+ Networks/outlets.</b>  <b>Ensure relevant information on benefits of working for Belfast City Council communicated effectively using appropriate channels.</b>	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	HR	Employee Resourcing

Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
Reducing any perceived/ realised bias experienced by LGBT+ individuals	<i>Training and development</i>	<b>Source and offer unconscious bias training to relevant staff e.g. HR chairs/recruiters</b>	✓			HR	£3000
Understand reasons employees (including LGBT+) depart the organisation	<i>Monitoring/ Organisational analysis</i>	<b>Develop an exit interview process</b>			✓	HR	Staff Resource
Collaborate with other Diversity Networks in BCC to promote the wider Diversity and Inclusion message	<i>Visibility and inclusive growth of all Networks</i>	<b>Conduct a workshop between Diversity Networks on Intersectionality</b>		✓		HR/Network Chairs	Staff Resource
Position in national benchmarking exercise with peers which provide a framework for continuous improvement	<i>Organisational analysis/ Continuous Improvement</i>	<b>Annual Membership in Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme (ranked 391 for first submission)</b>  <b>Stonewall Equality Index - prepare for submission in Sept each year and participate in Stonewall Staff Survey.</b>	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	✓  ✓	HR/Chair/BCC Project Team	£2500/ Staff Resource to complete and document submission and staff survey.
Ensuring better LGBT+ inclusion through the supply chain	<i>Procurement</i>	<b>Take on board feedback in the Procurement area of the 1<sup>st</sup> WEI submission. Work with colleagues in procurement to develop processes that support this.</b>	✓	✓	✓	HR/Procurement Team	Staff Resource
Better engagement and visibility with LGBT+ and allies	<i>Community Engagement/ Communications</i>	<b>Explore feasibility of a Proud Instagram page to share relevant info/events/messages</b>	✓	✓	✓	Corp Comms/Network Chair	Staff Resource
Understanding needs of LGBT+ community and service users.	<i>Clients, customers and service provision.</i>	<b>New Customer Hub – main customer interface. Provide specific and relevant training in relation to bias.</b>	✓			Network Chair/HR	£600
				✓		Network/Chair	Staff

Expected Outcomes	Theme	Actions	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Activity Lead	Indicative cost (year 1)
		Engage with hub in relation to monitoring service use and customer satisfaction and Service User Journey.  Use BCC social media more to promote BCC as an inclusive service provider. E.g. Pride/TDOR/TDOV/LGBT+ History month (profile local LGBT+ Champion).	✓	✓	✓	Corp Comms/Network Chair	Resource  Staff Resource
Clear support of LGBT+ community and promotion of relevant events and occasions.	Community Engagement /Communications	Participate in LGBT+ Awareness Week. Social Media and signposting to an annual diary of LGBT+ event	✓	✓	✓	Network/Corp Comms	Staff Resource
<b>Total Year 1 Cost £13,050</b>							

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

### Operational Issues

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 10th June.

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 25th May.

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group of 20th May.

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

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to note the minutes of the meeting of the Active Belfast Limited Board of 7th June.

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

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

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
<b>2021 EVENTS</b>						
Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Belfast	27 November 2021  <i>Dependent on City Hall recovery and COVID guidelines</i>	<b>Celebration of Bahá'í Community</b> – cultural and social reception.  Numbers attending – 300 - 400  <i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>	C & D	No (voluntary group)	No Hospitality	Approve No charge No hospitality

2022 EVENTS						
The Executive Office	26 January 2022	<p><b>2022 Holocaust Memorial Day</b> Commemoration event and reception</p> <p>Numbers attending – 400</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	C	Yes - £825 (Government Dept)	No Hospitality	Approve Yes, charge No hospitality
Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	28 January 2022	<p><b>Celebration dinner for 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Integrated Education</b></p> <p>Numbers attending – 250</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	C	No (charity)	Yes, Wine Reception as centenary	Approve No charge Wine Reception

**Requests for the Use of Council Premises**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reminded the Members that the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner was currently undertaking a review of Local Government Boundaries. The Commissioner was planning to publish her proposals in an accessible online format and, in order to accommodate those members of the public who may not have internet access, had asked the Council to place a computer in one of its facilities, such as a community centre.

In addition, the Commissioner would, at the end of September, be convening public hearings on the provisional proposals for each Council area. Given the current public health issues, it was likely that these would be held virtually rather than in person. However, she was hoping to convene an in-person hearing for at least a limited number of people and, therefore, had requested the Council to provide an appropriate venue. He pointed out that the Council had, in the past, in the interest of allowing wider access by the public, granted free use of a room in the City Hall for similar events.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer went on to state that, in January 2021, the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland had announced the commencement of the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in Northern Ireland, in accordance with the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986, as amended. The Commission had also recently published its Guide to the Review, which included information on the upcoming boundary review process and set out how members of the public, political parties and wider civic society would be able to share their views.

He explained that the publication of the Commission's initial proposals and the first period of public consultation was planned for autumn 2021, with further periods of public consultation planned during 2022, in line with the statutory requirements. The Commission was required to make a copy of its proposals available for inspection by the public at specified places within each proposed constituency. During previous reviews, Public Display Points had been established in a range of public venues across all constituencies, including local council buildings and public libraries. This had ensured that there had been widespread access to the Commission's proposals, in addition to them being made available on the Commission's website.

He confirmed that the Boundary Commission was proposing to adopt a similar approach for the 2023 Review, although it was conscious of possible public health restrictions which may be in place in the autumn. It was, therefore, seeking approval, in principle, to establish one or more Public Display Points within Council buildings throughout the eight-week consultation period. Again, during the previous review, the Council had made available a space in the reception area of the City Hall to display the proposals.

The Members of the Committee agreed to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4th May, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to approve the requests for the free use of Council facilities, as outlined, subject to all public health measures in place at the time being adhered to.

#### **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

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

- i. illuminate the City Hall in red and white on the night of Wednesday, 30th June, to mark Canada Day on 1st July; and

- ii. to hold an appropriate event to commemorate the 215 indigenous children whose remains had recently been found on the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia and all other children who had died in residential schools across Canada.

Chairperson