

# Council

## MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held Remotely via Microsoft Teams on Thursday, 1st April, 2021  
at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

### Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCusker) and Councillor M. Kelly.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillor Verner declared an interest in relation to the motion on a 10 Per Cent Pay increase for Council Workers, on the basis that her husband was employed by the Council, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed.

Councillor Hussey declared an interest in respect of the motion on a 10 Per Cent Pay increase for Council Workers, in that he was involved in the national pay negotiations, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being considered.

Councillor Brooks declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading "Brexit and Port Health – Transition Update", on the basis that he was employed by Mr. Gordon Lyons MLA, who had acted for a time as Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. However, as that item did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in respect of the motion on Mullaghglass Landfill Site – Legal Action, in so far as his employer, the Public Health Agency, had an interest in this issue, and left the meeting whilst the motion was being discussed.

Councillor Bunting declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading “Bonfire Approach 2021”, in that she acted as the Secretary to the Belvoir Area Residents’ Group, which had applied for the micro grant and cultural leadership programme funding, and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to the motion on Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service, on the basis that he was on the Board of the Ligoniel Improvement Association, which hosted the Tribunal Service, but did not leave the meeting as he considered his interest to be non-pecuniary.

Councillor Newton declared an interest in respect of the motion on Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures, in that his employer worked for the Bank of Ireland, and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Walsh declared an interest in relation to the item contained within the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, under the heading “James Connolly Heritage Trail Sign”, on the basis that he was involved in that initiative. However, as the matter did not become the subject of discussion, he was not required to leave the meeting.

### **Minutes of the Council**

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey),  
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st March be taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Official Announcements**

The Lord Mayor, together with a number of Members, extended their condolences to Councillor Spratt on the recent death of his father, Mr. Jimmy Spratt, a former MLA and Castlereagh Borough Councillor.

The Council agreed, at the request of Councillor Groogan, to extend its condolences to the families of Stacey Knell, Karen McClean and Sarah Everard, who had recently lost their lives as a result of violent attacks.

Alderman Kingston highlighted the fact that Mr. Gerry Copeland, the former City Events Manager, had retired recently from the Council and, together with Alderman Rodgers, highlighted the significant role which he had played in delivering many high-profile events in the City.

Councillor McReynolds paid tribute to Ms. Yolanda Fusciardi, the former Dog Control Manager, and Mr. Stephen Stewart, the former Estates Officer, who had also retired recently.

The Lord Mayor confirmed that he would be writing to these and other former officers who had retired recently, thanking them for their service and wishing them well for the future.

### **Change of Membership**

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Alliance Party indicating that it wished to replace Councillor Mulholland with the High Sheriff (Councillor Long) on the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

The Council approved the change.

### **Minutes**

#### **Strategic Policy and Resources Committee**

Moved by Councillor Black,  
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

(The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) withdrew from the meeting during consideration of the following minute, on the basis that it made reference, amongst other things, to a letter being forwarded to his wife, the Justice Minister.)

### **Amendment**

#### **Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations**

Moved by Councillor Canavan,  
Seconded by Councillor Baker and

Resolved – That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading “Motion: Black Lives Matter Demonstrations” be amended to provide that:

- i. the letter to be forwarded to the Police Service of Northern Ireland should also:
  - (a) highlight the Council's disappointment at the Chief Constable's assertion at a public meeting of the Northern Ireland Policing Board earlier that day that the Police Service, on the basis of separate legal advice,

could not rescind a Fixed Penalty Notice once it had reached the court and that it would be a matter for the individual concerned to contest it or for the Public Prosecution Service to withdraw it if it was deemed to have been issued inappropriately; and

- (b) call upon the Police Service to reconsider its position on the matter; and
- ii. the letters to be forwarded to the Minister of Health, the Minister for Justice and the Northern Ireland Executive's Adherence Group should make reference also to the Chief Constable's comments.

### **Amendment**

#### **Alleygating Programme – Phase 5**

Moved by Councillor Groogan,  
Seconded by Councillor McKeown and

Resolved – That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading "Alleygating Programme – Phase 5", be amended to provide that a list of criteria be drawn up against which Members will assess potential locations for alleygates in Phase 5, as an interim measure, while awaiting the outcome of the full review of Phases 1-4. This may include but not be limited to issues of crime and/or antisocial behaviour in the area, street cleansing and fly tipping issues and the potential effectiveness of gates. This list will be brought to and agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in advance of potential locations for alleygating being brought to the Area Working Groups. Lists of potential locations which have been identified by Members previously will also be included for consideration in Phase 5.

### **Amendment**

#### **Revision to Scheme of Allowances**

Moved by Councillor Carson,  
Seconded by Councillor Lyons,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading "Revision to the Scheme of Allowances", be rejected and, accordingly, the Council agrees to an increase only in the rate of Dependants' Carers' Allowance.

On a recorded vote, twenty-five Members voted for the amendment and thirty-two against and it was declared lost.

<b><u>For 25</u></b>	<b><u>Against 32</u></b>
Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Gormley, Heading, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McKeown, McLaughlin, Murphy and Walsh.	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Flynn, Groogan, Hanvey, Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, McAllister, McCullough, McDonough-Brown, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Newton, Nicholl, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt and Verner.

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the Council granted approval for the City Solicitor to discuss with the Department for Communities the potential for establishing an independent decision-making process around the Scheme of Allowances.

**Request for Matter to be taken back to Committee**

**Bonfire Approach 2021**

Councillor Beattie requested that the Chairperson agree to the minute under the heading "Bonfire Approach 2021" being taken back to the Committee to enable further information to be obtained.

The Chairperson approved the request but it was declined by the Council.

**Amendment**

**Bonfire Approach 2021**

Moved by Councillor Beattie,  
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, under the heading "Bonfire Approach 2021", be taken back to the Committee to enable further information to be obtained.

On a vote, twenty-six Members voted for the amendment and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

### **Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing addition and amendment, the minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 19th March, were approved and adopted.

### **People and Communities Committee**

Moved by Councillor Baker,  
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 2nd and 9th March be approved and adopted.

### **City Growth and Regeneration Committee**

Moved by Councillor Brooks,  
Seconded by Councillor T. Kelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 3rd March, be approved and adopted.

### **Request for Matter to be Taken Back for Further Consideration**

#### **Update on Tourism**

At the request of Councillor Hanvey, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Update on Tourism" be taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

### **Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing omission, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 3rd March, were approved and adopted.

### **Licensing Committee**

Moved by Councillor Donnelly,  
Seconded by Councillor Magee and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 10th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Planning Committee**

Moved by Councillor Hussey,  
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Pre-Determination Hearing of 23rd February and the Planning Committee of 16th March, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Stakeholders' Committee**

Moved by Alderman Haire,  
Seconded by Councillor McAteer and

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 4th March, be approved and adopted.

**Brexit Committee**

Moved by Councillor Flynn,  
Seconded by Councillor Walsh

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 11th March be approved and adopted.

**Independent Economic Study**

Councillor Walsh requested that the Council agree to commission an independent economic study to explore opportunities on how best to exploit the unique position which Belfast occupied currently. The study should include, but not be limited to, harnessing economic opportunities on the island of Ireland, fostering new trading and economic relationships with other nations in the European Single Market and maintaining the valuable East/West relationship.

The Chief Executive explained that, since the proposal would place an additional financial burden upon the Council, there was a requirement to refer it initially to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

Accordingly, the Council agreed that a report on the potential for commissioning the economic study be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. It agreed also that a briefing session be held, to which all Members would be invited, to receive an update on the work which had already been undertaken by Council officers and other agencies on that issue and that relevant economic experts be invited to contribute to the discussion.

### **Adoption of Minutes**

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the proceedings of the Brexit Committee of 11th March, were approved and adopted.

### **Motions**

#### **Presentation to Shared Island Unit/All-Party Working Group**

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

“This Council will write to the Irish Government and seek representation from this Council to present to the Shared Island Unit on matters including, but not limited to, planning for constitutional change, All-Island Economy, Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor, Brexit and the Irish Protocol and an All-Island approach to the climate crisis.

As the second largest city on the island of Ireland, our citizens should have representation on any determination of their future.

Accordingly, to inform any presentation to the Shared Island Unit, this Council will create an Elected Member working group for the purpose of exploring how Belfast can establish and foster stronger social, economic and political linkages on the island of Ireland and how it can work collaboratively to avail of opportunities or deal with strategic issues and challenges to the benefit of our citizens.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Donnelly.

At the request of Councillor McAllister, the proposer agreed:

- i. to amend the first paragraph of his motion to read as follows:

This Council will write to the Irish Government and seek representation from this Council to present to the Shared Island Unit on matters including, but not limited to, the economy, the Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor, Brexit and the Northern Irish Protocol and an All-Island approach to the climate crisis; and

- ii. to add the words “without a prejudiced outcome” to the end of the second paragraph.

On a recorded vote, thirty-nine Members voted for the motion, as amended and set out below, and nineteen against and it was declared carried:

“This Council will write to the Irish Government and seek representation from this Council to present to the Shared Island Unit on matters including, but not limited to, the economy, the Belfast to Dublin Economic Corridor, Brexit and the Northern Irish Protocol and an All-Island approach to the climate crisis.

As the second largest city on the island of Ireland, our citizens should have representation on any determination of their future, without a prejudiced outcome.

Accordingly, to inform any presentation to the Shared Island Unit, this Council will create an Elected Member working group for the purpose of exploring how Belfast can establish and foster stronger social, economic and political linkages on the island of Ireland and how it can work collaboratively to avail of opportunities or deal with strategic issues and challenges to the benefit of our citizens.”

<b><u>For 39</u></b>	<b><u>Against 19</u></b>
The High Sheriff (Councillor Long); and Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, De Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, Heading, Howard, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, Nicholl, O’Hara, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	The Lord Mayor (Alderman McCoubrey); Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Haire, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Hussey, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, McCullough, Newton, Pankhurst, Spratt and Verner.

**Proposed Bank of Ireland Closures**

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

“This Council:

- notes the plans announced by Bank of Ireland to close 103 branches across the island of Ireland, including three in South Belfast;
- notes the expectation set by the Financial Conduct Authority that banks should assess customer needs and consider the availability and provision of alternative arrangements where closures are planned;
- notes the concern expressed by the Financial Conduct Authority that it may be harder than usual to reach all customers under the current restrictions and engage with them on closure proposals effectively;

- supports the call from the Financial Services Union that there should be no closures of branches during the pandemic and its call for a moratorium on closures until the end of 2022; and
- agrees to write to the CEO of Bank of Ireland to call for such a moratorium.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Gormley.

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

**Violence against Women and Girls  
Strategy - Raise Your Voice Training**

In accordance with notice on the agenda Councillor Mulholland proposed:

“This Council notes with sadness the recent murders of Stacey Knell and Karen McClean, along with Sarah Everard in London, adding to the hundreds of women and trans women across these islands who have lost their lives in gender-related attacks, where a man has been convicted or charged as the primary perpetrator.

We send our sympathies to their families and loved ones and we make clear our anger that these women were taken from them.

We are deeply concerned by the rising numbers of violent acts perpetrated against women and we are committed to doing everything within our powers to make Belfast more safe, fair and equal for all women.

The Council welcomes the recent developments made by the Minister for Justice regarding a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and so the Council agrees to write to the Northern Ireland Executive to ask that an open, transparent discussion and consultation about what needs to be in the strategy takes place. It is imperative that the Executive listens to the voices of women and girls to provide direction and meet their needs within such a strategy.

The Council will work with voluntary organisations, such as Women’s Aid, to promote the wider campaign to address violent acts perpetrated against women.

We will ensure that Belfast City Council has an up-to-date Anti-Harassment Policy in place for all Council facilities and Council-run events. The Council believes that this should set a precedent for all hospitality venues, workplaces, and events within this City to do the same.

The Council will issue a commitment that Elected Representatives and officers of all genders will engage in training delivered by Raise Your Voice on the realities facing victims of sexual harassment and gender violence.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Groogan.

At the request of Alderman Copeland, the proposer agreed to amend her motion to provide for the inclusion of the words “and girls” after the word “women” in the third and fifth paragraphs.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the Council and passed:

“This Council notes with sadness the recent murders of Stacey Knell and Karen McClean, along with Sarah Everard in London, adding to the hundreds of women and trans women across these islands who have lost their lives in gender-related attacks, where a man has been convicted or charged as the primary perpetrator.

We send our sympathies to their families and loved ones and we make clear our anger that these women were taken from them.

We are deeply concerned by the rising numbers of violent acts perpetrated against women and girls and we are committed to doing everything within our powers to make Belfast more safe, fair and equal for all women and girls.

The Council welcomes the recent developments made by the Minister for Justice regarding a Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy and so the Council agrees to write to the Northern Ireland Executive to ask that an open, transparent discussion and consultation about what needs to be in the strategy takes place. It is imperative that the Executive listens to the voices of women and girls to provide direction and meet their needs within such a strategy.

The Council will work with voluntary organisations, such as Women’s Aid, to promote the wider campaign to address violent acts perpetrated against women and girls.

We will ensure that Belfast City Council has an up-to-date Anti-Harassment Policy in place for all Council facilities and Council-run events. The Council believes that this should set a precedent for all hospitality venues, workplaces, and events within this City to do the same.

The Council will issue a commitment that Elected Representatives and officers of all genders will engage in training delivered by Raise Your Voice on the realities facing victims of sexual harassment and gender violence.”

### **Legislation to Tackle the Third Party Sale of Pups**

(The High Sheriff (Councillor Long) withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this motion, on the basis that a proposed amendment called upon the Council to write to his wife, the Justice Minister.)

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

“This Council expresses concerns regarding the illegal and cruel practice of puppy farming, the smuggling of puppies through the Port of Belfast and calls for the introduction of legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups and to strengthen the powers of local Councils to address the issue.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Bunting.

At the request of Councillor Flynn, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to provide for the replacement of everything after the word “Belfast” with the following:

The Council reaffirms its support for and acknowledges the important work of operation Delphin, the multi-agency approach to tackling the illegal puppy smuggling industry throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Furthermore, the Council commits to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Justice to:

- reiterate our call for the introduction of legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups and kittens;
- seek the strengthening of powers for local councils, port authorities and the Police Service to address the issues outlined including, but not limited to; powers to seize pups at the ports without proper documentation and powers to issue prohibition notices on unlicensed breeding establishments;
- ask that more resources be put in to checks on documentation for consignments including pups travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain;
- seek the creation of a central database of licenced breeders across all councils, with unique identifiers given to each breeder;
- seek changes to microchipping, including a new unique number for pups related to their breeder, so that pups can be traced back to their point of origin, and a point of responsibility; and
- seek support for the creation of a public information campaign, raising awareness of the impact of puppy farming and the animal welfare issues surrounding this cruel trade.”

At the request of Councillor McKeown, the proposer agreed to amend his motion further to provide that the letters to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Justice include a request for a register to be established of persons who had been convicted of animal cruelty.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out below, was put to the Council and passed:

“This Council expresses concerns regarding the illegal and cruel practice of puppy farming, the smuggling of puppies through the Port of Belfast.

The Council reaffirms its support for and acknowledges the important work of operation Delphin, the multi-agency approach to tackling the illegal puppy smuggling industry throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Furthermore, the Council commits to write to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister for Justice to:

- reiterate our call for the introduction of legislation to tackle the third party sale of pups and kittens;
- seek the strengthening of powers for local councils, port authorities and the Police Service to address the issues outlined including, but not limited to; powers to seize pups at the ports without proper documentation and powers to issue prohibition notices on unlicensed breeding establishments;
- ask that more resources be put in to checks on documentation for consignments including pups travelling from Northern Ireland to Great Britain;
- seek the creation of a central database of licenced breeders across all councils, with unique identifiers given to each breeder;
- seek changes to microchipping, including a new unique number for pups related to their breeder, so that pups can be traced back to their point of origin, and a point of responsibility;
- seek support for the creation of a public information campaign, raising awareness of the impact of puppy farming and the animal welfare issues surrounding this cruel trade; and
- request that a register be established of persons who had been convicted of animal cruelty.”

### **Mullaghglass Landfill Site – Legal Action**

Prior to presenting his motion, Councillor Baker was granted approval by the Council to insert the words “and the site operator” after the word “Agency” in the initial paragraph of the motion.

Accordingly, in accordance with notice on the agenda, he proposed:

“This Council must immediately prepare legal action against the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the site operator for their dereliction of duty in protecting the rights of citizens around the Mullaghglass landfill site.

Dangerous odours are having a negative impact on the quality of life of our citizens who live within a large circumference of the Mullaghglass landfill site.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has refused to take action against the landfill operators and, as a result, citizens of both Belfast and Lisburn are having to endure the daily effluvium of raw waste.

Clean air should be afforded to everyone, we must act now.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Walsh.

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

### **Support for Sign Languages Action and the Addition of Sign Languages to School Curricula**

Prior to presenting his motion, Councillor McMullan was granted approval by the Council to amend the final paragraph to provide that a letter be forwarded also to the Minister for Education.

Accordingly, in accordance with notice on the agenda and with the assistance of Ms. J. Beck, a registered sign-language interpreter, he proposed:

“This Council notes that 15th – 21st March was Sign Language Week, timed with the anniversary of the UK Government formally recognising British Sign Language (BSL) as a language in its own right on 18th March, 2003. However, in 2021 neither BSL nor Irish Sign Language have legal status in Northern Ireland nor are sign languages part of school curricula.

This means at present, that deaf people must rely on the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act (NI) (1995) to secure reasonable adjustments via sign language provision. In order to do so, deaf people are required to identify as ‘disabled’, in sharp contrast to their right to recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This Council believes that there is a need to create a more accessible and inclusive society in Northern Ireland, through greater learning of sign languages and awareness of Deaf culture.

It further notes this Council's previous support for the Belfast Statement on Mental Health and Deafness following the 6th World Congress, which met in Belfast in September 2014, to address issues around equal rights for deaf people in mental health care under the CRPD and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Noting the rights of deaf people to recognition as a cultural and linguistic minority under the CRPD, this Council expresses its support for the introduction of a Sign Languages Act for Northern Ireland. Further noting Article 24(b) of the CRPD that requires the State to facilitate the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community, the Council expresses its support for sign languages to be added to school curricula to ensure that all children learn from the earliest opportunity.

Therefore, the Council will write to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Education to ask when the New Decade, New Approach commitment to a Sign Language Act will be brought forward and further asks that this legislation includes provision for sign languages to be added to the Key Stage 1 and 2 Curriculum, with schools equipped to deliver these courses, as well as the introduction of sign languages as a GCSE for secondary school pupils."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

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

### **10 Per Cent Pay Increase for Council Workers**

(Upon the amendment to this motion being moved, Councillor Spratt declared an interest, on the basis that he was employed in the public sector, and left the meeting for the remainder of the discussion.)

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Matt Collins proposed:

"Over the last year, councils have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local Government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is.

But the pandemic has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income and the Government has failed to provide the full amount of promised support.

Local Government workers have kept our communities safe throughout the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health and deliver functioning services during this difficult time.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 23 per cent of their value since 2009/10. At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity.

The funding gap caused by Covid-19 will make local government employment even more precarious. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Westminster Government were to fully fund the unions' 2021 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

The Council believes that:

- our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need, and ensure services continue to function. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services would not be deliverable. Local government workers deserve a proper real-term pay increase; and
- the Government should take responsibility to fully fund this increase, it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding streams have greatly suffered and who have not been offered adequate support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- support the pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite with NIPSA support on behalf of council and school workers, for a substantial increase with a minimum 10 per cent uplift in April 2021;
- call on the Local Government Association to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim;
- write to the Chancellor and Secretary of State to call for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government; and
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for its pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council can support the campaign; including encouraging all local government workers to join a trade union."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Michael Collins.

At the request of Councillor Heading, the proposer agreed to amend his motion to provide for the deletion of everything after the words “Therefore, the Council resolves to” and the insertion of the following:

- support the pay claim submitted by Trade Unions representing all public sector staff for a substantial increase;
- write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for a pay increase for public sector workers to be funded with new money from central government;
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the Council can support the campaign; and
- encourage all staff to join a union.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was put to the Council and passed:

“Over the last year, councils have led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local Government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is.

But the pandemic has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income and the Government has failed to provide the full amount of promised support.

Local Government workers have kept our communities safe throughout the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health and deliver functioning services during this difficult time.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 23 per cent of their value since 2009/10. At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity.

The funding gap caused by Covid-19 will make local government employment even more precarious. There has been a disproportionate impact on women, with women making up more than three-quarters of the local government workforce.

Recent research shows that if the Westminster Government were to fully fund the unions' 2021 pay claim, around half of the money would be recouped thanks to increased tax revenue, reduced expenditure on benefits, and increased consumer spending in the local economy.

The Council believes that:

- our workers are public service super-heroes. They keep our communities clean and safe, look after those in need, and ensure services continue to function. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services would not be deliverable. Local government workers deserve a proper real-term pay increase; and
- the Government should take responsibility to fully fund this increase, it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding streams have greatly suffered and who have not been offered adequate support throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- support the pay claim submitted by Trade Unions representing all public sector staff for a substantial increase;
- to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to call for a pay increase for public sector workers to be funded with new money from central government;
- meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the Council can support the campaign; and
- encourage all staff to join a union."

### **Standing Order 23**

At this point in the meeting, the Lord Mayor drew the Council's attention to the fact that, in accordance with Standing Order 23, any meeting of the Council which has lasted continuously for five hours shall stand adjourned unless the Council shall by resolution decide to continue sitting.

The Council resolved to continue to sit to deal with the remaining business.

### **Funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, the Lord Mayor called upon Councillor Ferguson to propose the following motion, which was being seconded by Councillor Matt Collins:

“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The Council is deeply concerned with the lack of core funding offered to this service over the past year and notes that the recent Department for Communities budget did not include a necessary funding package to retain this vital service.

The Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately release core funding for this service of £256,769 per annum, in order to meet the growing need and pressure that the service faces.

Until then, the Council pledges to retain Belfast City Council funding for this project, through its reserves if necessary, until other sources of funding are secured. Accordingly, the Council agrees to call an emergency meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and, subsequently, a special meeting of the Council to discuss the logistics of this proposal.”

Councillor Ferguson informed the Council that, since her motion had been submitted, a meeting had taken place between the Council, the Department for Communities and the Citywide Tribunal Service to discuss the Service’s funding requirements. She pointed out that the Department for Communities had offered some funding, however, that had fallen short of what was required to meet the Service’s costs until the end of the current financial year. With that in mind, she sought and was granted approval by the Council to amend her motion to read as follows:

“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The Council is deeply concerned with the lack of core funding offered to this service over the past year and notes that the recent Department for Communities budget did not include a necessary funding package to retain this vital service.

The Council, therefore, calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately release core funding for this service of £256,769 per annum, in order to meet the growing need and pressure that the service faces.

Until then, the Council will provide £128,500 through its reserves, if necessary and refers the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”

At the request of Councillor Lyons, the proposer agreed to amend her motion further to provide that the Council seek an urgent meeting with the Minister for Communities, with a view to securing the long term future of the Citywide Tribunal Service.

After discussion, the motion, as amended and set out below, was put to the Council and passed:

“This Council notes with alarm that the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service once again faces closure due to a lack of funding.

The Council is deeply concerned with the lack of core funding offered to this service over the past year and notes that the recent Department for Communities budget did not include a necessary funding package to retain this vital service.

The Council, therefore, calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately release core funding for the Citywide Tribunal Service of £256,769 per annum, in order to meet the growing need and pressure which the service faces and calls for an urgent meeting with the Minister, with a view to securing its long term future.

Until then, the Council will provide £128,500 through its reserves, if necessary and refers the matter to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”

Lord Mayor  
Chairperson