

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd October, 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, McReynolds, 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;
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

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th October, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2(i) - Heritage Trail - Expression of Interest Submissions, in so far as it related to the application to erect a James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign, on the basis that he was involved in that initiative, and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Restricted Items

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

Medium-Term Financial Plan and Efficiency Programme

The Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the assessment of the key financial factors which would influence the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/23 - 2024/25 and the rate setting process for 2022/23 and on the priorities and work in progress to establish the 2022/22 – 2024/25 Efficiency Programme.

The report outlined the six key elements involved in the annual setting of the District Rate and provided information on business as usual pressures, committed and emerging priorities, efficiencies, the rate base and the ongoing revaluation of non-domestic properties.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report.

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 and agreed that it should continue to receive the report on a monthly basis.

Belfast Region City Growth Deal

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's approval the Belfast Region City Deal Document and Governance Framework. The Deal Document, which would be approved and signed by all partners, committed the partners to the delivery of the £850m Belfast Region City Deal investment programme and would allow funding to flow to projects once their individual Outline Businesses Cases had been approved. She pointed out that the approval and signing of the deal document represented a key milestone in the Belfast Region City Deal process.

The Committee approved the Belfast Region City Deal Document and Governance Framework and commended those officers who had been involved in the process to date.

Update on Strategic Property Acquisitions

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

Update on New Regional Planning IT System

(Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management), attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee noted a report providing an update on the progress being made on the design, configuration and implementation of the new regional Planning IT System, to be shared by the Council, nine other councils and the Department for Infrastructure. The report provided an update also on the contract management of the new system, which would be managed by the Council on behalf of the eleven participants.

Review of Corporate HR

The Committee:

- i approved the implementation of the proposed staffing structure resulting from the review of Corporate HR (Phase 1), including the increase in establishment posts, as set out within the report; and
- ii agreed that a report be submitted to its meeting in November providing information on other structural reviews which were currently being undertaken across the Council, including an indicative timeframe for their completion.

Correspondence - Casement Park

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that the Council had received pre-action correspondence in relation to the Department for Infrastructure's decision to grant planning permission for the redevelopment of Casement Park. The Executive Office had also been named as a proposed respondent, as part of the challenge related to the Executive Committee (Functions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2020, which had permitted the Minister to determine the planning application without Executive approval.

He reported that the correspondence had been sent to the Council as a potential notice party, as the development was within its district and he requested that the Committee determine whether the Council should:

- a. become a notice party to the proceedings;
- b. provide a substantive response to the issues raised within the correspondence; or
- c. respond by advising that the application had been considered acceptable by the Council's Planning Committee in its role as statutory consultee and that it was for DfI and The Executive Office

to provide a substantive response on the issues raised and in addition to reiterate the Council's strategic support for the development.

The Committee granted approval to the City Solicitor to proceed with option c.

**Update on Draft Amenity
Bye Laws for the City Centre**

The City Solicitor submitted for the Committee's consideration a report outlining the background to the drafting of amended bye laws for the amenity and good governance of the City centre. He explained that, under the provisions of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972, bye laws must be approved by the Department for Communities before they could be adopted. Council officers were of the view that it would be prudent to carry out some informal consultation with that Department and with other relevant agencies, following which a report would be presented to the Committee.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved the draft bye laws and authorised officers to begin the consultation process with the Department for Communities and other relevant statutory agencies, in advance of a wider public consultation;
- ii. agreed that the City Solicitor examine the issue of excessive noise from Belfast Party bikes; and
- iii. agreed that a similar review be undertaken of the bye laws governing the use of the Council's parks.

Heritage Trail - Expression of Interest Submissions

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th March, it had considered a request to install an interpretative interactive sign on a bollard facing the North West lawn in the grounds of the City Hall, as part of a James Connolly heritage trail in Belfast.

The Committee had agreed to defer the request to allow for an appropriate policy to be formulated and for an expression of interest exercise to be undertaken to review other cultural heritage type projects which might wish to work up an interactive signage proposal.

The City Solicitor reported that the expression of interest exercise had concluded on 8th October and that ten submissions had been received by that date. He explained that four of those had met the criteria and scoring threshold, and recommended that they be progressed to the next stage on a without prejudice basis, to obtain more detail on the proposals for the purpose of further consideration by the Party Group Leaders and the Committee. He recommended also that the Committee consider if it wished to approve the installation of the James Connolly Heritage Trail sign at this stage, given that it was a fully worked up proposal.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by The High Sheriff (Councillor Long),

That the Committee agrees to proceed immediately with the installation of a James Connolly Heritage Trail sign on a bollard facing the North West lawn in the grounds of the City Hall.

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

The Committee agreed also:

- i. that the design of interactive signage, including symbols, be addressed by the Party Group Leaders, in consultation with the City Solicitor;
- ii. that the four submissions which had met the criteria and scoring threshold be progressed to the next stage in the process and that other groups which had been identified by Members but had not submitted an expression of interest be included for consideration; and
- iii. that officers work with a number of other proposals for which a previous interest had been expressed outside of the current process.

Pedestrian Animation

The Committee agreed, at the request of Councillor Garrett, that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing an update on his motion on Pedestrian Animation, which had called for the creation of permanent animation at appropriate points along the Pride Parade route ahead of the 2020 Pride festival, which had been passed by the Council at its meeting on 2nd December, 2019.

Amendments to Standing Orders

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that Council officers had been made aware of a recent judicial review of a planning decision which had been taken by another council. Whilst the Judgement had yet to be formally published, it was felt that it should be brought to the attention of the Committee, as the judge had made a number of findings which would require the Council to consider its Standing Orders in relation to the call-in process and the operation of the protocols governing the Licensing and Planning Committees, insofar as they related to Member participation in decision-making when they may have been absent during any part of the process of determining an application.

He explained that officers were engaging with their counterparts in the Department for Communities to explore how the issues identified by the Judgement could be resolved and that a more detailed report on the impact of the Judgement on the Licensing and Committees would be presented to the Committee in due course.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee:

- i agree to suspend the relevant provisions of the Operating Protocols of the Planning and Licensing Committee which prohibited Members from taking part in decision making insofar as they related to non-attendance;
- ii agree to amend Standing Orders to the effect that decisions of quasi-judicial committees (Planning and Licensing) would be subject to call-in by the deletion of Standing Order 48 (2) (a); and
- iii agree to amend Standing Order 48 (2) (c) limiting the ability to suspend call-in to those cases in which an inability to immediately implement a decision would result in a breach of statutory or contractual duty or would otherwise prevent the Council from responding to a situation of emergency, as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Assets Management

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

Beechvale Farm

The Committee:

- i. agreed to affirm its decision of 24th September 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; and
- ii. agreed that consideration be given to re-establishing tree nurseries on the Council estate, including on the 22 acres being retained at Beechvale Farm.

Cregagh Youth and Community Centre

The Committee approved the grant of a new licence to the Irish Rugby Football Union (Ulster Branch) for the occasional use of the car park adjacent to Cregagh Youth and Community Centre.

**Request for the use of Falls Park for
Féile An Phobail Winter Festival**

(Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services informed the Committee that a request had been received from Féile An Phobail for the use of Falls Park to hold its "Winter Festival" event.

He reported that the festival, which was a new addition to Féile An Phobail's annual events programme, would take place provisionally between 26th November and 4th January and detailed the various attractions/facilities which would be provided. The event would be taking place outside normal opening hours and would require the closure of a substantial area of the park, particularly when equipment was being erected and dismantled.

He confirmed that the organisers would, in line with the Council's events process, be required to submit supporting documentation, including a Covid-19 Risk Assessment, to demonstrate that the event management plan was compliant with all Government Covid- 19 regulations and public health guidance requirements at the time of the event. In addition, a legal agreement would be prepared by the Legal Services Section and would include appropriate fees and bonds for reinstatement costs.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee grant to Féile an Phobail the use of Falls Park to hold its "Winter Festival" event on the aforementioned dates, subject to the completion of the appropriate Event Management Plans and satisfactory terms being agreed by him and on the condition that the event organisers:

- resolve all operational issues to the satisfaction of the Council;
- meet all statutory requirements, including those relating to Public Liability Insurance cover, health and safety and licensing;
- consult with adjoining public bodies and local communities, as necessary; and
- adhere to Government Covid-19 Regulations in place at the time of the event.

After discussion, during which the Director of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that the event organiser would be advised of their responsibilities under the Council's Goods Relations Policy, the Committee adopted the recommendation.

**Recruitment of Post of Chief Executive
and Interim Arrangements**

(With the exception of the Chief Executive, the Senior Democratic Services Officer and the Democratic Services Officer, all officers left the meeting whilst this item was under consideration.)

The Committee considered a report which set out recommendations for the recruitment of the post of Chief Executive on a permanent basis, including an indicative timeframe for completion, together with the interim arrangements to be put in place to ensure continuity in the intervening period and a number of proposed changes to the role of Deputy Chief Executive.

The Committee:

- i. approved the recruitment of the post of Chief Executive on a permanent basis and agreed that it include the responsibility of Accounting Officer;
- ii. agreed that the shortlisting panel for the post consist of the Chairperson of the Committee and two Members from a Political Party not represented by the Chairperson (or their nominees), the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission and the Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services of the Local Government Staff Commission, in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection; and
 - a. nominated Councillors Beattie and Bunting to sit on the shortlisting panel;
- iii. agreed that the final interview panel for the post consist of the Chairperson of the Committee and four Members from Political Parties not represented by the Chairperson (or the nominees) and noted that it would be advised by the Chairperson of the Local Government Staff Commission, the Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services of the Local Government Staff Commission and one Professional Advisor, in accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection; and
 - a. agreed that one Member from each of the four largest Parties on the Council be nominated to sit on the final interview panel, with Councillors Beattie (SF) and Bunting (DUP) being nominated and the Alliance and SDLP Parties to nominate a Member in due course;
- iv. approved the interim arrangements to be put in place pending the appointment of a successful candidate, as set out within the report; and
- v. agreed that the role of Deputy Chief Executive be amended as part of a structural review and granted approval for the current postholder to retire on partial efficiency grounds at the end of the interim period.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 4th October, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Matt Collins and seconded by Councillor Michael Collins:

This Council:

- welcomes legislation at committee stage in Stormont for Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay;
- notes the Coalition for Bereaved Workers concern that this bill is a 'missed opportunity' and 'does not go far enough';
- will write to the Stormont Economy Committee to urge that they further the legislation on bereavement policy so that everyone who is bereaved of a close relative or partner is entitled to 2 weeks statutory bereavement leave and pay in line with the Coalition for Bereaved Workers campaign objectives; and
- will also undertake a review of its own bereavement policy, in conjunction with the unions, that seeks to establish two weeks statutory bereavement leave and pay for all Council workers, in line with the Coalition for Bereaved Workers "Call to action" document.

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

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

Motion - Environmentally Sustainable Event Spaces

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 4th October, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor Garrett and seconded by Councillor Bradley:

"This Council has a long-standing track record of working with event promoters to host significant events and concerts within the Council's estate across the city.

The Council should be commended for the role it plays in facilitating and promoting a vibrant calendar of events within our estate.

As we look into the future, our position as a Council in declaring a climate emergency and the stark indications presented within Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report, we must find ways and offer solutions to mitigate against the catastrophic effects of climate change.

Making our event venues more environmentally sustainable, with access to clean energy (Electricity) and running water will help mitigate the necessity for Fossil Fuel energy combustion and plastic pollution derived from plastic products.

Therefore, this Council will commit to a timetable and plan for delivering the physical means for environmentally sustainable event spaces with Clean Energy (Electric) power sources and Running Water points to mitigate against plastic pollution.”

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 on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

Motion - Staff on Temporary Contracts

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting on 4th October, the following motion had been proposed by Councillor McLaughlin and seconded by Councillor Murphy:

“This Council is concerned to learn about the number of staff on temporary contracts who have worked for the organisation for many years.

The staff affected do not have job security, cannot plan their lives and are constantly worried that this temporary contract will be their last. We can and must do better for our staff. An organisation should be measured on how it treats its staff and if the Covid-19 pandemic has shown us anything, it’s the value of all our incredible hard working and diligent staff who constantly go above and beyond for the citizens of this City.

As a result, the Council will obtain a legal opinion with a view to ascertaining if it is possible to establish that anyone on a temporary contract employed for 12 continuous months, regardless of job title, can have that contract made permanent if the staff member so wishes and, subject to that advice, the Council will put in place procedures enabling this to happen”

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

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. adopted the motion and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed; and

- ii. agreed that a report be submitted to its meeting in November providing a breakdown, on a Departmental and Unit basis, of the number of staff currently employed on temporary contracts and the length of time on which they had been on them.

Motion - Pregnancy Loss Pledge

The City Solicitor informed the Members that a request had been received from Councillor M. Kelly for the Council to consider signing up to the Miscarriage Association's Pregnancy Loss Pledge.

He explained that the Pregnancy Loss campaign urged employers to commit to supporting staff through the distress of miscarriage by:

- encouraging a supportive work environment where people felt able to discuss and disclose pregnancy and/or loss without fear of being disadvantaged or discriminated against;
- understanding and implementing the rules around pregnancy-related leave, thereby ensuring that staff felt able to take the time off which they needed;
- showing empathy and understanding towards people and their partners experiencing pregnancy loss;
- implementing a pregnancy loss policy or guidance, or ensuring that it was included in sickness, bereavement or other workplace policies, being mindful also of the needs of partners;
- encouraging line managers to access in-house or external guidance, such as that available on the Miscarriage Association's website, on how to support someone experiencing pregnancy loss; and
- supporting people back to work by being responsive to their needs and showing flexibility, wherever possible.

He reported that the current approach adopted by the Council in relation to staff absence resulting from miscarriage was set out within the Attendance Booklet which accompanied the Attendance Policy. Line managers had been directed to seek further guidance, where necessary, from their Business Support Section and/or the Employee Relations and Occupational Health Units. The Employee Counselling service was also available to all staff.

He added that, whilst the Attendance Policy, advice and support materials were already aimed at ensuring that pregnancy loss absence was managed sensitively and that employees were fully supported, the Council would ensure that the Pregnancy Loss Pledge criteria would be fully considered and integrated into the ongoing review of the Attendance Policy and supporting materials.

The Committee granted approval for the Council to sign up to the Miscarriage Association's Pregnancy Loss Pledge.

**Motion - Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order
1996 – Response from Minister for the Economy**

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 1st June, had passed the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Lyons and seconded by Councillor Heading:

"This Council notes with alarm the growing number of employers, especially in the retail, hospitality and aviation sectors, who are making employees redundant before reemploying them on less-favourable terms and conditions; believes that these employers should instead be focused on supporting their employees through this pandemic; agrees with Unite the union and others that this fire-and-rehire practice makes a mockery of workers' rights.

The Council, therefore, calls on the Department for Economy to close this legal loophole as a matter of urgency, for example by amending The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 to specify that such redundancies should automatically be regarded as unfair dismissals."

The City Solicitor drew the Committee's attention to a response which had been received from Mr. G. Lyons, Minister for the Economy.

The Minister had begun by stating that he would continue the work of his predecessors in protecting those immediately affected by the pandemic and had outlined the extent of that work. He pointed out that they had taken a number of steps to protect workers' rights in terms of ensuring that statutory family-related payments and various statutory entitlements connected with redundancy or the termination of employment had been based on normal pay rather than furlough pay.

The Department had also introduced legislation to allow workers who were unable to take holiday leave as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak to carry over their annual leave into the next two leave years. Legislation had also been introduced which had extended vital Health and Safety protections to all workers, something which had previously applied only to employees.

Significant progress had also been made towards the introduction of Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay in Northern Ireland, which would be an important new employment right for those parents in work who had suffered the loss of a child.

The Minister had gone to state that, as the focus moved to recovering from the damage inflicted on the economy by the pandemic, his priority would be to ensure that workers had jobs to which they can return. His Department's economic recovery action plan would help protect jobs, which, in his opinion, was the most fundamental of all employment rights.

He had then stressed that, in his view, the practice of giving notice and offering a new contract known as 'fire and rehire' should not be used as a negotiation tactic. Using fire and rehire as a tactic to put undue pressure on workers to accept new and often worse terms and conditions or face losing their jobs was unacceptable.

The Minister warned employers that dismissal and rehire should only be used where there was an existential risk to the business and added that, even in those circumstances, they must follow a statutory minimum dismissal procedure, and may have to follow a collective redundancy consultation process if a group of employees was involved.

He had pointed out that he was conscious that any potential measures to address the worst excesses of fire and rehire, including legislation, must be carefully considered to ensure there were no unintended consequences, particularly where those measures could lead to more redundancies. His officials would continue to liaise with their counterparts in the Department for Business, Enterprise and Industrial Strategy on this matter.

The Minister had then highlighted the need to remember that any employees who believed that they had been unfairly dismissed from the original contract may be able to complain to an Industrial Tribunal, providing that they had at least one year's continuous service with their employer. Employees may also be able to claim redundancy if they had at least two years' service.

He had concluded by making reference to the Labour Relations Agency's Workplace Information Service and the Law Centre as being valuable sources of assistance/support.

The Committee noted the response.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Update on Customer Focus Programme

(Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Members are reminded that, in February and May 2021, the Committee was provided with updates on the Customer Focus Programme, which included updates on the new Customer Hub function which has been operational from 29 March 2021.

1.2 This report provides an update:

- **on the implementation of the Customer Hub function;**
- **on progress in the development of added features in the Elected Members' mobile app and plans for release of this version to all Members; and**
- **on the Customer Focus programme, including the Council's website development and enabling infrastructure.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

1. note the update on the implementation of the Customer Hub function including completion of the reception area of the ground floor in CWB and continuing works to accommodate the Customer Hub team;
2. note the update on the next release of a mobile application for Elected Members and plans to roll this out to all members in October/November 2021;
3. note that Party Group briefings are planned to take place in October 2021 to continue engaging with elected members to gather feedback on their Customer Hub experience and to continue to promote use of the new mobile app and the additional functionality in the next release;
4. note the work that is continuing to improve missed bin collections;
5. note progress on the development of the Council's websites; and
6. note the progress on the provision of enabling infrastructure.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The first phase of the new Customer Hub function went live on 29th March 2021 as planned. The Customer Hub deals with customer contact for all departments and services, across a number of channels (online, telephone, email). In the first phase of implementation the hub has managed all customer contact for cleansing/waste and calls formerly through the main switchboard and corporate complaints numbers. All other direct dial telephone numbers remain unchanged.

As part of the blueprint for Elected Members, the Customer Hub provides specific services for Elected Members in the form of a direct phone line and email account and both these channels went live on 29 March 2021.

Work has continued with the Customer Focus Task and Finish group of Elected Members to develop a third contact channel, a mobile application which enables members to raise issues, keep track of their cases and review their history of cases. The first version of the app was rolled out to members in July 2021. Work has continued with the Task and Finish group to develop additional functionality within the app.

Work has now started on planning of phase 2 of the programme implementation which will include onboarding of the Building Control Service. A report to a future committee will provide details of the plan.

3.2 Update on the implementation of the Customer Hub Function

The first few months of operation during the summer period provided significantly high volumes of calls averaging approximately 800 calls per day with higher volumes experienced after bank holidays. Email traffic has accounted for one third of overall contacts. An analysis of the Customer Hub throughput from April to September 2021 has been circulated.

3.2.1 Customer Hub Resources and Capacity

Because call volumes have been higher than anticipated we have been closely monitoring call queues, prioritising them and assessing the impact on staffing requirements. To address demand and to stabilise the operation of Customer Hub, we used temporary staff as an interim measure and increased and extended these arrangements whilst backfilling or recruiting temporary posts for a period of 6 months. We also brought forward the recruitment of an additional 2 permanent posts within the agreed establishment.

Integral to this formative stage has been the inclusion of staff and Trade Unions in understanding the impact on staffing requirements during the transition and the early stages of operating the new Customer Hub.

Recruitment has been completed and new staff have received their initial training and development, and this will continue across all team members as we continue to build capacity.

As this is a new function and to provide assurance after the first six months of operation, an independent health check is being commissioned to review the operational set up of the Customer Hub and to assess future capacity needs.

3.2.2 Hand offs to Departments/Services

The handoffs from Customer Hub to services in other departments has been designed and implemented initially on a 'wide and thin' basis i.e. a basic level of information and signposting for customers is provided at the first point of contact for all services across all channels. Handoff processes have worked well in general however the focus has now shifted to improving issue resolution and responsiveness, ensuring service standards are consistent across departments and in particular as we step towards a return to office working. To facilitate this we are working with Digital Services and departments to define management information requirements to support continuous improvement in service delivery.

3.2.2 A new physical Customer Hub

Since October 2020, plans for the refurbishment of the Ground Floor of Cecil Ward Building as the physical Customer Hub have been delivered by our Building and Maintenance colleagues with support from colleagues in Civic and Legal Services. Whilst it is to be determined when 'face to face' services will fully resume, the plans have included a refurbishment of the reception area as a first phase providing a more welcoming customer interface and acting as the physical focal point for customer service. This work has also provided the opportunity to upgrade digital infrastructure and to deep clean stonework. Work is now in progress to refurbish the office space adjacent to the reception area to accommodate the Customer Hub team. Photographs of the new reception area have been circulated.

3.3 Dedicated Services for Elected Members

As stated, the Customer Hub went live with specific services designed for elected members – a dedicated telephone line and email account. A profile of Elected Members' engagement to date has been circulated to the Committee.

3.3.1 Upgrade to the mobile App designed and developed for Elected Members

After the launch of the mobile app for elected members in July 2021, we continued to work with the Customer Focus Task and Finish group of Elected Members to develop the product.

A second release of the app with new features has been developed which members of the Task and Finish group have tested and at a recent workshop fed back on their experience and recommendations for improvement. We are grateful to elected members for their continuing support and time and input to the development process. The app has

been developed and supported by Digital Services who are currently planning for the upgrade of the app to be made available to all Members at the end of October 2021. A training video has been developed by Digital Services Trainers to support the rollout. Members will receive an email from Democratic Services which will have links to the video – this will be accessed through the Members Portal where the other App training videos are already available.

3.3.2 Further Engagement with Elected Members

Party group briefings have been arranged for the end of October to continue engaging with elected members to facilitate a demo and promotion of the upgrade to the elected members' app and to get their feedback on their Customer Hub experience to inform service improvements.

3.4 Update on Missed Bin Collections

As part of the Customer Focus programme, aligned to the overall Resources and Fleet transition and improvement programme, we have been focussing on how we can improve issues with missed bins including information flows between elected members, customers, staff and managers.

A mobile app to report missed bins has been developed for Resources and Fleet staff to use during collections and a pilot to test the technology has been completed across 10 out of 50 squads. The outcomes of the pilot have been assessed and issues which were identified during the pilot, such as a high volume of damaged, contaminated or multiple bins, have been reviewed and action plans to address these issues, including a review of back office processes and systems have been reported and agreed through the People and Communities Committee.

Plans are now being developed to extend use of the mobile app to capture further information on missed collections and to focus on improving information flows between the operation, Customer Hub and customers.

3.5 Update on development of our Websites

3.5.1 New Council Website

The new council website www.belfastcity.gov.uk has now been in place for a year, aiming to provide a consistent online experience for every user and to adhere to the relatively new legislation for public sector websites. The website was delivered on time and within budget.

The development focused specifically on accessibility and mobile responsiveness. It involved a complete content review and the size of the site was reduced by around 80%, making information more concise and relevant. We identified over 2000 pdfs and converted those still needed to HTML documents.

We carried out user testing throughout and after the project on a range of users, including those with disabilities and of different ages.

3.5.2 Other site developments

In addition to the main site, other sites to move under the www.belfastcity.gov.uk domain are:

Belfast Stories – 16 September 2021
Belfast Zoo – 21 September 2021
Invest in Belfast - 27 October 2021

3.5.3 Web Governance Panel

A Web governance panel has been established comprising of officers from Digital Services and Marketing and Corporate Communications. Any requests for mobile apps, domain names, websites and online development work are directed through this panel in order to ensure we are managing contracts efficiently; to ensure information is correct and that Belfast is promoted in a cohesive manner.

To continue to provide assurance and to protect the investment in our online channels, any requests regarding new platforms will be channelled through the Web Governance panel.

3.5.4 Accessibility

The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (the Accessibility Regulations) require us to:

1. meet the [international WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standard](#)
2. publish an accessibility statement that explains how accessible our website or mobile app is.

Beyond this, we are continually looking for new ways to ensure no-one is left behind or hindered from getting the information they need from our website.

Our default publishing method is in HTML, the language of the website. We state in our accessibility statement that we will not publish any more PDFs to the site, and if needed due to a legislative requirement, we will amend our statement to alert users to the issue and offer alternatives.

Online Design Authority

- 3.5.5 An online design authority has been established to champion the removal of barriers to accessibility and usability. It thinks from the customer perspective, rather than the service.

To support this the Online Team has developed a suite of guides to support internal staff. These include web style guidelines, publishing principles and guidelines on legislative compliance across our digital offering, including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (PSBAR).

Cabinet Office Monitoring

In July 2021, we were advised by the Central Digital and Data Office, which is part of the Cabinet Office, that they would be conducting a compliance audit on our main website www.belfastcity.gov.uk which would involve monitoring of the site and provision of information to assist them.

We have received their feedback within the last week and are in the process of working through their recommendations to plan improvements.

The Silktide Index

- 3.5.7 The Silktide Index presents a comprehensive analysis of public sector websites throughout the UK. Tests cover the latest standards for website accessibility, which include mobile accessibility. The Index is maintained by Silktide in partnership with Society of IT Managers (SOCITM).

As of September 2021, the index measures Belfast City Council website as Excellent (91%), which is top in Northern Ireland councils.

Enabling Infrastructure

- 3.6 The success of the Customer Focus programme is wholly dependent on the delivery of enabling infrastructure and specific to Customer Hub, the technical infrastructure provided via telephony and systems delivered by Digital Services.

Digital Services are continuing the development and support of the following services:

- **Contact Centre**
Improving customer experience by ensuring that customer contact from any channel is directed to the right agent with the right skills. It also provides real-time information to improve agent effectiveness and management information for departments to support service improvement;
- **Customised CRM integration**
Phone and CRM system integration provides visibility of calls made and received, quick access to customer information and the ability to receive and make calls directly within the CRM;
- **Softphones**
Bring all the functionality of a desk phone onto a laptop or mobile phone. This enables the staff working in the Customer Hub to operate remotely or in the office.
Implementation of softphones is being prioritised in line with the design of hand offs to departments where use of softphones is most effective.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 The Committee agreed, in November 2017, that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project.

Resource requirements for operation of the Customer Hub are provided for within existing Budgets.

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

- 3.8 No implications.”

The Committee noted the report.

Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Committee that the Council had received from Glasgow City Council an invitation to sign the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration, which would be presented on 6th November at the COP26 conference.

He explained that Glasgow City Council had, with a number of partner organisations, been part of a process aimed at moving local governments and integrated food policies to centre stage. That process had led to the establishment of the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration and organisations and local authorities had been invited to become involved. The Declaration would confirm their commitment to developing sustainable food policies and called upon national governments to put food and farming at the heart of the global response to the climate emergency. The following three key commitments had been included:

- to develop and implement integrated food policies and strategies as key tools in the fight against climate change;
- to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from urban and regional food systems, in accordance with the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, and build sustainable food systems which would be able to rebuild ecosystems and deliver safe, healthy, accessible, affordable, and sustainable diets for all; and
- to call upon national governments to establish supportive and enabling policy frameworks and multi-level and multi-actor governance mechanisms, to allow for co-ordinated decision-making on food systems.

The Committee granted approval for the Council to sign the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration.

Update on COP26

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with a high-level overview of the COP26 arrangements and Belfast's involvement. The Council is sending a delegation to the event and, as such, is seeking retrospective approval for Lord Mayor to attend COP26 in the lead role. She will be accompanied by two Elected Members and one council officer.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i note the current arrangements for COP26 and activity planned both in Belfast and Glasgow; and**
- ii provide retrospective approve for the Lord Mayor's attendance at COP26 on 10th and 11th November, as the lead of the Council's delegation.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 COP26 is the 2021 United Nations annual climate change conference which runs from the 1st to the 12th November 2021. COP stands for Conference of the Parties. Parties are the signatories of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - a treaty agreed in 1994 which has 197 Parties (196 countries and the EU). The 2021 conference, hosted by the UK, together with partners Italy, in Glasgow, will be the 26th meeting of the Parties, which is why it's called COP26. United Nations climate change conferences are among the largest international meetings in the world. The negotiations between governments are complex and involve officials from every country in the world as well as representatives from civil society and the global news media.

3.2 Activity at a COP takes place in two different zones - the Blue Zone and the Green Zone. The Blue Zone is for people registered with the UN body tasked with coordinating the global response to the threat of climate change – the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In the Blue Zone you might be part of a national delegation, work for the United Nations and related organisations & agencies or be a member of the media or not-for-profit observer organisation. In the Blue Zone, delegates from countries meet for both formal negotiations and informal consultations. They may also take part in meetings with other delegations to clarify their position and interests with the aim of reaching agreement or overcoming a negotiating deadlock. The UNFCCC will also host a range of events, including technical briefings, to support the negotiations process.

3.3 The Green Zone is for the general public. There will be a wide range of events, including workshops, art exhibitions and installations, as well as presentations, demonstrations of technology and musical performances for everyone to attend.

The Council's approach to COP26 involvement is multi-faceted, with activity planned in Belfast over the period of COP26 and in Glasgow on 10th and 11th November. Our aims are as follows:

3.5 AMBITION: Using the event as a catalyst for local action by Belfast anchor institutions, businesses and communities by:

- **Joining Global Campaigns to pledge climate action and set targets, to plan how targets will be achieved, to show that we are proceeding with climate action and to publish our progress. Belfast has signed up to four global climate campaigns: Race to Zero, Race to Resilience, Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and One Planet City Challenge.**
- **Explaining COP26 to local businesses, communities and individuals (Video and website)**
- **Showing how BCC is playing its part in the run up to COP26 and the wider climate agenda (list of events and actions to date on website)**
- **Encouraging local businesses, communities and individuals to be part of the conversation and get involved (tweet us your #OneWeeThing)**
- **Creating a community and city that is well informed about climate change**
- **Offering residents a positive vision of the transition to an inclusive, net-zero, resilient economy**
- **Encouraging personal responsibility and motivate residents, businesses and communities to join the climate journey (#OneWeeThing)**

3.6 AWARENESS: Showcase examples of good practice and innovative work in Belfast, including:

- **Electric and hydrogen buses, Artemis ferry, Hydrogen generation by NIW, Research and innovation in Bio-Energy, Marine, renewable Energy, floating solar, intelligent energy systems, Green apprenticeships, Greenway, One Million Trees, Species rich grasslands and wildflower meadows, Danske Bank's new Carbon Neutral Mortgage, Sustainable Tourism, Linen Quarter sustainable district, Recycling Centres**

3.7 OPPORTUNITY: to build partnerships to tackle climate change and promote inclusive green growth

- **Continued partnerships with Glasgow City Council and other core cities on climate action planning and delivery and build new partnerships to exploit opportunities to support and finance inclusive green growth.**

3.8 Belfast Focused Activity

It was previously agreed that we would focus primarily on Belfast in our COP26 planned activity and, to that end, we have undertaken a number of actions:

- Supporting the Carbon Bus Tour, which is now complete.
- Funding for Podiem Business Sustainability Conference with 334 attendees, which is now complete.
- Development of a COP26 focused video which showcases local projects and people, aligned to the themes of the COP26 programme, for use on social media and as a 'climate asset' which can be used beyond COP26.
- Funding of the Common Purpose Northern Ireland Legacy Programme which this year has a climate theme
- Belfast partnership in the Core Cities Climate Investment Platform, which will launch an investment analysis report on the 21st October, with an in person event to follow on 11th November, during COP26.
- Funding of the RE(ACT) festival which is led by Linenquarter BID RE[act] Festival | Festival for a Sustainable Belfast (reactfestival.co.uk)
- Belfast Climate Commission Youth Working Group Youth Summit on the 5th November in Belfast City Hall, which will feedback the results of a recent Youth Climate Survey hosted on BCC Yoursay Platform.
- BCC coordinated 'Perspectives on adaptation' seminar – online session on the 8th November which forms part of the regional green zone activity, part funded by BCC and BEIS, through NILGA.
- Temporary Art installation – the Climate Unit and Culture Unit have funded a mobile art installation which will be developed by Threes Theatre Company, across the period of COP26.

3.9 Opportunities for Elected Members to engage with and support COP26 activities are being developed and will be presented to the Party leaders.

Glasgow Focused Activity

- A Belfast City Council delegation will attend COP26 on 10th and 11th November, with plans to attend several Green Zone events including those that Council has been involved in arranging – Climate NI 'All together Now' session on local government networking and adaptation.
- The delegation will attend the Glasgow City Council/UK100 Leaders and Mayors event on the evening of the 10th November.

- The delegation will attend the Core Cities ‘Enabling Net Zero Investment’ event on the 11th November.
- The Glasgow Food and Climate Pledge will be launched during COP26 – Belfast City Council has been invited to participate.
- There are ongoing discussions with Glasgow City Council, and networks which Belfast is part of including Resilient Cities Network, ICLEI, Core Cities, PCAN to explore opportunities for city to city discussions.
- To that end meetings are planned with Nottingham representatives and Manchester representatives, and with the leader of Glasgow City Council.
- Belfast has also been invited to participate in a Blue Zone event run by the Resilient Cities Network on the morning of the 10th November, which is focused on the link between nature and play, which has come about through our involvement in the Real Play Coalition.
- Linked to our city submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project which was made in July 2021 Belfast has now joined the Race to Zero and Race to Resilience Campaigns, which are connected to COP26.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 There are no new financial requirements.

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.

Universal Basic Income – Proposed Contribution to Feasibility Research

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Committee of a proposed feasibility study into the development of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilot in Northern Ireland as well as a financial ask to contribute to the feasibility work.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to consider the request for a contribution of £15,000 towards a feasibility study into developing a UBI pilot in Northern Ireland.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Members will be aware that, in September 2019, the Council passed a motion to support the implementation of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) trial in Northern Ireland. Similar motions were passed in a number of other councils across the region. Over the last six months, a steering group has been formed to explore how this can be realised. This steering group is being co-ordinated by the UBI Lab Network, a global UBI advocacy movement with a local Northern Ireland group. Membership of the steering group includes councillors and officers from five of the eleven councils in Northern Ireland, as well as Advice NI, the Participation and Practice of Rights (PPR) Project and Community Foundation NI. The Council's representatives are Cllr. McReynolds and Cllr. Heading.

- 3.2** The group has met on three occasions to date. One of the main areas of work which they have explored is the potential to undertake a feasibility study to consider how a UBI trial would be planned, delivered and measured. This study would also identify the likely outcomes of such a trial and would create a foundation on which a NI-wide UBI might be delivered and resourced by the Northern Ireland Executive.

Whilst the Department for Communities is not likely to be a funding partner in this preliminary work, support for a UBI is contained within DfC's *Recommendations for an Anti-poverty Strategy* paper (published December 2020), stating that 'informed public debate on the merits and challenges involved should be encouraged'. Subject to the outcome of the work,

DfC could potentially become the lead agency in development and delivery of a UBI trial and any trial would require their endorsement.

The UBI model has been explored to varying degrees in a number of other locations. In June 2020, Scotland published an extensive report exploring the feasibility of a UBI there, which included detailed economic modelling and a range of options for trialling the concept. The main conclusion was that Scotland would require permission from DWP to run a trial, which DWP have indicated they will not give. The Welsh government has recently (following the local elections) stated their commitment to trialling UBI and initial costings

on this have recently been published. The coalition government in ROI committed to a trial of UBI in their Programme for Government, and planning of this trial is underway.

An outline scope of services for the feasibility study has been drafted by the Working Group secretariat. Key areas of work include:

- **Agent Based Modelling** - This type of modelling can provide a dynamic illustration of the potential impact of UBI on a diverse range of outcomes including mental health and wellbeing, crime, paramilitary activity and social trust. It has the potential to deliver a rich evidence base to support assumptions about the impact of any future trial. It would also be useful in expanding discussion around UBI outside of traditional metrics such as financial cost and labour market participation;
- **Economic Modelling** – this modelling would provide the cost of a range of levels of UBI at devolved level, as well as an analysis of fiscal powers required to fund this, such as devolution of income tax or a national wealth fund. This element of the research also provides a tax and benefit simulation model which would show how much better or worse people would be under UBI and the potential impact of UBI on poverty rates and inequality; and
- **UBI Calculator** – this is a public-facing UBI calculator which would be hosted online and allow people to enter their financial/household circumstances and see how much better or worse off they would be under the devolved UBI explored in the feasibility study.

The total cost of this study has been calculated at £95,800. The UBI Lab Network has secured around £40,000 to date and is now seeking support for the remainder of the cost from steering group members and charitable trusts. The finance proposal for the NI feasibility study consists of:

- A £15,000 contribution from each of the local authorities identified as a potential trial locations within the study. These areas would be promoted as lead authors alongside the UBI Lab Network. At present, locations being considered are based in three councils areas: Belfast City Council; Derry City and Strabane District Council and Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (Note: Derry City and Strabane District Council has recently agreed to the funding request)

- A £5,000 contribution from local authorities supportive of UBI but not identified as a potential trial location within the study
- A £5,000-£10,000 contribution from other steering group members CFNI and Advice NI (£5,000 secured from CFNI)
- Funding bids for any shortfall to trusts and foundations such as Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, Big Lottery Awards for All, Nuffield Foundation, Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust.

The current funding position is as follows:

- €20,000 secured from Freiburg University in Germany via their *Basic Income and Peacebuilding* group
- £5,000 secured from the Community Foundation NI
- £2,500 secured from Queen's University for a project researcher to support the work of the project team
- £15,000 secured from Derry City and Strabane District Council
- A funding bid for £5,000 has been submitted to Advice NI
- A bid for £15,000 has also been submitted to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council
- In the event of a shortfall, funding bids will be prepared for Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, Andrew Wainwright Reform Trust, Nuffield Foundation and Awards for All.

The indicative timeframe for this work is completion by September, 2022. However, it is likely that the early modelling work will be able to identify indicative costings for a potential UBI trial by Spring 2022.

This proposal was presented to the Social Policy Working Group on 28th September 2021. It was agreed that the request to contribute to the research should be brought to the S P and R Committee for further consideration.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.10 The overall cost of the feasibility study is likely to be in the region of £96,000. A financial request has been made of £15,000 from Belfast City Council.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

- 3.11 The modelling work will take account of the introduction of a UBI on all disadvantaged and s75 groups. One specific angle for this study will be to consider how this approach can support good relations in a post-conflict society.”

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McReynolds,
Seconded by The High Sheriff (Councillor Long),

That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendation to allocate £15,000 towards a feasibility study to develop a Universal Basic Income trial in Northern Ireland.

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

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Update on Physical Programme

The Director of Physical Programmes submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes 140 live capital projects, with investment of £100m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report provides an overview of recently completed capital projects and contracts awarded in the last quarter.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Physical Programme update - note the update on those projects that have been completed recently and those currently in construction; and

- Contracts awarded in Q2 2021/22 –note the update in relation to contracts awarded.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Physical Programmes Update: Q2 July to September 2021

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

3.2 Recently completed projects:

- Capital Programme / non-recurrent: IT Programme – Backup Platform Infrastructure, Vere Foster playground, Falls Park playground, Hurling Wall at Cliftonville (Pitches Strategy), Cregagh Green pathways, Willowfield Changing Facilities, Customer Hub location – Phase 1
- BIF Programme: Knockbreda Parish Church Hall, Hanwood project, Colin Glen Trust - new tourism and recreation facilities totalling £4m at the forest park including Ireland's first Alpine Toboggan and the longest zipline in Ireland at nearly 700m; Lagan Gateway - £5m for a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections. Bridge completed. Work underway to develop Phase 2; new facilities for H&W Welders FC including new 3G pitch and pavilion
- SOF Programme: Belfast Orange Hall Museum
- LIF Programme: St. John GAC, Woodvale Cricket Club, West Belfast Orange Hall, St. Matthew's Parish Church Hall

3.3 Projects Underway:

- LTP Avoniel - £8m new facility at Avoniel focused on outdoor leisure provision – due for completion Autumn 2021
- City Cemetery Heritage Project - £2.3m scheme to protect, enhance and promote the cemetery's rich heritage.

- **St Comgall's** – £7m restoration of former school to create a multi-use community hub
- **LTP Templemore Baths** – £17m restoration of Templemore Baths with a focus on heritage and spa provision
- **Forth Meadow Community Greenway** – an ambitious and transformational £5m scheme which will see the development of a new 12km urban greenway in West Belfast.
- **Páirc Nua Chollann (New Park in Colin)** – open space
- **Boodles Dam** – works to the Dam and environmental improvements
- **Belfast Zoo** - health & safety works and improvements at the zoo
- **Sports, leisure and tourism projects** - Blanchflower Playing Fields, TAGIT Boxing Club, Berlin Swifts FC changing pavilion, Roddy McCorley Heritage Centre
- **Community projects** –VOPIC (Voice of Young People in Care) – refurbishment and upgrade, Sailortown/St Joseph's upgrades, Star Neighbourhood Centre refurbishments, Holylands environmental improvements, Mornington Community Centre upgrades, Lisnasharragh Community Schools project, Walkway Community Association, Prokick community gym
- **Corporate projects** – range of IT projects to ensure business continuity and ongoing Fleet replacement programme

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

3.5 **Contracts Awarded – Quarter 2**

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

Finance and resource implications have been identified within the stage approval process for individual projects.

3.7 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee noted the report.

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
The appointment of delivery agent(s) to provide technical support, advice and research and economic analysis support service as part of Belfast Labour Market partnership	Up to 4 years 6 months	£225,000	A Reid	The purpose of the partnership is to make employability and skills interventions more effective and support an inclusive approach to growth in the city.
The appointment of delivery agent for Gateway to Choices service as part	Up to 4 years 6 months	£800,000	A Reid	The purpose of the partnership is to make employability

of Belfast Labour Market partnership.				and skills interventions more effective and support an inclusive approach to growth in the city.
Appointment of delivery agent to ensure the delivery of Pathway to Enterprise Programme	Up to 3 years	£200,000	A Reid	The programme will support those who are economically inactive/those who are out of work to start a business or build skills to enter employment.
Replacement of the sports floor at Belvoir Activity Centre & Cregagh Youth & Community Centre	Up to 4 weeks	£40,000	S Grimes	Included in planned maintenance programme 2021. Back logged work.
Replacement Palo Alto Firewalls	Up to 3 year	£203,000	R Cregan	The procurement and commissioning of 2 new Palo Alto Firewalls, with the redesign of the council's IT Network Topology including moving from a dual to a single skin firewall
Multi supplier framework for external support services to deliver the Renewed Ambition Programme 'RAP'	Up to 4 years	Up to £1,000,000	A Reid	External support is required to assist with delivering RAP moving forward, including assisting with securing sponsorship, stakeholder management and engagement, programme development and delivery. The overall cost of delivering RAP will be covered by a programme budget raised from private and public sector partners, which includes a BCC

				contribution of £80,000 for the 2022 programme. It is anticipated that external funding will form the majority of this overall budget.
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Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Cloud based Content Management System (CMS) to manage content which will be displayed via screens and workstations at the new City Cemetery visitor centre	£42,000	S Grimes	Legato
The implementation of a centralised Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) to protect IT equipment from power outages and spikes in the Cecil Ward Building	£39,139	R Cregan	Black Box Network Services
To provide a detailed carbon reduction plan (mini stern) for the Belfast Region	£45,000	J Tully	Professor Andy Gouldson Leeds University

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Supplier
T1862 - Peace IV Young Advocates	Up to 3 years 5 months	Additional 4 months	S Toland / R Black	Cooperation Ireland
T1858a Peace IV Connecting Communities	Up to 3 years 2 months	Additional 3 months	S Toland / R Black	NI Alternatives Limited

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
T2070 - Bus internal & external advertising	Up to 18 months	£140,000	J Tully	Global Outdoor
T2071 - Advertising at bus stops	Up to 18 months	£140,000	J Tully	Clear Channel
The provision of de-icing and snow-clearance services (including outdoor cleaning activities)	Up to 6 months	£120,000	S Toland / R Black	Patterson Outdoor Cleaning Solutions
Re-roofing Smithfield Market rear car park elevation	Up to 4 weeks	£37,400	S Grimes	Robinsons Roofing Ltd

Equality and Good Relations

Language Strategy: Elected Member Working Group – Draft Terms of Reference

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd April, it had agreed to establish an All-Party Working Group to take forward the Council's Language Strategy.

The City Solicitor reported that officers had met on a number of times since then, in preparation for the inaugural meeting of the Working Group in November and that nominations had been sought from each of the Political Parties. The Working Group would be asked at that meeting to agree its Terms of Reference and would be provided with an overview of the Language Strategy. A facilitated workshop would be held in December to enable the Working Group to agree the overall approach for taking forward the Strategy.

He pointed out that the officers involved in this work were also co-ordinating the public consultation on the Dual Language Street Sign Policy and the accompanying Equality Impact Assessment during this period, which could affect timelines due to resourcing issues. The Elected Member Language Strategy Working Group would, he added, be kept updated on the progress of this consultation and any emerging issues effecting the planned timelines.

He went on to state that the Department for Communities had recently established an Irish Language Strategy Expert Advisory Panel and an Ulster-Scots Language, Heritage and Culture Strategy Expert Advisory Panel to advise the Department on the direction and development of two new strategies. This work would be cognisant of developments in this area and the Council's Irish Language Officer had already been invited to engage with the Irish Language Strategy Expert Advisory Panel.

He concluded by recommending that the Committee approve the following Terms of Reference for the Working Group on the Language Strategy and endorse the proposed approach:

**Draft Terms of Reference for the Elected Member
Language Strategy Working Group**

Introduction and Purpose

A Language Strategy Member Working Group has been established to provide Members with a forum within which to discuss the implementation of the Belfast City Council Language Strategy 2018-2023 and agree action plans in relation to the languages in the Strategy.

Whilst the Working Group will not be a decision-making body, it will be required to report into the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on progress against the strategy and associated action plans.

The Strategy has 5 strands: Irish; Ulster Scots; Sign Languages; New Communities' Languages and Languages and Communications for People with Disabilities. The Strategy commits to examining the use of languages in the following areas:

- Documents
- Communications
- Translation and interpretation
- Signage and Branding
- Council meetings
- Development of Website/social media
- Media
- Support for the community
- Support for schools
- Council staff

Terms of Reference

The Language Strategy Member Working Group Terms of Reference will be:

- to provide elected members with a forum to discuss the impact of the languages in the Strategy across the above areas of work;
- to support the development of action plans in relation to the Language Strategy;
- to seek updates and monitor the delivery of work emanating from the action plans;
- to oversee the investigation of emerging policy development in relation to the Language Strategy; and
- to report on progress to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a regular basis through reports and minutes of meetings

Membership

- All political party groupings should be represented
- Each political party grouping should have one representative

Ways of Working

- The Working Group will decide on arrangements for chairing the meetings.
- The Working Group will meet quarterly or as required

Governance

The Working Group will not have decision-making powers. The minutes of its meetings will be presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Request to fly the Transgender Flag to mark Transgender Day of Remembrance

The Committee granted approval for the Transgender flag to be flown on the City Hall on 20th November and on that date each year thereafter to mark Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 11th October, including the recommendations:

- to note and agree the following updates from the ongoing delivery of the Good Relations Action Plan:
 - i. to note all updates in relation to the PEACE IV Programme;
 - ii. to note that £15,000 had been allocated to Falls Community Council (as a lead organisation in partnership with a number of other organisations in the area) through the Strategic Intervention Programme within Programme BCC10 of the District Council Good Relations Programme Action Plan;
 - iii. to note that up to £5,000 would be allocated to Finaghy Women's Group and Belvoir Area Residents Group from the same Programme in the District Council Good Relations Programme Action Plan for community interventions;
 - iv. to note that Suffolk Community Forum, as a lead partner for a number of Men's Sheds, had been awarded £12,000 for the delivery of a programme between now and March 2022, to increase cross community contact through community gardens and men's sheds, as part of BCC7 programme in the Action Plan;
 - v. to agree to grant funding of £1,500.00 under BCC7 – Shared Community for a Christmas event with Holy Family Youth Club and Mountcollyer Youth Club;

- vi. to agree to receive a presentation from the Commission for Victims and Survivors on its current work; and
- vii. to agree that a briefing session be organised in conjunction with the British Red Cross on current issues relating to Refugee and Asylum Seekers.

**LGBTQ+ Hub for Belfast –
Feasibility and Scoping Study**

The Committee acceded to a request from HERe NI, The Rainbow Project, Cara-Friend and Transgender NI, for the Council to support a feasibility and scoping study for the establishment of an LGBTQ+ hub in the City, with the cost, as yet unknown, to be met potentially through the feasibility fund.

Operational Issues

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 14th October.

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

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 28th 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 8th October, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2021 EVENTS						
Pharmacy Forum	25th November 2021	Rewarding Excellence Awards celebrating excellence in pharmacy profession and fellowships awarded for outstanding contributions.	B & C	No (charity)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

		<p>Numbers attending – 100</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>				
2022 EVENTS						
<p>Libra Events on behalf of Royal Television Society</p>	<p>25th May 2022</p>	<p>The Royal Television Society Northern Ireland Programme Awards 2022 Annual awards event to showcase the best programmes and the best people making a positive contribution to Northern Ireland's creative industries.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 300 to 400</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social</i></p>	<p>B & C</p>	<p>No (charity)</p>	<p>No hospitality</p>	<p>Approve No Charge No hospitality</p>

		<i>distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i>				
Community Trade Union	31st May 2022	<p>Community Trade Union Biennial Delegate Conference Gala Dinner as part of a conference taking place at the ICC.</p> <p>Numbers attending – 300</p>	A & B	No <i>£825 waived due to links with Visit Belfast</i>	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Commonwealth Games Ireland	27th June 2022	<p>TeamNI Celebration Dinner to recognise and celebrate NI athletes before they represent NI in Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games</p> <p>Numbers attending – 400</p> <p><i>* Numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of this event.</i></p>	B & C	No due to nature of event	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

British Institute of Cleaning Science	26th August 2022	Cleaning Operative of the Year Awards – awards ceremony celebrating excellent industry standards in the province. Numbers attending – 100	B & C	Charge £115	No Hospitality	Approve Charge £115 No hospitality
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Minutes of 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 6th October.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Fertility Treatment Leave

At the request of Councillor Murphy, the Committee considered the following proposal:

"This Council:

- i. recognises that 1 in 6 couples across these islands experience infertility and that receiving treatment such as IVF can bring with it stress and pressure;
- ii. acknowledges that the World Health Organisation recognises infertility as a disability; and
- iii. further acknowledges that Council staff at present are having to take unpaid leave or annual leave to receive treatment, which is unacceptable.

In view of this, the Council will seek to implement a new leave provision for staff, which caters for those who need leave for fertility treatment and offers the same protections as sick leave.

The Council will include in any such provision a safety net period of two weeks paid leave following any unsuccessful treatment."

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3770

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Friday, 22nd October, 2021

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion and agreed also, at the request of Councillor Murphy, that the report to be submitted to a future meeting on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed be extended to include menopause leave.

Illumination of City Hall for the
Northern Ireland Centenary

The Committee noted, upon the advice of the City Solicitor, that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Chairperson