

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th September, 2021

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND
REMOTEY 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, McDonough-Brown,
McLaughlin, Murphy, Pankhurst and Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
Ms. C. Matthews, Director of City Services (Resources
and Fleet);
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
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 McReynolds.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd and 20th August 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 September, 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 relation to agenda item 4(a) – Local Government Boundary Commissioner – Provisional Recommendations, insofar as it related to the boundary of the Harbour Ward, on the basis that they were on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, and left the meeting for that part of the discussion.

The High Sheriff, Councillor Long, declared an interest in relation to agenda item 4(e) – Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Proposed Corporate Action Plan and agenda item 8(a) – Response to Consultation on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill, on the basis that they made reference to the Department of Justice, where his wife was the Justice Minister, and left the meeting whilst they were being presented.

The Chairperson (Councillor Groogan), together with Councillors Carson, Garrett and Murphy, declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2(g) – Assets Management, insofar as it related to Connswater Community Centre, on the basis that they were members of the Planning Committee and would be considering an application for the Centre, and left the meeting for that part of the discussion.

Restricted Items

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

Residual Waste Contract Arrangements

The Director of City Services (Resources and Fleet) provided the Committee with details of the latest developments around the Council's residual waste disposal arrangements, in the context of the decision by Alpha Resource Management not to extend the existing arc21 contract for the provision of landfill disposal, post January 2022, under the existing terms and conditions. The Director sought the Committee's approval to implement an interim solution, pending the outcome of the arc21 interim residual waste treatment contract and in the longer term, the Residual Waste Treatment Project.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed:

- i. to recommend that arc21 enter into formal contractual negotiations with Biffa Waste Services Ltd. to deliver interim landfill arrangements for a period of six months, commencing on 1st February, 2022;
- ii. to transfer disposal arrangements to Biffa Waste Services Ltd., subject to negotiations reaching a satisfactory conclusion and the payment of the gate fee proposed within the report; and
- iii. that officers organise in the autumn a workshop for all Members on residual waste disposal and future options.

The Committee agreed also that any new landfill contract awarded by arc21, in which the Council was a participant, would include a clause that waste would be pre-treated before it entered the ground.

Community Diversionary Festivals Programme

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th June, it had been agreed that the annual allocation of £500k for the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme be retained, with a view to delivering the Programme later in the year.

The Committee was reminded further that the Council, at its meeting on 1st July, had agreed that:

“due to the exceptional circumstances of this year and the fact that it is now July, that the open call for the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme is suspended for this year only. The funding, which is already included in the annual budget, is allocated to the same groups which were awarded funding following the open call in 2019, with the same amount again being ear-marked for each. These groups will be required to submit application forms which will be subject to due diligence, the application process will be opened to these groups immediately, that there be no fixed closing date so that applications can be assessed as they come in and funding awarded. Mindful that of the fact that some, though not all, events are planned for August, authority be delegated to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to hold a special Committee meeting on 2nd August to approve grants for those applications approved by then. All planned events obviously must be compliant with Covid restrictions at the time, with the use of Council Parks for approved events in August granted, if required, and that call-in on this matter be suspended.”

The Director of City Services informed the Members that, whilst the diversionary and festival fund was a rolling programme for 2021/22, officers had stipulated deadline dates for the submission of applications, to ensure that there was sufficient time for a preliminary assessment in advance of them being presented to the Committee. She confirmed that the only application which had been received by the latest deadline date of 10th September related to The Hubb, which had requested funding of £44,051.50. If approved, the Hubb's allocation would be capped at £44,000, which was the maximum amount which could be awarded for this project.

She provided details of the project and the assessment score and confirmed that, if approved, officers would provide the applicant with a funding agreement and terms of grant, similar to that which had been issued in 2019. There was, however, the potential, based on the final documentation submitted, for changes to be made to the proposed programme and/or a reduction in funding to ensure compliance with the relevant Council policies and procedures.

The Director added that, since all those groups which had received funding in 2019 had submitted an application for 2021, there would be no requirement for further submission dates.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst,

That the Committee agrees to allocate up to a maximum of £44,000 to The Hubb to deliver its community diversionary festivals programme.

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

The Committee agreed also:

- i that, in accordance with Standing Order 48 (a) (2) (c), the aforementioned decision would not be subject to call-in, on the basis that an unreasonable delay could be prejudicial to the Council's or the public's interest;
- ii that, in compliance with existing Council policies and the use of the Council's parks and open spaces, the decision to allocate funding to The Hubb would remain subject to the negotiation of satisfactory terms and conditions of use, including any relevant fees, via an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:
 - the applicant resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
 - compliance with the Covid-19 restrictions in place at the time of the event(s); and
 - the applicant complying with all relevant statutory licencing requirements.

Recruitment of Senior Posts

Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services

The Committee agreed that the selection panel for the re-advertised post of Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services would consist of the Chairperson of the Committee (or her nominee), Councillor Murphy (as the nominee of the Deputy Chairperson), Councillor Bunting, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive.

Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th June, it had agreed that the selection panel for the post of Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty should comprise Councillor O'Hara (as the nominee of the Chairperson), Councillors McLaughlin and Pankhurst, the Chief Executive (or her nominee) and another Council Director.

The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 20th August, it had been informed that Councillor Pankhurst would be unable to participate in the selection panel and that he had been unsuccessful in securing a replacement from his Political Party. The Committee had noted that the Alliance Party would, in the first instance, seek to nominate a Member to sit on the selection panel.

The Chief Executive reported that the Alliance Party has also been unable to nominate a Member and confirmed that the Head of Human Resources had been appointed to the panel. Her appointment fulfilled the panel's requirements in terms of community background and gender balance.

The Committee noted the change in the membership of the panel.

Post of Chief Executive

The Committee noted that proposals would shortly be presented to the Party Group Leaders on the process for appointing a replacement for the current Chief Executive, who would be leaving her post early in 2022.

City Regeneration - Institutional Investment Expression of Interest

The Chief Executive reminded the Members that reports had, in the past, been presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee around the strategic use of Council land assets to bring forward regeneration opportunities, including the potential for institutional investment to help drive regeneration at scale, as aligned to Belfast Agenda growth ambitions and the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.

She reported that recent engagement with institutional investors and other cities had identified a number of partnership-based regeneration schemes between institutional investors and councils and referred, for example, to those in Bristol, Cardiff, Manchester and Newcastle. In addition, the recent Innovation and Growth Commission 'Reset for Growth' report had highlighted the need to create a re-imagined, liveable, mixed use city core, with a strong focus on quality residential schemes, and had emphasised the need for public bodies to engage actively with the market and with investment partners in order to deliver on this ambition.

In terms of progressing these discussions further, the Council had sought legal and professional commercial advice to establish a robust and compliant process to fully engage with the investment/development market, with a view to procuring a suitable partner to unlock the investment and regeneration potential which existed across a number of strategic assets in the city centre initially and to develop a partnership which could deliver on further regeneration across the city.

The Chief Executive explained that the legal advice had included a thorough review of potential procurement routes and had proposed the following phased approach to engagement and evaluation:

Stage 1: Pre-soft market testing preparation

Stage 2: Soft market testing (to inform Stage 3)

Stage 3: Expressions of Interest stage

Stage 4: Evaluation

Stage 5: Appointment of preferred bidder and contract close

She pointed out that it was recognised that, to bring forward regeneration and development at scale, with a focus on housing regeneration, would require significant funding and stressed the importance of engaging with investment partners. Based on the legal and commercial advice, it was proposed that the Council proceed by way of a soft market testing exercise, followed by an expression of interest exercise, to determine investor/development partner interest. The soft market testing exercise would involve targeted engagement with identified potential institutional investors/strategic development partners in relation to the Council's identified sites. The feedback from this would inform the detail of the expression of interest exercise and help to understand the viability, scale and phasing potential, the nature of subsequent partnership/joint venture arrangements and investor requirements to bring forward development at scale. The proposed soft marketing testing and expression of interest process would not, she pointed out, bind the Council and the outcome of this exercise would be presented to the Committee before any decisions would be made.

The Chief Executive concluded by providing details of five sites which had been identified through the ongoing Strategic Site Assessment process and confirmed that those would be deemed suitable for inclusion in an initial development portfolio.

She then recommended that the Committee:

- i note the ongoing work in relation to the potential for adopting an institutional investor approach to the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration;
- ii approve the proposed approach, commencing with an initial soft market testing exercise and a subsequent expression of interest exercise and note that it would receive a further detailed report upon the completion of the expression of interest exercise in order to inform next steps; and
- iii note the inclusion of Council property assets, as detailed within the report, as part of the initial soft market testing exercise.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

City Hall Recovery Plan - Update on Progress

The Committee noted a report providing an update on the progress being made across each of the operational areas in implementing the City Hall Recovery Plan.

Consultation on Signage - Andersonstown, Lisnasharragh, Olympia and Templemore Leisure Centres – Options Paper

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration a report presenting options for the language or languages to be used in naming and signage in those leisure facilities designated with a City-wide catchment.

He reminded the Committee that, in accordance with the decision taken at the special meeting of the Council on 11th October, 2019 around dual-language signage, a City-wide consultation had been undertaken, to inform the approach to be adopted in respect of Andersonstown, Lisnasharragh, Olympia and Templemore Leisure Centres, which were deemed to have a City-wide catchment. The Committee had subsequently, at its meeting on 24th January, 2020, granted approval to erect bilingual external naming and internal directional signage in Andersonstown Leisure Centre.

He reported that Mr. J. Kremer, an equality consultant, who had been commissioned by the Council, was in attendance to outline the findings of the consultation exercise.

Mr. Kremer reviewed the consultation methodology and provided details on the number of responses which had been received. In terms of the results, he confirmed that there had been overall support for bilingual naming, using English and Irish. However, where more local consultation had been undertaken, strong opposition and views had been expressed in relation to Lisnasharragh and Templemore Leisure Centres. In terms of Olympia Leisure Centre, the consultation had not provoked the same reaction at that time. However, he and Council officers had met subsequently with local community representatives who had expressed strong views against bilingual signage in English and Irish.

The City Solicitor pointed out that Mr. Kremer had met with officers from the Legal and Civic Services and the Physical Programmes sections to review the results of the consultation and the views which had been expressed by local communities and Party Group Leaders. In light of those, the following options had been drafted for the Committee's consideration:

1. to retain the current use of English only at the centres;
2. to use bilingual or some element of bilingual signage at the centres (English and Irish);
3. to use tri-lingual or some element of tri-lingual signage at the centres (English, Irish and Ulster-Scots);
4. to use multi-lingual or some element of multi-lingual signage at the Centres (English, Irish, Ulster-Scots and the language of the predominant new community in the City Council district, as

informed by information on languages in new migrant communities in Belfast);

5. the use of pictorial signage is recommended;
6. to have a single sign at the point of entry (the main directional sign) in the formats suggested at options 2, 3 or 4, with the remaining signs in English and pictorial format, as a way of delivering balance;
7. it is recommended that the signage under consideration is wayfinding only.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Murphy,

That the Committee agrees:

- i. to erect bilingual external naming and internal directional signage at Olympia Leisure Centre, with a report on the detail and appearance of that signage to be submitted to a future meeting;
- ii. that a report on linguistic accessibility at Lisnasharragh and Templemore Leisure Centres be submitted to a future meeting; and
- iii. that a multi-lingual welcome sign be erected in the entrance/reception area of all leisure centres.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the linguistic signage to be erected at Olympia Leisure Centre to allow for further engagement to take place with the local community.

On a vote, six Members voted for the amendment and twelve against, with one "no vote" and it was declared lost.

The original proposal, which had been proposed by Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor Murphy, was then put to the meeting, when twelve Members voted for and six against, with one 'no vote', and it was declared carried.

The Committee agreed also to adopt the recommendation to proceed with pictorial signage.

Assets Management

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for Committee's consideration a report seeking approval in relation to the following asset related disposal, acquisition and estate matters:

i. Land at Upper Whiterock Road

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a recommendation to dispose of this site to Radius Housing Association to enable further discussions to take place around access to the Belfast Hills.

ii. Beechvale Farm

The Committee agreed to proceed with the disposal of approximately 108 acres of agricultural land and to retain the former farmhouse dwellings, outbuildings and surrounding land (circa 3 acres) and the remaining land (circa 22 acres) and access laneways.

(The Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Walsh, in the Chair.)

iii. Connswater Community Centre

The Committee agreed to grant to Sustrans a temporary licence to place a storage container on Council land at Severn Street, for an initial period of up to nine months, with the potential to extend the agreement for a further nine months thereafter.

(The Chairperson, Councillor Groogan, in the Chair.)

iv. Ormeau Park

The Committee agreed to grant a retrospective easement to the Department for Infrastructure which had, when placing a pedestrian crossing on the Ormeau Embankment, erroneously encroached onto Council land, close to the entrance to the Ormeau Park.

King George V Playing Fields

The Committee noted that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Belfast Destination Hub – Update on Site Acquisition

The Committee was provided with details of the revised programme for the delivery of the Belfast Destination Hub and, accordingly, adopted the recommendation within the report to:

- i. approve the extension of the date for the payment of the remaining balance for Site 10 from 31st December, 2024 to 31st December, 2026; and
- ii. approve the corresponding proposal for the indexation of the final balance payment from 1st January, 2025.

Meanwhile Use in the City Centre

The minute for this item has been restricted due to commercial sensitivity. The restriction will be lifted in due course.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - A Changing Places Toilets Policy for Belfast City Council

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor McMullan and seconded by Councillor Mulholland:

“Changing Places are specialised toilet facilities which make public places and spaces accessible and inclusive for everyone, including children, adults and older people with complex needs or mobility issues.

Where they are not provided, people are changed on a toilet floor, which is dangerous, unhygienic and undignified. Without them, people may be excluded entirely from certain public spaces.

The Council notes its commitment in the Belfast Agenda to deliver an accessible City for all and its unanimous support for a COVID-19 response and recovery inclusive of disabled people, older people and carers in July, 2020.

It further recognises the importance of Changing Places toilets in delivering our vision of an accessible and inclusive Belfast.

The Council notes that Building Regulations in Northern Ireland only require standard accessible toilets to be provided. Despite discussion to add Changing Places toilets to these regulations, there is currently no requirement for these facilities. As a result of this, Changing Places are not usually provided as a matter of course, even in new buildings.

This Council will, therefore, develop a Changing Places toilet facility policy for Belfast City Council, with input from disabled people, older people and carers, to include the following:

- The Council will commit to include a Changing Places facility in every new building in which the public will have access to its services and where public toilet provision is available for others.

- The Council will also make every effort to include Changing Places facilities when it extends or extensively refurbishes an existing Council-owned building. These schemes will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the early stages of feasibility/design to establish whether there is an opportunity to install a Changing Places.
- It will review where such facilities could be installed on the Council Estate (e.g. playgrounds) and put a plan in place to ensure that all inclusive playgrounds are equipped with such a facility.
- It will ensure that organisers of all large-scale public events (e.g. concerts, festivals, family days) with a license from the Council will have a fixed or portable Changing Places unit as part of the design of the event.
- Where the Council is organising a large public event, it should be considered if it can take place at a venue that already has a Changing Places facility and include a mobile/portable facility, if a permanent Changing Places toilet is not available.
- For smaller public events, these should be advertised early and adequately communicated with the option to request access to a Changing Places facility whereupon they can be moved or have a mobile/portable facility provided.”

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

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Motion - Rights of Nature

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Alderman Copeland:

“This Council notes the legal and social movement globally for the ‘Rights of Nature’, which aims to strengthen protections for people, place and planet.

It believes that ‘Rights of Nature’ can help inspire an innovative rethinking about how to create regenerative, not extractivist, economies while also making human and other living communities safer, stronger and more resilient.

The positive work already being done by Council staff and groups on the climate emergency and biodiversity crises are commendable, but we recognise the need for a rights-based approach to nature.

It is proposed that, over the next twelve months, the Council will collaborate with civic society to explore what rights of nature mean for the people and economies of the region and to investigate how Rights of Nature could be expressed in community plans, corporate plans, improvement objectives and other strategic frameworks. In particular, the Council will, in the next twelve months, hold community workshops and work with the local community and stakeholders to draw up a Declaration for the Rights of Nature for the City, to be brought back before the Council for adoption.

It is also requested that a report, authored in collaboration and with input from the local community, be brought to the Council in relation to embedding 'Rights of Nature' as a keystone concept into the Council's operational practices, planning processes and long-term decision-making.

Mindful of our mutual environmental obligations under the Espoo Convention, we call on all councils in Northern Ireland to also explore 'Rights of Nature' for their council areas."

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

Councillor Smyth spoke in favour of his motion, following which the Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Motion - Bonfire Procedures

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Beattie and seconded by Councillor McLaughlin:

"After multiple incidents, including the tragic incident in Ballysillan on 11th July, this Council agrees to remove all bonfire materials from Belfast City Council assets, unless permission has been granted through an application process.

A bonfire application must include:

- permission being requested by a constituted organisation;
- a risk assessment provided by the applicant and agreed with the PSNI, Fire Service and landowner (BCC);
- Public Liability Insurance;
- an Event Management Plan;

- a commitment to ensuring that there will be no burning of any toxic materials (e.g. tyres);
- an Entertainments Licence;
- the demonstration of sufficient consultation with local residents; and
- a site cleansing plan.

In addition:

- The display or burning of offensive materials such as flags, emblems, effigies, and posters will not be permitted and a commitment must be provided. Any breaches will impact upon future applications; and
- Bonfire Beacons will be preferred, unless an applicant can demonstrate the necessity and safety of a non-structured bonfire.

Any failure to follow an open, transparent, robust and successful application procedure for a bonfire will result in the Council requesting the support of the PSNI to provide protection to our contractors for the removal of materials.

Applications must be received three months before a planned event.”

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

Amendment 1

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That Councillor Beattie’s motion be replaced with the following:

“This Council:

- recognises that July bonfires are a legitimate and long-standing tradition within the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community;
- supports all efforts to encourage self-regulation and responsible management of bonfires and beacons, free from hazardous or offensive material;
- will not support bonfires which pose a serious risk to property or life nor the burning of hazardous materials which pose a serious risk to health and/or the environment;

- will work with local communities, elected representatives, collaborative networks and statutory partners to encourage safe and responsible bonfires, where these are locally wanted; and
- will continue to provide and to encourage the use of beacons in agreed managed circumstances where these are wanted by local communities as an alternative to a traditional bonfire.”

On a vote, six Members voted for the amendment and eleven against, with one “no vote”, and it was declared lost.

Amendment 2

Moved by the High Sheriff (Councillor Long),
Seconded by Councillor McDonough-Brown,

That Councillor Beattie’s motion be replaced with the following:

“This Council will conduct an immediate review of the 2021 bonfire season, to be completed in time for the Committee meeting in November, to include Elected Representatives, statutory agencies and bonfire builders, in order to highlight issues which will need to be addressed.

The Council agrees to write to the Executive Office asking for the FICT report to be published, along with an action plan, as this will help inform the Council’s view moving forward.”

On a vote, three Members voted for the amendment and fifteen against and it was declared lost.

Councillor Beattie’s motion was then put to the meeting, when nine Members voted for and eight against, with one “no vote”, and it was declared carried.

The Committee noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting providing details on how the motion would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Motion - A Four-Day Working Week

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 1st September, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Garrett and seconded by Councillor Murphy:

“Over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, businesses and workers have re-evaluated and re-assessed the issue of work life balance and productivity.

It has been almost 100 years since Trades Unions secured workers the right to a weekend and it is important that, as part of the economic recovery, we consider how we can modernise the working arrangements to the benefit of workers and employers.

There are numerous examples from across the world where a four-day working week has been successfully trialled, leading to increases in positivity and an improved work life balance.

The latest trial from Iceland has been hailed as an 'overwhelming success', with productivity remaining unchanged or actually going up and the health and wellbeing of workers improving significantly.

The Council agrees, therefore, to work alongside Trades Unions and other relevant bodies, to bring forward a plan within twelve months to implement a trial under review within our own Council workforce, based on best international examples and practices elsewhere.

The Council agrees also that progress and implementation reports be presented to the Council on a quarterly basis, to support and inform any policies being progressed within the Department for Economy or other relevant bodies elsewhere.”

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

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Quarterly Update on Motions/ Issues Raised in Advance

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the progress of all motions for which it is responsible.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- **note the updates on all motions for which it is responsible; and**
- **agree to the closure of 30 motions and Issues Raised in Advance, as outlined in paragraph 3.8 below.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Members will recall that the first update on motions was presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in March 2021.

- 3.2 This report provides an overview of the progress on those motions and Issues Raised in Advance which remained open following the March 2021 update and new motions which have been approved by the Committee since March 2021.

Motion Updates

- 3.3 There are currently 95 active motions and Issues Raised in Advance for which the Committee is responsible.

Closure of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance

- 3.4 At the SP and R Committee meeting on 20th November, it was agreed that motions could be closed for one of two reasons:

- Category 1
- Motions which contained an action that has been completed and recommend they are closed.

All motions within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the motion. As these are not technically part of the motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The motion can, therefore, be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions are not contained in this report but will be noted in the live database moving forward.

- Category 2

Motions which have become Council policy and recommend they are closed.

These motions did not contain a specific task that could be complete. Instead, they were more strategic in nature and required changes in Council policy and/or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.

- 3.5 Following an update of those motions and Issues Raised in Advance on the live database, it is recommended that Members approve the following Motions/Issues for closure.

Category 1 Recommended Closures:

- **No Grey Zone Campaign** (Reference Number 10)

PCSP procured a 'Talking about Consent' project and advised that this project would include the PSNI's 'No Grey Zone' messaging. Work is ongoing by PCSP regarding talking about consent and the aspect regarding premises could be taken forward once our premises are being used fully post COVID-19. Lead Officer has advised once final meeting has been convened we will report back via PCSPs. The motion can be closed and work taken forward via PCSP partners.

- **Support for People with a Gambling Addiction** (Reference Number 53)

Letter sent. No responses received.

- **Needle Exchange Facility** (Reference Number 100).

PHA presented to the People and Communities Committee in June 2021 - this and related issues will be picked up in routine briefings on public health issues to Committee on a six-monthly basis. It is recommended that this motion is now closed.

- **Addressing Hate and Intolerance across all our communities** (Reference Number 101)

- Correspondence sent to TEO in November 20 regarding flexibility in funding and consideration of extension to the hate crime categories. Response reported to Shared City Partnership (SCP)/ SP&R Committee in March 21 – S75 is a matter reserved for Westminster and groups included in the hate crime categories can apply for GR funding if meeting T:BUC priorities. A number of projects are being considered through SCP and PCSP regarding Hate Crime, however, a number of projects have been funded through the Community Recovery Fund to reduce isolation among groups which are included in the hate crime legislation.

- **Review of Housing Fitness Standards** (Reference Number 103)

Response from Minister for Communities noted by S P and R 23/10/20

- Free car parking for health workers, patients and visitors (Reference Number 104)

Responses from Minister of Health and Minister for Infrastructure noted by SP and R 23/10/20

- Climate Change Act (Reference Number 105)

Response from DAERA Minister noted by the SP and R Committee 20/11/20. Climate legislation now in development and BCC will input when appropriate

- Moratorium on Licences for Fracking and Exploration of Fossil Fuels (Reference Number 111)

Responses from Minister for the Economy and Minister for Infrastructure noted by SP and R 20/11/20

- Funding for the Arts and Creative Industries (Reference Number 112)

Response from Minister for Communities noted by SP and R 20/11/20

- Job Retention Scheme (Reference Number 113)

Job Retention Scheme was extended beyond October 31st

- Implementation of Care Partner arrangements in Nursing and Care Homes (Reference Number 128)

Response from Minister of Health noted by SP and R 22/1/21

- Access to Maternity Wards for Birthing Partners (Reference Number 129)

Response from Minister of Health noted by SP and R 18/12/20

- Clean Air Strategy (Reference Number 132)

Response from DAERA Minister noted by SP and R 18/12/20

- **Invitation to President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris** (Reference Number 134)

Letters issued

- **Disability Strategy** (Reference Number 142)

No specific actions for the Council to take forward

- **Procurement - Employment Academy Framework** (Reference Number 144)

Report noted by SP and R in January 2021. A 6-month review of impacts has been programmed in and will be reported to Committee to enable any adjustments to future plans

- **Health and Social Care Workers: Thank You Payment** (Reference Number 147)

Response from Minister of Health noted by S P and R 19/3/21

- **Takeover of Private Healthcare** (Reference Number 158)

Response noted by S P and R 19/3/21

Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures (Reference Number 166)

Letter sent 22/4/21 – Response noted by S P and R 21/5/21

- **Support for Sign Languages Act and Addition of Sign Languages to School Curricula** (Reference Number 170)

Letter sent 22/4/21 - Response noted by S P and R 21/5/21

- **Equality for LGBTQI+ Community** (Reference Number 173)

Letter sent 17/05/21 - Response noted by SP and R June 21

- **Immediate need to tackle the waiting lists for Diagnosing Autism in Children** (Reference Number 174)

Amended letter sent 17/05/21 - Response noted by SP and R June 21

- Charges for use of ATMs (Reference Number 175)

Letter sent 17/05/21 - Response noted by SP and R August 21

- Motion - Ban Conversion Therapy (Reference Number 177)

Letter sent 17/05/21 - Response noted by SP and R June 21

- Private Members Bill to provide Safe Access Zones (Reference Number 183)

No specific actions required from Council in motion

- The Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 (Reference Number 184)

No specific actions required from Council in motion

- Request to the Irish Government and the UK (Reference Number 185)

Letters sent 2/7/21

- Ballymurphy Massacre (Reference Number 186)

No specific actions required from Council in motion

- End Child Poverty (Reference Number 188)

No specific actions required from Council in motion

- Transfer of Regeneration Powers to Local Authorities (Reference Number 191)

Letters sent 22/7/2021 - Joint Response from DfC noted by S P and R 20/8/21

3.6 Additional information in relation to these motions and Issues Raised in Advance are attached.

3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Local Government Boundary Commissioner – Provisional Recommendations

The Committee considered the following report and draft Council response to the Local Government Boundary Commissioner’s provisional recommendations on the review of local government boundaries in Northern Ireland:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Boundary Commissioner’s Provisional Recommendations which are out for public consultation and to seek retrospective approval for the attached Council response which was provisionally approved by Party Leaders Consultative Forum on 16th September. The Commissioner had invited written feedback and suggestions by 21st September.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the report;**
- ii. approve retrospectively the attached response to the Local Government Boundary Commissioner (which has been provisionally approved by Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum) on 16th September; and**
- iii. agree that officers make representations in line with this response on behalf of the Council at the public hearings scheduled for late September / early October**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

On 27th July 2021 the Local Government Boundary Commissioner published the Provisional Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern

Ireland. These Provisional Recommendations will now be the subject of public consultation. The closing date for written feedback and suggestions about these proposals is 21st September 2021.

The Commissioner's office has indicated that the process is about independently ensuring electoral equality and fairness across Northern Ireland, with the aim that all the wards within a district should, as far as possible, have a similar number of electors. The Statutory Rules governing the review are set out in the Local Government Act (Northern) Ireland Act 1972, as amended.

After the initial consultation period a series of 11 public hearings will be held in each council area facilitated by Assistant Commissioners. The public hearings, which will be subject to public health guidance at that time, will be held in late September and early October. To maximise public participation in the hearings, and to mitigate against any public health restrictions that may be in place, these events will be in a hybrid format allowing for both in person and online participation.

3.2 Previous Local Government Boundary Review – 2008

The previous Local Government Boundary review took place in 2008. At that time the Final Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commissioner (Dick Mackenzie) included the placement of the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building within the new Belfast district boundary.

However, the NI Executive made amendments to the Final Recommendations which resulted in Forestside and the adjacent Castlereagh Council Civic HQs remaining within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh council area.

3.3 Local Government Boundary Review (2021 – 2022)

Provisional Recommendations – Belfast

On 27 July the Local Government Boundary Commissioner published the Provisional Recommendations for the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland.

District Boundary – Belfast

The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.

Wards

The LG Boundary Commissioner recommends that Belfast district should remain comprised of 60 wards. The current

electorate per ward (as at 4 January 2021) and proposed new electorate per ward have been circulated.

There has been some alteration to ward boundaries to satisfy the legislative requirement for each ward within the district to have substantially the same number of electors. There is a total of 230236 electors within the district which averages at 3837 electors per ward and the recommended changes are designed to balance the electorate across the district.

The ward boundary changes that have been proposed can be accessed by clicking:

[Belfast Wards](#)

3.4 Belfast City Council Response

(as provisionally approved by Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum on 16th September).

Wards

In line with previous decisions in relation to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland, responses to the Commissioners recommendations in relation to ward boundaries will be left to individual parties. Parties are encouraged to examine the table at Appendix 1 and to review the map accessible at the link above.

District Boundary

Whilst the 2021 review recommends that the district boundary remains unchanged, Members will note that, in 2008, the Final Recommendations recommended that the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building should reside within the new Belfast district boundary. However, the Council notes that the NI Executive did in fact amend the Final Recommendations of the Commissioner and included Forestside in the new LCCC district boundary.

Given the LG Boundary Commissioner's previous conclusions in respect of the Belfast district boundary, Members are asked to retrospectively approve the Belfast City Council response (attached at Appendix 2) asking the LG Boundary Commissioner to reassess the 2008 Final Recommendations with a view to placing the area containing Forestside within the Belfast district boundary as originally proposed in 2008.

The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

The Council's response also highlights an issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary. The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans and request that the Commissioner, when considering any modification to the district boundary, may wish to take this into account also.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

No financial implications attached this report

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

No good relations or equality implications attached to this report."

Local Government Boundaries Review in Northern Ireland

Provisional Recommendations

(September 2021)

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

Introduction

This submission in response to the Local Government Boundary Commissioner's Provisional Recommendations 2021-22 is made on behalf of Belfast City Council.

The Commissioner will wish to note that, as with previous decisions in relation to boundaries review in Northern Ireland, the Council have advised individual parties to submit their own responses to the recommendations, particularly in relation to proposed changes to ward boundaries.

The following Council response can be categorised into:

(i) General Points pertaining to broad issues concerning the Commission's approach to the identification of boundaries; and

(ii) Specific Points in relation to Belfast.

(i) General Points re Boundary Delimitation

A number of General Points on the approach to boundary delimitation can be distilled under the headings of (a) statutory parameters and (b) additional factors.

Statutory Parameters

Please note from the outset that the Council understands how the Commission has arrived at its recommendations, having regard to the statutory parameters it has to work within. In this respect, we understand that Belfast has to be equipped with a certain number of wards that falls within the range of 55 to 65. We appreciate that the Commission, in the desire to appear even-handed, would have a tendency to advocate the medium of this range, namely the 60-ward figure.

We also accept that a degree of interpretation has to be made in respect of what constitutes readily identifiable boundaries, in terms of the importance attached to physical features on the ground – whether they be man-made (roads, railway lines, etc.) or natural features (rivers, lakes or uplands).

To this end, we recognise that the existing urban footprint and Development Plans, such as the BUAP and Draft BMAP, can act as reference points for deciding what constitutes 'readily identifiable boundaries' for District Council areas. This is because Development Plans define settlement limits and apply land use zonings, particular those relating to green spaces between built areas, which need to be respected when defining boundaries.

Taking on board these points, the Council would refer the Commissioner back to the Final Recommendations from the previous Local Government Boundary Review in Northern Ireland in 2008 which made clear those features which the Commissioner adjudged to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in the Belfast City Council area. As the Council argued at that time, such 'readily identifiable boundaries' provided support for the principle of expansion of the Belfast Council Area.

Additional Factors

Having stated the above, we would, however, like to make the Commissioner aware of a number of additional factors that may help inform her of the need to facilitate the expansion of Belfast's council area. There are essentially two of these:

1. Firstly, we are well aware that the definition of Local Government Districts is very much premised on achieving greater efficiency in the delivery of services, in terms of securing better value for money and quality of service.

The definition of such boundaries must allow for the creation of a critical mass of population within the Belfast Council Area upon which to sustain and improve upon efficiency in the delivery of services. We say this for the very good reason that Belfast City Council has a disproportionate number of deprived wards in Northern Ireland.

Following the 2008 review a number of wards of similar socio-economic standing were included within the new Belfast City Council area (Twinbrook and Collin Glen, which are ranked the twentieth and the twenty first most deprived wards), making it even more imperative that the Belfast Local Government District be equipped with an optimum population size and geographical area capable of sustaining and improving services.

2. Secondly, we attach appreciable significance to the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland and its aspirations (under SPG-BMA 1) to create a thriving Belfast Metropolitan Area based on a revitalised City of Belfast. In this regard, we view Belfast as the regional driver of growth in Northern Ireland and all efforts to promote this objective in the form of bolstering its population size should be welcomed. This is especially so when it is considered that, in recent times, Belfast has endured significant population loss to surrounding districts.

(ii) Specific Response in relation to Belfast

Against the background of the general points outlined above, we would like to make the following comments in respect of the existing Belfast City Council district boundary.

Boundary with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council

The previous Local Government Boundary Review for Northern Ireland - Final Recommendations 2008 included a recommendation to place the Galwally area (including Forestside) within the new Belfast City Council district area. However, as the Commissioner will be aware, the NI Assembly ultimately approved the Final Recommendations with some amendments, one of which included the placement of the Galwally area within the new Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area. Belfast City Council would contend that this decision by the NI Assembly disregarded the logic governing the need to have regard to the 'readily identifiable boundaries' guidelines and was in contravention of the clear recommendations of the Boundary Commissioner.

This decision, as Belfast City Council argued at the time, amounted to an irrational departure from those features that have helped to shape the delimitation of the District Boundary in this part of Belfast, namely the readily identifiable boundaries of the Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area. Indeed, when viewed on a map, it graphically stands out as an aberration in boundary demarcation.

Forestside Catchment Area

There are different ways to approach the calculation of catchment area figure as it can be done on a spend or population (customer) basis, both of which could be further refined in many ways to take account of the different days, times of travel, population / household composition, socio/economic group.

The Council however believe that that the simple drive time catchment analysis could be utilised as it is based on published data and standard tools.

The appended diagram shows the extent of the catchments generated for 0-5, 5-10, 10-15 and 15-20 minutes. For the table these polygons were used to determine the number of residential properties (using the OSNI Pointer Domestic Address from 27/07/2021).

Drivetime Catchment	Percentage of Pointer Domestic Addresses by Council Area				
	Belfast	Lisburn and Castlereagh	Ards and North Down	Newry, Mourne and Down	Antrim and Newtownabbey
0 - 5 mins	69.6	30.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
0 - 10 mins	84.3	15.6	0.1	0.0	0.0
0 - 15 mins	74.4	19.5	4.8	1.1	0.2
0 - 20 mins	62.7	20.4	8.5	2.5	5.9

There have been no major applications at Forestside that could provide an assessed catchment for the Centre although the Centre was assessed as part of the Lisburn and Castlereagh Retail Capacity Study 2018. In para 6.5.4 (page 25) of that study the concluding statement is at best a simplification in terms of potential draw from outside *“In the Forestside catchment, it was estimated that 50% of the comparison turnover of the centre came from outside the area; principally from the Belfast suburbs, as the shopping centre is right on the border of the Council area”*. Both the average household size and available income would have to be significantly higher to sustain such a conclusion.

Belfast City Council also notes that the various objections from the former Lisburn and Castlereagh councils to the Final Recommendations in 2008 in respect of this area, (whilst not being deemed sufficient at that time to change the Final Recommendations), which carry less weight now given that i) the majority of LCCC council services have since been transferred to the Island Civic Centre in Lisburn, and ii) a range of new bus routes has been introduced since 2008 (including the Glider service and the proposed Phase 2 of Glider) which extend routes into the Lisburn and Castlereagh district.

The Council would also make a case based on which authority is best placed to manage and address the wider implications of the District Centre's operations, accessibility and servicing. The A55 Outer Ring Road is a significant physical barrier and much of the potential for improvements in accessibility with potential for better integration into the surrounding urban areas would naturally lie with Belfast City Council in relation to the geography of the site and the potential for integration with existing services.

Taking into account each of these points, and the Commissioners previous recommendations, the Council does not agree with the Provisional Recommendation at para 7.3.1 which recommends that the Belfast "district boundary line should remain unchanged".

Belfast City Council would, therefore, request that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the "Final Recommendations" report and the "Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district" which clearly recommended that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary based on the statutory parameters highlighted above.

District Boundary with regards to the Harbour Ward

The Council also wishes to highlight an issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure existing outside of the district boundary (see image below).

Existing Situation (area currently beyond the BCC boundary)



The exercise of powers and responsibilities are normally linked to the LGD geography. This creates an issue for the Council not only in terms of rates but also for enforcement with regards to any event which may happen beyond our line and therefore jurisdiction. The Council would note that there is a further approved extension (planning permission at appendix 1) beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans – see red line below. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.

Example of potential new boundary to encompass the extension of the Harbour



Conclusion

In summary, Belfast City Council does not agree with para 7.3.1 of the Provisional Recommendations report which states that the district boundary line should remain unchanged. The Council would refer to the following two issues in relation to the district boundary.

Galwally Area (including Forestside)

The Council requests that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the “Final Recommendations” report and the “Report of the Assistant Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district” which made clear recommendations that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.

The Council would argue that the principles upon which the 2008 recommendations were made and those features which the Commissioner determined to constitute ‘readily identifiable boundaries’ in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

Harbour Area

The Council also wishes to highlight the issue with the district boundary as it pertains to the Harbour ward, and in particular the extension to the harbour which has resulted in part of the harbour infrastructure being outside of the district boundary.

The Council would note that there is a further approved extension beyond the currently constructed area shown on the plans. The Commissioner when considering any modification to the district boundary may wish to take this into account also.”

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations contained within the report.

France-United Kingdom Local Government Forum

The Committee was informed that the city of Nancy would, on 25th and 26th October, be hosting the next meeting of the France – United Kingdom Local Government Forum. It was intended that this would be an in-person meeting, however, it could change to a hybrid or virtual one nearer to the time.

The Chief Executive pointed out that the theme for days one and two of the forum would be “Reinvigorating Franco-British Cooperation and Exchange” and “Green Transition: Global Challenges and Local Responses” respectively and that NILGA was inviting nominations from Northern Ireland councils to speak at the event. She added that some funding had been agreed between NILGA and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with any additional travel and subsistence costs to be met from existing Departmental budgets.

Accordingly, she recommended, given the subject matter, that the Committee approve the attendance at the France-United Kingdom Local Government Forum of the Chairperson of the Brexit Committee, the Chairperson of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis and the City Solicitor, as the Senior Reporting Officer for Brexit.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

COP 26 Climate Business Conference Funding Agreement

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to inform the Committee of a proposal by the Management and Leadership Network (MLN) to host a prominent climate business conference ‘Sustain Exchange’ in Belfast, with up to 400 business leaders, ahead of the COP 26 conference. The report also requests retrospective approval for a funding agreement to be put in place between the Council and the event organiser, with the value of £10,000. The event will be planned to coincide with the arrival of BEIS -sponsored Planetmark’s Carbon Battle Bus. Both**

events will simultaneously promote the *Road to Zero* and *Together for the Planet* campaigns.

- 1.2 Furthermore, in relation to the COP26 programme, which runs from 1st to 12th November in Glasgow, permission is being sought for the Chair of the All Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis (Councillor Smyth), and the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Councillor Groogan) to attend events should the opportunity for a delegation to attend arise.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to support this business focused climate conference by retrospectively approving that a funding agreement to the value of £10,000 be entered into with the event organiser, a report having previously been submitted to and approved by CMT and Party Group Leaders.

- 2.2 The Committee is also asked to approve the attendance of the Chair of the All Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis (Councillor Smyth) and the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Councillor Groogan) at events during COP26 in Glasgow, should the opportunity for a delegation to attend arise.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The United Nations COP 26 Climate Summit in Glasgow in November will bring a sharp focus on the role of the business community on delivering on global net zero GHG emissions by 2050. It will also challenge business to radically reduce their environmental impact both directly and indirectly through their supply chains. It is a truly transformative time for businesses as they address climate risks and identify new opportunities in the green economy. The transition is not straightforward. Businesses need help in securing cleaner power, heat and transport solutions. They need help in navigating new markets to find more environmentally sustainable solutions in their supply chain, and they need to do it fast. There has never been a more important time to find specialist help to navigate the transition, and to educate inform and engage by sharing the existing knowledge and exemplar experience of those at the forefront of the transition.

Purpose and Format of Event

- 3.2 The event will be planned to deliver on the objectives above and will connect local business leaders with international thought leaders with those at the forefront of the transition locally.

The event will ideally take place as a hybrid event with the Carbon Bus campaign that will bring 100 local leaders (primarily business leaders but also those from the public, NDPB and third sectors) together in-person for a half day with some or all of the event streamed live to a mass (400+) virtual audience of additional local leaders, thus ensuring the message has reach and that partners get a level of profile, amongst the NI business / leadership community, to justify their investment.

Opening Address and Format

- 3.3 The opening keynote address will be delivered by an authoritative political or business leader who will focus on the business threat of the climate crisis, the legacy of COP 26 and the imperative of business to act fast, within the next decade to take advantage of the new global and local business opportunities. The keynote speaker will be followed by a carefully selected line-up of local leaders who will be challenged to share their story (exemplar), insights (expert) or support offering (stakeholder).

As exemplars these businesses will share their story and associated lessons in an engaging, informative, and entertaining manner. The speakers will encourage and empower other sectoral representative bodies (insurance, banking, hospitality transport and logistics etc) to consider their own climate impact and take the first steps on their 'Race To Zero'.

Management and Leadership Network Experience

- 3.4 Management and Leadership Network (MLN) have previous experience in hosting several large events with 500 + attendees.

Virtual summits organised by Management and Leadership Network include:

Galvanise NI May 2020 - 1400 Business leaders
Re- launch July 2020- 900 business leaders
Unlearn 2021 December 2020- 700 business leaders
WELL – February 2021 – 1000 business leaders

Leadership Summit - February 2020 Prior to first lockdown MLN hosted 500 paying business leaders at Titanic Belfast. BCC was a partner on this event which featured world class speakers including Lord David Puttnam at Titanic Belfast. Podiem and MLN's virtual events have been created and delivered in a 3–4-week lead time (and have consistently attracted business leader audiences of 500+).

As host, MLN will facilitate the event and invite all speakers to provide their slides in advance so that the idea-sharing session is delivered in a concise, visually impactful and professional manner. This format can be flipped to 100% virtual at short notice should restrictions command. Council will be invited to participate and profile their extensive climate work i.e Mini – Stern Report, and associated Housing and Transport Readiness Assessments, Climate Ambitions Report, Reset Agenda, internal climate mitigation and adaptation plans and /or the work of the Belfast Climate Commission, Resilience and Sustainability Board etc.

Legacy Platform and Annual Event

- 3.5 The conference is an opportunity to highlight and celebrate the activity that is already underway in NI. It is intended that this will become an annual event which positions Belfast as a centre of excellence and activity when it comes to businesses and the Race to Zero. It is the intention of the organisers to establish an online platform to share the case studies profiled and others available. The climate challenge will inevitably move further up the political and business agenda as we move through the decade and the pace of change on this issue is fast, so there is a need for annual event for the NI business/leadership community to share knowledge, experience and progress and supporting platforms available all year round to share resources.

'Lifting the Rock' - Branding

- 3.6 The conference will be branded with the theme of 'Lifting the Rock'. It is designed to speak to and encourage participation from those businesses well on their way and those just starting their zero-carbon pathway. It acknowledges the challenges involved in committing to take meaningful action. This 'planet – saving' rock will be heavy for most organisations, and there may well be 'creepy crawlies' underneath, but better to honestly assess the realities and create a realistic and robust strategy rather than set the rock back down and opt for greenwashing. Podiem will complete a comprehensive evaluation report on the conference.

Date, Venue and Contingence

- 3.7 The total cost of the conference will be £60k. Podiem have already secured some corporate sponsorship for the event from Danske bank and are in advanced conversations with Belfast Harbour along with other corporate partners of MLN (energy companies etc).

Venue

- 3.8 The event will be hosted in a City centre location (to encourage use of public transport and cycle networks) and this will also allow for the Carbon Bus to be on show at the venue. Should Covid restrictions (due to 3rd wave or variant) rule out any form of in-person gathering then all elements of the event will switch to 100% virtual. This includes profiling and involving the Carbon Bus.

Partner Contribution and Profile Benefits

- 3.9 If the Council chooses to support the conference it would be profiled as an 'Event Partner' alongside several other lead event partners. The Council brand would be prominent on all event marketing collateral as well as 'at-event'. A Council representative would be invited to participate in the event press launch and MLN would be delighted for the Council to deliver a presentation. Council would also promote the conference through its social media and other relevant communication channels.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 £10,000 to support this initiative has been allocated from within the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.11 There are no direct equality or good relations/rural needs implications."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project and Associated Campaigns

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite the Committee to note that the Council has made a submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) – ICLEI reporting platform, which is a global reporting framework to assess progress against climate ambitions at city level. A number of global climate campaigns require a submission to CDP – ICLEI as a prerequisite to joining – we will explain what each entails and request that Members approve Belfast’s participation in these campaigns. This will support marketing and publicity linked to COP26 (1st – 12th November 2021), provide access to networks of good practice, toolkits, and support for Belfast in determining and reaching our city targets.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

i. that the Council has made the first annual submission through the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) – ICLEI reporting platform. This submission will be assessed by CDP, with feedback and a score provided to the city by the end of 2021, which will inform the submission in 2022; and

ii. that officers will take forward the Council’s participation in a number of global campaigns described in this report, with updates to be provided on an annual basis on the annual CDP – ICLEI submission and campaign progress.

3.0 Main Report

Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) – ICLEI submission

3.1 In July 2021, the Council made the first annual submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) – ICLEI reporting platform. This was undertaken to support baselining of activity and emissions in Belfast, and to enable full participation by Belfast in global climate action campaigns such as the Race to Zero, which links to COP26, the Race to Resilience, the Global Covenant of Mayors, and the WWF One Planet City competition. All of these campaigns require members to have made a submission through a recognised reporting mechanism, of which CDP – ICLEI is perhaps the most well-known. The survey consisted of 59 questions across the following categories:

- **Governance and Data Management**
- **Climate Hazards and Vulnerability**
- **Adaptation**
- **City-wide Emissions**
- **Emissions Reduction**
- **Opportunities**
- **Energy**
- **Transport**
- **Food**
- **Waste**
- **Water Security**

3.2 As Belfast has made a submission to CDP – ICLEI, the city is now eligible to participate in a number of global campaigns which are set out below. The benefits of these campaigns are as enablers for local activity, by giving access to good practice, climate finance partnerships, city networks with a focus on climate and reaching net zero. In joining these campaigns Belfast will be part of global efforts to reach net zero, which will in turn enhance our reputation and allow us to share our progress both locally and globally. For the last 5 years Belfast has been a member of the Global Resilient Cities Network (previously 100 Resilient Cities) which presented opportunities to access additional funding, participate in peer learning initiatives, and to lever support from experts in a range of areas, most recently enabling Belfast to become part of the Real City Play Coalition.

3.3 Participation in these initiatives will be on the basis that they provide tangible benefits to Belfast and this will be kept under review on an annual basis. The Council will be active throughout COP26, supporting local activity by young people, business, the arts sector and will use the opportunity to lobby for additional powers and finance to allow progress on our local targets. The Belfast Net Zero Carbon Report and Belfast Resilience Strategy – Ambitions Document form the foundation of our programme of activity, and Members will be aware that the Council is developing its own Climate Plan at present. We have established city and council governance structures to ensure accountability and collaboration is at the heart of our programme of work – through the Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board, Belfast Climate Commission, Belfast City Council Climate Plan Programme Board, All Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis and through city initiatives such as the Belfast One Million Trees Programme.

Cities Race to Zero

3.4 This global campaign is bringing together a large coalition of leaders from cities, regions, businesses, investors, and universities who are committing to be net zero by 2050 at the latest. To participate Belfast would have to sign up to the following pledges:

I. Publicly endorse the following Principles:

- We recognise the global climate emergency;
- We are committed to keeping global heating below the 1.5°Celsius goal of the Paris Agreement;
- We are committed to putting inclusive climate action at the centre of all urban decision-making, to create thriving and equitable communities for everyone;
- We invite our partners – political leaders, CEOs, trade unions, investors, and civil society – to join us in recognising the global climate emergency and help us deliver on science-based action to overcome it; and
- Pledge to reach (net)-zero in the 2040s or sooner, or by mid-century at the latest, in line with global efforts to limit warming to 1.5°Celsius.

I. In advance of COP26, explain what steps will be taken toward achieving net zero, especially in the short- to medium-term. Set an interim target to achieve in the next decade, which reflects a fair share of the 50% global reduction in CO₂ by 2030 identified in the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°Celsius.

II. Immediately proceed to planning at least one inclusive and equitable climate action as listed on www.citiesracetozero.org that will help to place your city on a resilient pathway consistent with the 1.5°Celsius objective of the Paris Agreement and begin implementation no later than 2022. Actions are listed in Appendix 1, which has been circulated with this report, with an asterisk beside those that Belfast has already made progress against.

III. Report progress annually, beginning no later than 2022 to the usual or the recommended reporting platform. The cities 1.5°Celsius target and action commitment(s) should be shared through your regular channels of reporting. If the city has not reported

before, the city will be contacted by partners for support.

<http://www.citiesracetozero.org/>

Race to Resilience

- 3.5 The Cities Race to Resilience (CRTR) is a strand of the Race to Resilience campaign, focusing on supporting cities to pledge their commitment to building resilience in the face of climate change.

Should Belfast sign up to the campaign, the Mayor and/or City Council would have to commit to the following four pledges:

- I. Integrate climate change adaptation and resilience in all aspects of urban planning and undertake a community-wide climate risk and vulnerability assessment that also includes all vulnerable communities;
- II. Plan to use available knowledge and scientific evidence, including data and spatial analysis, for decision-making and action, and outline interim targets and milestones as part of a long-term commitment for citywide action;
- III. Immediately proceed to taking action by committing to at least one of the resilience actions listed by COP26, which has been circulated with this report. An asterisk has been placed beside those which Belfast has already made progress against.
- IV. Report commitments by COP26 - and progress annually thereafter, to an existing or recommended reporting platform.

The list of actions referenced above under pledge 3 have been circulated with this report. At least one action would have to be undertaken to permit participation in the campaign.

<https://citiesracetoresilience.org/>

Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM)

- 3.6 The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is the largest global alliance for city climate leadership, built upon the commitment of over 10,000 cities and local governments.

The Carbon Disclosure Report (CDP)-ICLEI Unified Reporting System is one of the officially recognised reporting platforms to GCoM.

Signatories commit to develop, implement and report - within the established deadlines, an action plan to reach their targets. More specifically, signatories commit to submit the following:

- A strategy with a long-term vision including mitigation targets and climate adaptation goals (within 2 years after their official adhesion to the Covenant of Mayors);
- A Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI), quantifying the energy consumed and therefore the emissions emitted on the signatory's territory (within 2 years);
- A Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA), identifying and assessing the climate hazards and vulnerable sectors (within 2 years);
- Actions undertaken on mitigation, adaptation and energy poverty; and
- Monitoring reports on the implementation of actions (every 2 years) and on emissions (every 4 years).

<https://www.globalcovenantofmayors.org/why-join-us/>

Financial and Resource Implications

3.7 There are no financial or resource implications at present.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

3.8 There are no direct equality or good relations/rural needs implications.”

The Committee noted the report.

Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Proposed Corporate Action Plan

The Committee considered the following report and approved the accompanying Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement for 2020/21 and the suggested actions to be taken forward by Council Departments:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out for Committee approval a corporate action plan to meet the obligations of the Modern Slavery Act, 2015, including the updating of the annual Transparency Statement.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. agree to the proposed actions based on the NILGA guidelines, which are to be taken forward by various Departments; and**
- ii. approve the updated annual Transparency Statement.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

3.1 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 aims to address slavery and trafficking by enhancing support and protection for victims, giving law enforcement the tools needed to target today’s slave drivers and ensuring perpetrators can be severely punished. It also includes a provision to encourage organisations to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free, known as the Transparency in Supply Chains arrangements (‘TISC’).

Key Issues

3.2 The Council has voluntarily published an annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains statement on our website since 2015. This sets out what an organisation has done to ensure there is no modern slavery in their supply chains or any part of their business. This year, the annual Transparency Statement has been significantly refreshed by Commercial and Procurement Services to reflect current guidance on its content and layout. An updated version for 20-21 is set out in Appendix 1 below and will be published well before the deadline of October 21. Please note that due to business pressures in Governance and Compliance Services the update of last year’s statement was delayed.

3.3 In July 2018, the Home Secretary undertook an independent review of the MSA and made recommendations, one of which was to strengthen Section 54 by extending the requirement to publish Modern Slavery Statements to government and the public sector.

- 3.4 In July 2019, the UK Government launched a consultation on measures to strengthen the TISC arrangements, and recently published its proposals on how it plans to take this work forward. Many of the proposed changes will require legislative change which the UK Government hopes to take forward later in 2021. The proposed changes will see a strengthening of the TISC arrangements for commercial businesses, and will, for the first time, extend them so they apply to the public sector.
- 3.5 The Northern Ireland Department of Justice conducted a consultation exercise, which closed in May 2021, relating to the extension of the TISC arrangements to the public sector in Northern Ireland.
- 3.6 In accordance with Section 12 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, the Department of Justice publishes an annual Modern Slavery Strategy. The most recent Modern Slavery Strategy for 2019-2020 is the third strategy published by the Department of Justice and a consultation on the 2021/22 Modern Slavery Strategy recently took place. The purpose of the strategy is to raise awareness of modern slavery offences and so reduce the threat from, the vulnerability to, and the prevalence of, modern slavery in Northern Ireland.
- 3.7 In May 2020, NILGA published a guide for Councils with the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP), (a multi-agency, cross-party and cross-departmental body working to reflect the regionally specific needs of Northern Ireland in the development and implementation of UK immigration policy). The guide was also produced in partnership with the Department of Justice and the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. It sets out some actions which councils can take to tackle modern slavery specifically:
1. Provide Modern Slavery Awareness Training for all council personnel in public facing services (Lead: Corporate HR / Commercial and Procurement Services / Governance and Compliance Services);
 2. Designate a point of contact to report modern slavery concerns and raise awareness of modern slavery among communities (Lead: City and Neighbourhood Services);
 3. Establish clear procurement guidelines (Lead: Commercial and Procurement Services); and

4. Collaborate with other councils and agencies (Lead:
All Directors)

- 3.8 The suggested actions for councils are outlined in Appendix 2 below, which also includes a summary of the guidance from NILGA and a suggested lead within the Council for each action.

Reporting

- 3.9 Governance and Compliance Services will co-ordinate an annual report on progress to be brought to committee.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 This will involve staff from City and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, Governance and Compliance Services, Commercial and Procurement Services, Corporate HR and Marketing and Corporate Communications.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.11 Any equality, good relations or rural needs implications will be identified using the council's usual screening process."

Appendix 1

Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement for the period
1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021

Introduction

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the "Act") places specific responsibilities on organisations to ensure slavery and human trafficking does not exist within their supply chains, and in any part of their own businesses. Organisations need to demonstrate accountability through transparency to protect workers, adults and children from abuse and exploitation.

The Council is committed to improving practices to prevent slavery and human trafficking. The Council expects suppliers, partners and third parties to adhere to the same values and principles to combat slavery and human trafficking.

This statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Act and constitutes Belfast City Council's slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 31st March 2021.

Our structure and our supply chains

The Council is the local authority for the Belfast area with responsibility for a wide range of services including local planning, economic development, tourism, street cleaning and parks, leisure and waste management.

The [Belfast Agenda](#) is the community plan that the whole city is working towards. Our vision is that by 2035 Belfast will be a city

- Where everyone benefits from a thriving and prosperous economy
- That is welcoming, safe, fair and inclusive for all
- That is vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable
- Where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing and
- Where everyone fulfils their potential

Our political governance structure is set out below:



The Council procured goods, works and services from circa 2,400 suppliers during the last financial year with a supply chain mostly based in the UK and Ireland.

The Council has a responsibility to prevent slavery and human trafficking within its supply chain and in any part of the organisation. As the customer, the Council makes clear to our suppliers, and those wishing to do business with us, what is expected of them.

The Council's tender process require all tenderers to provide confirmation that they are compliant with the Act. They are also required to confirm their subcontractors and suppliers comply with the Act.

Our policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking

The Council has the following policies or procedures in place, related to mitigating the risks of slavery and human trafficking:

Safeguarding

We recognise our responsibility to develop, implement and monitor policies and procedures to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Our child

safeguarding procedures are well established; our current focus is on underpinning how we take care of adults and the reporting system.

Equality and Diversity

We are committed to Equality and Diversity and actively seek to eradicate discrimination and inequality when developing services and when goods and or services are provided on the Council's behalf. To this end we have developed an internal toolkit which integrates equality and diversity into everything we do from policy development to service planning and delivery.

We are an Equal Opportunities employer and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We are a Lead Partner and Member of Excellence of Employers for Disability NI with members of our recruitment team being accredited as "Disability Positive". We have a dedicated helpline for any applicants who require reasonable adjustments or whose first language is not English. We appoint strictly on the merit principle and our recruitment processes require the completion of relevant pre-employment checks which include eligibility to work in the UK and the uptake of suitable references, where required. We operate a job evaluation scheme to ensure all employees are paid fairly and equitably.

Raising Concerns

We encourage workers to raise any concerns that they may have and there are established arrangements in place for handling these. Externally, members of the public and customers can use our [Corporate Complaints Compliments and Comments](#) procedure to report concerns.

Fraud and Bribery

We are committed to protecting the public money we look after and to making sure that the opportunity for fraud, bribery or any other financial impropriety is reduced to the lowest possible risk. We have policies and procedures to manage the risk of fraud, bribery and other financial impropriety, including arrangements for prevention and detection as well as arrangements for reporting and investigation.

Code of Conduct

We expect all employees and Councillors to demonstrate the highest standards of conduct and ethical behaviour. We require all Councillors and Senior Managers to submit declaration of interests to record and declare personal and pecuniary interests.

Due diligence in assessing modern slavery risk in operations or supply chains

The Council's Commercial and Procurement Services team have recently introduced Category Management. A Category Management structure within the

team enables greater transparency in the identification of risks associated with modern slavery on a category basis.

Risk Assessment and Management

All new suppliers, for new or extended applicable contracts, are assessed as part of the Council's tendering process to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Act.

We commit to reviewing and updating our contract terms and conditions to ensure that they are compliant with the Act.

The Commercial and Procurement Services team completed CIPS Ethical Procurement training achieving the professional standard of CIPS Corporate Ethics kite mark for the service.

We commit to developing a new safeguarding policy that will go out for consultation in 2021.

Key performance indicators to measure effectiveness of steps being taken

We will communicate this policy to our staff to make them aware of the issue and the Council's obligations.

The Northern Ireland Department of Justice is expected, at some point, to announce guidance on the new duty to report incidences of modern slavery. This may require further training and guidance being issued to staff.

Training on modern slavery and trafficking

The Commercial and Procurement Services team commit to retaining the professional standard of CIPS Corporate Ethics during 2021. Further Council officers involved in procurement activity will also be selected for this training.

This statement was approved by the Corporate Management Team of Belfast City Council on 31st August, 2021.

Signed on behalf of Belfast City Council by:

John Walsh
City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Date:

SUGGESTED ACTIONS FOR COUNCILS

Action	NILGA Guidance	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline
<p>1. Provide Modern Slavery Awareness Training for all council personnel in public facing services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department of Justice and the Department of Finance’s Construction and Procurement Delivery can advise on TISC (Transparency in Supply Chains) training for public sector and council procurement leads. • The guidance provides a list of voluntary and community sector organisations which can advise on modern slavery and provide training. <p>NILGA’s suggested next steps for Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver training for public sector procurement leads in respect of transparency in supply chains. • Accessing “Train the trainer” sessions for Councils shared by the Department of Justice to provide Councils with the tools to deliver their own inhouse training on Modern Slavery. <i>(The Train the Trainers session will be built into NILGA’s Regional Training Programme and further information will follow on an ongoing basis as appropriate).</i> 	<p>Commercial and Procurement Services – N Bohill</p> <p>Corporate HR – C Sheridan / Governance and Compliance Services – S Williams</p> <p>External provider to deliver approved training.</p>	<p>March 2023</p>

Action	NILGA Guidance	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using Training Materials for Council Staff, available from the Department of Justice and PSNI. <i>(In April 2019, the Department of Justice and the PSNI wrote to all local Councils CEOs to offer training materials for staff on modern slavery concerns¹⁵.)</i> 		
<p>2. Designate a point of contact to report modern slavery concerns and raise awareness of modern slavery among communities.</p>	<p>Councils should designate a lead officer or team who can act as a point of contact and expertise on the issue. Council Community Planning, Good Relations or Policing and Community Partnerships (PCSP) teams are ideally placed to fulfil this role. A Lead Officer from either one of these teams could be nominated as the “go to” person for other officers or council workers who have concerns that modern slavery may be happening in certain businesses or in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A council protocol for reporting suspicions of modern slavery should be developed. Community Planning Partnerships should be harnessed to share information and to raise awareness of modern slavery with communities and the drive to eradicate it. PCSPs are a key council resource in the drive to eradicate 	<p>City and Neighbourhood Services – R Black</p> <p>Nicola Lane to take the lead on this element of the action plan and act as the conduit in terms of Good Relations and PCSP.</p> <p>To be agreed, at the relevant time, how we will embed / promote through the Community Planning Structures, SCP and PCSP/DPCSP's.</p>	<p>March 2023</p>

Action	NILGA Guidance	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline
	<p>modern slavery in Northern Ireland. Intelligence which can be disclosed by the PCSP should be shared with the lead person / team in the council appointed as the “go to” for modern slavery concerns.</p>		
<p>3. Establish clear procurement guidelines</p>	<p>The modern slavery transparency statement required to be published by the Council under Section 54 of the MSA must include the steps the Council has taken during the financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, and in any part of its own business or; that the organisation has taken no steps in the financial year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency in supply chains is a process of continuous improvement. As stipulated in government guidance, the government expects organisations to <i>build</i> on their statements year on year • Guidance and resources include: Transparency in Supply Chains etc. A practical guide; Council Transparency Statements Portal; TISCRReport Transparency Map; LGA’s Tackling Modern Slavery Guide 	<p>Commercial and Procurement Services – N Bohill</p>	<p>Annually</p>

Action	NILGA Guidance	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline
	<p>NILGA's suggested next steps for Councils:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking account of any further government developments on proposals to extend the scope of Section 54 (TISC). 		
<p>4. Collaborate with other councils and agencies</p>	<p>Opportunities for collaboration include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All-Council Professional Officers Groups (e.g. the Environmental Health Professional Officers Group, the Local Government Safeguarding Network and the Planning Professional Officers Group); • Cross-council project collaboration (e.g. arc21); and • Council collaboration with the private sector: e.g. for Economic Development teams to provide guidance to new and existing businesses in their districts on developing modern slavery transparency statements to enhance their competitiveness when bidding for new, or when 	<p>All Directors to raise with relevant officers</p>	<p>Immediate</p>

Action	NILGA Guidance	Suggested Lead	Estimated deadline
	renewing goods / services contracts.		

Consultation on Draft NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-27 - Council Response

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To submit for the Committee’s approval a draft Council response to the Draft NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021 – 2027 for submission to the Department of Infrastructure.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to approve the draft consultation response and to note that any additional comments will be incorporated in the response.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Draft Flood Risk Management Plan states that in recent years, flooding has presented considerable challenges to both people and communities directly affected and to those providing emergency responses. Flooding can have potentially devastating impacts, on human life and health, damage to property, pollution to rivers and the sea and severe effects on economic activity, infrastructure and the environment. Flooding is also becoming more frequent and climate projections indicate that changing rainfall patterns, rising sea levels and more severe extreme weather conditions will increase its occurrence in the future.

3.2 Members will be aware that the Council has led on the development of the Belfast Resilience Strategy (December 2020), and has established Belfast Emergency Preparedness Group. In addition, the Council is currently developing the Belfast City Council Climate Plan, which will address both adaptation and mitigation, and Council is closely aligned with the planning and delivery of the Living with Water Programme.

3.3 The implementation of the Floods Directive, through the first six-year cycle of Flood Risk Management Planning, set out a catchment-based approach to the management of flood risk. It provided a more systematic, holistic and sustainable way of assessing, mapping and planning to manage flood risk than had been done previously. This was initiated in Northern Ireland by a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment

completed in 2011 (PFRA 2011) followed by preparation of Flood Hazard and Risk Maps in 2014. The information from these two stages culminated in the development of objectives and measures under the headings of Prevention, Protection and Preparedness, in the first cycle Flood Risk Management Plans, published in December 2015.

3.4 We are now well into the second cycle of Flood Risk Management Planning, the first stage of which was the Northern Ireland Flood Risk Assessment (NIFRA 2018). Flood Hazard and Risk Mapping was then reviewed and updated in December 2019. Accordingly, the [second cycle Draft Flood Risk Management Plan](#) has been issued for public consultation and the Council is now preparing to submit a response.

3.5 The second cycle Plan differs from the first cycle Plans in that there is now a single Plan covering the three River Basin Districts (RBD) for the six years from 2021 until 2027. Surface water flooding has been given greater emphasis because of the predominance of flooding from this source in recent years, and because the NIFRA 2018 indicated that potential damages from surface water flooding could be greater than from other main sources. In preparing this draft Plan the Department of Infrastructure worked in partnership with NI Water, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department for the Economy (DfE), to develop a shared understanding of flood risk and to consider and agree roles and responsibilities in managing this risk.

3.6 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications.

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

There are no direct equality or good relations/rural needs implications.”

After discussion, the Committee approved the response for submission to the Department for Infrastructure, a copy of which can be accessed [here](#) and agreed that it should also emphasise the need for more soft Sustainable Drainage Systems to be provided in urban spaces, including those where there were multiple land owners.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of:

- the North Belfast Area Working Group of 25th August;
- the West Belfast Area Working Group of 26th August;
- the East Belfast Area Working Group of 2nd September; and
- the South Belfast Area Working Group of 6th September.

Colin Interpretive Heritage Trail

The Committee was informed that the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership was working with the local community to develop the Colin Heritage Walking Trail across the Colin area. The trail would include a series of six interpretative panels providing information on notable landmarks and historical figures from that area. The Partnership had submitted a request to place panel number 4 in Páirc Nua Chollann, the Council's new park in Colin. That panel would commemorate the life and achievements of Mr. Frank Pantridge, who together with Dr. John Geddes and Mr. Alfred Mawhinney, had invented the portable defibrillator.

It was pointed out that the other five interpretive panels would not require approval by the Council as they were not being placed on its land.

The Committee acceded to the request from the Colin Neighbourhood Partnership to place the aforementioned panel in Páirc Nua Chollann.

Update on Physical Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes 170 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. This report requests agreement on implementation of procurement processes in relation to the Capital Programme (Fleet Programme) and non-recurrent programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- agree that the necessary procurement processes are initiated for the agreed Fleet Programme for 2021/22 and 2022/23, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;**
- agree that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any non-recurrent projects for 2021/22 and non-recurrent projects under re-allocated reserves as required, with contracts to**

be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver; and

- iii note that the Leisure Transformation Programme has been shortlisted for an international award for 'Social project of the year' by the Association of Project Management with the winner to be announced in November.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 Capital Programme - Fleet Programme 2021/22 and 2022/23

Members will know that the Council needs to run and maintain a substantial fleet in order to deliver its services. There is a rolling allocation of £2.2m towards the Fleet Programme for 2021/22 and £2.2m for 2022/23 under the Capital Programme at Stage 3. Members are asked to note that the Fleet Programme has been developed in conjunction with Council departments and reflects the service needs of the organisation. Members are asked to note that there are ongoing issues caused by the high age profile and condition of the fleet operating well beyond its recommended operational life cycle. Members are asked to note the agreed Fleet Programme for 2021/22 and 2022/23 and agree that the necessary procurement processes are initiated, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Non-recurrent projects 2021/22 and non-recurrent re-allocation funding

- 3.2 Members will be aware that the incremental nature of the capital programme allows the Council the opportunity to allocate an element of the 2021/22 capital financing budget to finance a number of one-off (non-recurrent) projects within year. It is recommended that this is focused on progressing projects which the Council is required to take forward either from a health and safety perspective and/or a legislative perspective. Members will also recall their decision in June 2021 to re-allocate the year-end surplus for 2020/21 to progress emerging projects and essential projects which did not have a recurring budget. These projects are now being developed. This included additional funding towards fleet. Members are asked to agree that necessary procurement

processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any non-recurrent projects for 2021/22 and non-recurrent projects under re-allocated reserves as required, with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Leisure Transformation Programme – Finalist, APM Project Management Awards 2021

- 3.3 The Leisure Transformation Programme has been shortlisted in the international APM (Association of Project Management) Awards 2021 in the category: 'Social project of the year'. The category recognises teams whose project demonstrates the most effective use of project management and the greatest benefits and outcomes to end users and communities in projects seeking to address the concerns of 21st century society globally. The winner will be announced on 15 November 2021 at an awards ceremony in London.
- 3.4 Members are asked to note that the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits for Members/ Party Groups to any capital project, with appropriate arrangements in place as required under latest Covid-19 guidance.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.5 *Financial* – Fleet Replacement Programme– as above
Resources – Officer time to deliver as required

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

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

- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 3 below; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 4 below.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Creative Development 2024	Up to 3.5 years	£175,000	A Reid	Seeking external expertise and leadership in the hosting of a large scale cultural programme in Belfast (retender)
Implementation services to assist with the new NIHE hardware	Up to 2 months	£31,052	R Cregan	Includes the build, installation and migration of data and software.
Professional Congress/Conference Organiser required for One Young World 2023 conference in 2023	Up to 20 months	£175,000	A Reid	The total budget for the event is approx. £2.2m. Of this £1m is coming from NI Executive to BCC and a further £350,000 from BCC directly with the remaining to be raised from the private sector. For this type of event the host city procures the services of a PCO (Professional Congress/Conference Organiser). They will be responsible for overall co-ordination and project management.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
To provide and supply 'Dennis Eagle and Terberg' OEM approved warranty parts/components, support and maintenance.	£400,000	C Matthews	Manvik Plant and Hire Ltd
To provide and supply 'Holder' and 'Schmidt' OEM approved warranty parts/components, support and maintenance.	£400,000	C Matthews	RD Mechanical Services Ltd

Table 3: Modification to Contract Term

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Supplier
T1764 - supply and delivery of general uniforms to stores	Up to 4 years	Additional 3 months and £60,000	S Grimes	Antrim Supplies Lot 1 – Hi-Vis Uniform Prosafe Lot 2 - General uniform Tailored Image Lot 3 – Uniform accessories

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
T1996 - Co-ordination, design development, fabrication, installation and maintenance of projection installations on Castle Street	Up to 2 years	£95,000	A Reid	C3 Productions Ltd
QCRD026 - Concept, detailed design development, outline costings and project management for extended payment enhancement at Adelaide Street, Belfast	Up to 3 months	£38,250	A Reid	MMAS/OGU Architects

Corporate Diaries and Christmas Cards

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 18th December, 2020, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing information on the savings to be derived from ceasing the production of Members' corporate diaries and Christmas cards and the process for donating those savings to a chosen local charity each Christmas.

The City Solicitor reported that the combined annual cost of purchasing corporate diaries and Christmas cards was £8,212.80 and stated that, in advance of committing resources to developing a process for making donations to charities, it would be preferable to obtain direction from the Committee on how it wished to succeed.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie and

Resolved - That the Committee agrees to cease the purchase of corporate diaries and Christmas cards and to include the resulting savings within an overall allocation of £10,000 from current budgets to be distributed equally each year amongst the Lord Mayor's four chosen charities.

Belfast City Council Statement of Accounts 2020-21

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the Statement of Accounts of the Council, including the Annual Governance Statement, for the period ending 31st March 2021.**
- 1.2 The Statement of Accounts are an important element of the council's overall corporate governance framework as they provide assurance to Members and ratepayers on the stewardship of the council's finances and its financial position.**
- 1.3 The Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021, as attached, have been prepared in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21 based on International Financial Reporting Standards and the Department for Communities Accounts Direction, Circular LG 08/21 dated 11th March and 24th June 2021.**

1.4 I can confirm that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 has been prepared in the form directed by the Department for Communities and, in my opinion, the Statement of Accounts give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year and the financial position as at the end of the financial year.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- i. approve the Council's Statement of Accounts and incorporated Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2021; and
- ii. agree that this report should not be subject to call-in (as indicated above) because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests given that the statement of accounts must be published by 30th September 2021.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

Audit Opinion

3.1 It is the Local government Auditors' opinion that:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with relevant legal and statutory requirements and the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020-21, of the financial position of Belfast City Council as at 31 March 2021 and its income and expenditure for the year then ended; and
- the statement of accounts have been properly prepared in accordance with the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and the Department for Communities directions issued thereunder; and
- the part of the Remuneration Report to be audited has been properly prepared in accordance with the Department for Communities directions made under the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015; and
- the information given in the Narrative Report for the financial year ended 31 March 2021 is consistent with the financial statements.

Reserves

3.2 General Fund

The credit balance on the General Fund has increased to £54,924,106 (of which £40,929,092 relates to specified reserves). The movement on the reserves balance is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Reserves Position

Opening Balance	£28.7m
In year movement in reserves	<u>£ 26.2m</u>
Closing Balance	£54.9m
Specified Reserves at year end	<u>£40.9m</u>
Balance Available	<u>£14m</u>

3.3 Capital Fund £19,296,139

The Capital Fund is made up of:

- **Belfast Investment Fund (£1,908,136) -created to support key partnership projects to regenerate Belfast and help lever substantial funds from other sources**
- **Local Investment Fund (£1,056,624) to fund smaller local regeneration projects**
- **City Centre Investment Fund (£13,408,897) to support the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Investment Plans**
- **Social Outcomes Fund (£2,922,482) to support City Centre projects which might not generate a direct financial return but would enhance the overall City Centre offer and support the attraction of investment.**

3.4 Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund £8,000,000

This fund was created from the Belfast Investment Fund, to support neighbourhood regeneration and tourism projects in local neighbourhoods.

3.5 Leisure Mobilisation Fund £630,245

This fund is to support the Leisure Transformation Programme and will cover programme level costs including communications, engagement and procurement costs.

3.6 Capital Receipts Reserve £7,962,458 and Deferred Capital Receipts £342,300

These are capital receipts which have originated primarily from the sale of assets and which have not yet been used to finance capital expenditure.

3.7 Other Fund Balances and Reserves £1,091,532

This relates to the Election Reserve (£379,435) which has been set up to smooth the cost of running council elections, the BWUH Subvention Fund (£436,402) to support national and international organisations in bringing their conferences to Belfast and the BWUH Sinking Fund (£275,695) to support planned maintenance and future capital works at the new exhibition centre.

3.8 Debt

The overall level of trade debtors had increased this year from £4.1m at 31 March 2020 to £5.2m at 31 March 2021. Whilst, the COVID 19 pandemic had an impact on overall debt levels, the main reason is an increase in public authority debt at year end. An analysis of trade debtors, inclusive of VAT, for the last two years is shown below:

Table 2: Analysis of Trade Debtors

	31 March 2021	31 March 2020
Less than three months	£3,963,319	£3,239,834
Three to one year	£418,307	£614,739
More than one year	£772,373	£218,298
Total	£5,216,999	£4,072,871

3.9 Creditors

The Department for Communities has set councils a target of paying invoices within 30 days. During the year, the council paid 51,593 invoices totalling £154,605,481.

The average time taken to pay creditor invoices was 17 days for the year ended 31 March 2021. The Council paid 39,959 invoices within 10 days, 48,218 invoices within 30 days, and 3,375 invoices outside of 30 days. The council endeavours

to process invoices as quickly as possible and has an improvement plan to support this process.

3.10 Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

The Statement of Accounts include Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year 2020/21, which has been prepared in line with the Accounts Directive provided by the Department for Communities, NIAO guidance and is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. Specifically, the AGS sets out:

- scope of responsibility of the Council in relation to governance
- the purpose of the governance framework
- the governance framework in place
- review of effectiveness of the governance framework
- significant governance issues to be disclosed.

3.11 The AGS is approved by the Chair of the Strategic Policy and Resources, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Resources. It is subject to review by the LGA (NIAO) as part of their annual audit.

3.12 Financial and Resource Implications

None

3.13 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Stall Fees for St George’s Market –
Request for Further Rent-Free Period**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on:

- i. a request from traders at St George’s Market for a four-week rent free period due to continuing COVID-19 restrictions; and

- ii. the financial implications of any decision to waive the stall fees for a further four-week period.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the request from St. George's Market traders to waive stall fees at St George's Market for a further four weeks from 1st October 2021, with an associated loss of income of £31,000, based on current rent figures for the market.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 Members will be aware that St George's Market was closed to the public due to COVID-19 on a number of occasions over the last eighteen months, most recently between December 2020 and April 2021.
- 3.2 Taking account of the difficulties faced by the traders during the previous periods of lockdown and subsequent limited re-opening, the Council agreed a rent-free period for St George's Market traders from July 2020 to December 2020. This resulted in a loss of income of £233k to the Council. Members also agreed a further 12-week rent-free period from the end of December 2020. As the market went into lockdown following this decision, this rent-free period commenced when the market re-opened on 19 April 2021. This meant that the traders at St George's Market did not pay daily rent for their pitches until 9 July 2021. This 12-week rent-free period has meant a further loss of income to the Council of £143k.
- 3.3 Following the July 2021 re-opening, the capacity in the market was limited in order to comply with the Northern Ireland Executive's social distancing requirements for retail premises. This meant that no more than 350 visitors at a time could access the market. Staff had to manage the capacity by putting in place queuing arrangements and actively managing the social distancing requirements within the market. As a result, visitor numbers were around 40% of pre-COVID-19 figures. Given the reduction in capacity, the traders at St George's Market expressed a concern about their ability to generate income. As a result, they made a request for the Council to consider a further rent-free period of four weeks. In the interim, traders have been paying rent on their stalls in line with the existing fee rates.
- 3.4 Since the initial request was made by the traders, Government guidance on social distancing has changed. This means that the current capacity in the market building at any one time has increased from 350 to 550 visitors. Since this expanded capacity has been in operation, footfall numbers in the market have increased. However, like all

retail outlets, some restrictions remain both in market capacity and also in our ability to offer the full 'market experience' in terms of live music performances and other animation. As further announcements are made by the Northern Ireland Executive, we will keep these arrangements under review, and will continue to take advice from the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Unit in terms of implementation and management.

- 3.5 Members will be aware that, prior to lockdown, work had been undertaken on a development and investment plan for St George's Market. One of the driving factors behind this plan was the need to ensure that the market retained its status as a unique asset in the city centre. In light of the challenges currently facing the city centre, attractions such as St George's Market will be more critical than ever in supporting city recovery. However, buildings of this nature require ongoing investment and have significant operational overheads, and it is critical that there is an underpinning investment programme to ensure that they continue to offer a quality experience. As the work on the implementation of the development plan moves forward, it is important that consideration is given to managing the costs associated with running the market, including the level of council investment available to support this work.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.6 A four weeks stall freeze would result in a cost to council of a further £31,000 based on current stall figures of 140 for each market day over the three-day weekend with the current restrictions continuing.
- 3.7 There is currently no provision in any departmental budget to cover these increased costs

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.8 No specific equality/good relations implications. No negative impact on rural areas."

After discussion, the Committee agreed to accede to the request from traders to waive stall fees at St. George's Market for a further four weeks from 1st October.

Equality and Good Relations

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 6th September, including the recommendations:

- i. to approve the delivery of a Leadership Development Programme to progress the recommendations contained within the COVID research report, at a cost of £10k and as budgeted for in the Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22;
- ii. to agree 'in principle' the Shared History, Heritage and Identity narratives for the Section 1 panels – Clarendon/Glencairn for inclusion in the project publication and to delegate authority to the Programme Board and Capital Project Board to agree on the locations, with a report to be submitted to the Partnership meeting in October;
- iii. to note the updates to the District Council Good Relations Plan Action Plan 2021/22;
- iv. to note that the North Belfast Friendship Club has been awarded £1,960 to facilitate meetings of the North Belfast Friendship Club through the Strategic Intervention Programme within the District Council Good Relations Plan Action Plan 2021/22;
- v. to agree the modifications to the Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22, as detailed under the update on the Council's District Good Relations Action Plan 2021/22; and
- vi. to assist with the cost for the storage of donations relating to the NI Refugee Resettlement Scheme, with an award of £300 for 2021/22 and an additional £300 for the 2022/23 financial year.

**Language Strategy - Update on Dual
Language Street Sign Policy**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update on the Dual Language Street Sign Policy.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the report

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 By way of brief background and as reported previously to the Committee, the Council on 7th January ratified a decision taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd October, 2020 to adopt a new policy position in respect of the Dual Language Street Sign Policy.

(Whilst the initial decision of 23rd October had been called-in, counsel opinion subsequently found that the grounds for call-in had not been satisfied).

3.2 Following this decision, an officer working group was formed, comprising officers from Governance and Compliance Services, Equality and Diversity Unit, Building Control, Good Relations, Legal Services and Place and Economy Policy who developed a new proposed revised policy incorporating the changes agreed.

3.3 In April 2021, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approved this proposed revised policy which incorporated the following key changes:

- The trigger for a consultation of the occupiers of a street will be an application to the Council by a resident / residents of the street or an Elected Member representing that District Electoral Area, as opposed to an application from anyone, supported by a petition of 1/3 of occupiers. In order for further consideration as to the erection of a second language street sign to take place, the threshold for the percentage of residents responding positively is 15% instead of 2/3;
- People not returning a reply are no longer deemed not to be in favour of the application;
- Each application will be equality, good relations and rural needs screened;
- Members may want to consider whether they will exercise their residual discretion at the point when an application is received and decide as to whether to progress that application to the stage of surveying the street in question or not.

3.4 The following key principles agreed previously were also incorporated into the new policy:

- 1. That the policy will be used for the promotion of language rights and for the benefit of linguistic communities.**
- 2. That the principles of equality, promoting good relations and respect will underpin the application of the policy in addition to the rights promoted by the policy itself:**
 - Based on legal advice, each application will be subject to an equality, good relations and rural needs screening;**
 - The Council retains an overriding residual discretion to take the particular circumstances of each application into account in deciding whether or not a second language street name plate should be erected. In summary, there may be circumstances when notwithstanding the consultation response it may be appropriate to depart from the policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. Guidance will be provided to Members on the factors which should be considered when using this discretion; and**
 - As is the case at present, the Council will consider the best approach for any applications relating to long streets.**
- 3. That, as with any statutory consultation which the Council is required to undertake, the City Solicitor may intervene if any complaint is made and a basis for that complaint established.**
- 4. That any decision relating to the erection of a second nameplate in the City centre (business core) will, in addition to the current policy considerations, be subject to a wider public consultation to reflect the community of users.**
- 5. That the policy will cover the corporately designated Gaeltacht Quarter, until such time as a policy which may contain specific proposals in respect of a bilingual strategy have been adopted.**

Update

- 3.5 This revised policy has been screened in for an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and during the summer months, a quotation was developed and issued to procure specialist equality support for both the EQIA and the public consultation process. An equality consultant has now been appointed and an initial briefing meeting has taken place. The consultant is currently developing a detailed plan of**

action on the process required for carrying out the EQIA and aligning this with the public consultation process as well as helping to devise the process for equality-screening each individual application as per legal advice.

- 3.6 It is envisaged by the equality consultant that the public consultation will be issued in the next 4-6 weeks i.e. by the end of October. It has been recommended by the equality consultant that the consultation is issued for a 14/16-week period due to an overlap with the Christmas holiday period. The equality consultant is also providing advice on what further pre-consultation engagement is required in order to explain the proposed operation of this policy in practice. Advice will be also sought from Marketing & Communications for communications support due to the high level of interest when this decision was made at Committee.
- 3.7 Members will be aware that the Council is in the process of establishing an Elected Member Working Group as well as two external stakeholder engagement fora, for the Irish and Ulster Scots language communities. In preparation for this, an internal officer working group has also been convened. The officer working group is developing an approach to take forward the Language Strategy which can be discussed and agreed by Members. Depending on timings, it is hoped that the results of the public consultation on Dual Language Street Signs can be used to inform the development of these emerging structures.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 As agreed previously, given the potential for increased numbers of applications, the Council will deal with no more than 5 in any given month, Processing time could increase however, due to the potential changes to the procedure. If numbers are excessive they will be held in a queue and dealt with in the order in which they have been received. This will also be managed in the context of the existing staffing resource and the established annual budget for street signage. As requested by Members, a report will be submitted to a future meeting outlining the potential for increasing the number of applications which could be processed on a monthly basis, taking into account the new procedure emanating from the revised policy.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.9 The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations are key principles within which the Language Strategy is delivered. The Language Strategy was subject to the Council's usual screening process."

After discussion, the Committee noted the report.

Operational Issues

Response to Consultation on the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill

The City Solicitor informed the Members that the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill had, on 5th July, been introduced into the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Bill would give effect to the Justice Minister's desire to improve the operation and effectiveness of the justice system and would have at its core the key themes of:

- i. enhancing public safety by implementing certain elements of the Report of the Gillen review of serious sexual offence cases and from a review of the law on child sexual exploitation and sexual offences against children; and
- ii. improving services for victims of trafficking and exploitation.

He reviewed the main provisions within the Bill and reported that the Committee Stage would commence in September, with the Committee for Justice seeking comments from interested parties by 24th September. Whilst officers had not identified any objections to the Bill nor any evidence which would inform its content, it was felt that the Council should submit a brief response welcoming the provisions within the Bill. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee approve the following response for submission to the Committee for Justice:

"The Council has reviewed the content of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill and is supportive of the provisions outlined in the Bill. It particularly welcomes the inclusion of live streamed images in the definition of exploitation for sexual purposes and the creation of a new offence of adults masquerading as children online and also welcomes the broadening of the definition of the abuse of power definitions, which are long overdue".

The Committee approved the response.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Working Group of 8th September.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 16th September.

**Department of Finance Consultation on
Updated Building Control Advice on the
fitting of Changing Places Toilets –
Council Response**

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that the Department of Finance had, on 28th July, initiated a consultation on its intention to implement amendments to the technical guidance accompanying local Building Regulations, to provide that new/relevant large buildings commonly used by the public were fitted with changing places facilities.

He explained that changing places were facilities where people with profound and multiple disabilities could avail of toilet and personal hygiene amenities designed specifically for their needs.

He pointed out that the draft response to the consultation had confirmed that the Council would support the mandatory provision of changing places toilets under Building Regulations, as a positive way of increasing inclusion for service users and their carers.

He went on to state that, following the introduction of similar regulations in England and issues which had been raised around the financial challenges associated with voluntarily providing changing places toilets in existing premises, a £30 million fund had been launched in July, to be distributed through local authorities. He suggested that, in addition to responding to the consultation, the Committee might wish to write to the Minister of Finance requesting that a similar fund be established in Northern Ireland for retrospective installations in existing premises.

The Committee approved the following response for submission to the Department of Finance and agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Minister of Finance, as suggested:

COUNCIL RESPONSE

The questions below are extracted from the online questionnaire which must be completed with the approved response. Information will be made publicly available, unless we request otherwise, and state a rationale for the information being kept out of the public domain.

The consultation opened on 28th July and will close on 20th October, 2021

Q1 Do you support the proposal to introduce criteria for Changing Places Toilets (CPT) facilities provision (in addition to the current accessible sanitary provisions), in certain buildings through building regulations statutory guidance?

We support the provision of CPT facilities in new buildings and those created by a material change of use for the category of buildings indicated. It is the view of Belfast City Council that a statutory requirement for such a facility would be the best way to ensure maximum provision. Whilst an amendment to technical guidance would be easier for the Department to implement this will allow scope for building owners and their designers to submit justifications for non-provision on the basis of proposed occupancy and

detailed use at the design and construction phase. These justifications would have to be considered under the functional regulation which requires 'Reasonable provision'. This may appropriately justify non-provision at the design and construction stage but may not cater for the occupancy and specific use over the life span of the building. Changes to how a building is occupied or used over its lifespan may not re-engage this requirement unless the purpose group of the building changed. In this regard we consider mandatory provision for CPT facilities under Building Regulations to be the preferred option.

In addition, the current guidance contained in Technical Booklet R for accessible toilets is applicable only where toilets are provided for visitors, customers or staff. If no such facilities are provided, then no equivalent accessible facility is required. In terms of how the guidance is written it would appear that a CPT facility is being recommended for compliance irrespective of toilet provision for visitors, customers or staff, however clarity would be required. It would be helpful if the recommendations of paragraph 6.14A as a stand-alone requirement was clearly indicated as independent of paragraph 6.12. For example, the guidance in paragraphs 6.13 and 6.14 would not be applicable unless toilets are provided as per paragraph 6.12. It should be clear and unambiguous that CPT provision in paragraph 6.14A is independent of paragraph 6.12 unlike paragraphs 6.13 and 6.14 if this is the case.

Q2 Do you agree with the defined in scope/relevant types of large buildings commonly used by the public, where a CPT facility should be provided for a new building or where a building is formed by a material change of use?

The scope proposed would appear reasonable and we would have no additional information or evidence to bring in terms of a reduction or increase to scope. However as indicated in Q1 we do consider maximum benefit will be achieved by an amendment to the regulations to make these facilities mandatory in relevant buildings. Applicants will still have the opportunity to apply for a relaxation or a dispensation of a prescriptive regulation if they have a valid case to make for non-provision. However, provision is likely to more widespread in the relevant scope with a mandatory requirement.

Q3: Do you agree with the set criteria (the building function, its people capacity or gross floor area) for the defined in scope/relevant buildings?

Yes, we would agree with the set criteria and would have no additional information or evidence to bring in terms of changes to this criteria.

Q4: The Department acknowledges that there may be complexities associated with CPT provision in existing buildings undertaking extension or alteration works, but would welcome further views and supporting evidence. Do you agree with the Department on the need for further supporting evidence and can you provide such, regarding CPT retro-fit installation to existing buildings undertaking extension or alteration works?

We have no evidence that would be of assistance in the establishment of triggers or thresholds for extending the provision of this facility to existing buildings. To have maximum impact this is an area which would need to be explored. Threshold combinations have been utilised in other Building Regulations for additional requirements such as floor area of the extension combined with percentage increase in useful floor area of the extended building. However we do not consider that determination of the threshold for application to extensions could be anything other than arbitrary. The application to alterations is likely to be even more problematic with perhaps type/size of the existing development and the estimated cost of alterations being carried out being potential triggers. Extending the recommendations to these categories of work would greatly enhance the provision of CPT facilities in the built environment as opposed to limiting provision to new buildings and those created by material change of use.

Q5: Do you agree with the analysis/principal assumptions, costs and impacts set out in the Part R consultation stage RIA?

Based on our experience of installing Changing Places into a number of premises, we would agree with the information/figures contained within the consultation

Q6: Have you any additional comments on the proposals you wish to provide?

It would be helpful to all industry stakeholders if the technical requirements for a CPT facility was provided in the statutory guidance as opposed to reference to associated documents. This could be reproduced as an additional appendix if necessary.

We welcome the steps being taken to increase inclusion for Changing Places Toilets facilities service users, and their carers. Promoting equality of opportunity is at the heart of the Belfast Agenda, the community plan for the city, and this action will contribute to that aim. In understanding the background to the campaign which has driven this change, there are several relevant points that demonstrate the opportunities we can learn from:

- The campaign for Changing Places Toilets facilities originated in England, gathering momentum with the establishment of a consortium in 2005. They successfully highlighted the need for such facilities, increasing public awareness and support from big business.
- This consortium has driven through the changes and utilised the findings of organisations such as the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers to highlight the spending power of disabled people, which has become known as the 'purple pound'.

- **Statutory guidance under Part M of the Building Regulations in England was amended in 2021 to require CPT facilities in new buildings, and since then the financial challenges to including such facilities voluntarily in existing buildings have been well documented. The Council notes that in July 2021 a £30 million fund was launched to encourage the retrospective installation of these facilities in existing premises which did not come under the scope of the new statutory guidance. This funding is to be distributed through Local Authorities.”**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee noted the key issues which had been discussed at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel of 14th September and approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Working Group on the Climate Crisis of 21st September.

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

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations made in respect of those applications received up to 10th September, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Aisling Events	4th November 2021	Belfast International Homecoming Dinner and Award Presentation as part of COP26 themed events in Belfast Numbers attending – 300 <i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing</i>	A and B	Charge £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge No hospitality

		<i>guidelines at the time of this event.</i>				
2022 EVENTS						
Society for Cardiothoracic Surgery in GB and Ireland	14 March 2022	<p>SCTS Annual Meeting 2022 Gala dinner As part of their Congress in ICC, Belfast</p> <p>Numbers attending – 150 -</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	A & B	No (charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Microbiology Society	5 April 2022	<p>Microbiology Society Drinks Reception as part of a celebration programme to celebrate 75th anniversary of the journal and engagement events for microbiologists</p> <p>Numbers attending – 100</p>	A & B	No £825 waived due to links with Visit Belfast	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
QUB & Solar Orbiter Workshop	11 September 2022	<p>Conference Welcome Reception for four-day conference</p>	A & B	No £825 waived due to	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

		taking place at Assembly Building		<i>links with Visit Belfast</i>		
		Numbers attending 250	–			

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Adopt a Kiosk Scheme

Councillor Garrett drew the Members' attention to BT's Adopt a Kiosk scheme which provided local councils, registered charities and other organisations with an opportunity, for a fee of £1, to transform unused payphone kiosks. He pointed out that he was aware of several such kiosks in his area and suggested that they could, for example, be used as a defibrillator station or put to other uses by community groups.

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the feasibility of joining the scheme and outlining the options open to the Council for the removal of the kiosks, should a decision be taken not to proceed.

Illumination of the City Hall

The Committee agreed, at the request of Alderman Kingston, that the City Hall be illuminated in an appropriate colour on the night of 18th October to mark Anti-Slavery Day.

At the request of Councillor Heading, the Committee agreed that the lights of the City Hall be dimmed for a short period of time on the night of October 6th to mark the removal of the £20 uplift in Universal Credit.

Chairperson