

**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**



**Belfast
City Council**

25th February, 2022

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

The Council will meet in hybrid form, both in the Council Chamber, City Hall, and via Microsoft Teams, on Tuesday, 1st March, 2022 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the business noted below.

You are requested to attend.

Yours faithfully,

RONAN CREGAN

Deputy Chief Executive

AGENDA:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council Meetings (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
6. Changes to Committees and Outside Bodies
7. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 58)
8. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 59 - 74)
9. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 75 - 104)
10. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 105 - 116)
11. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 117 - 152)

12. Minutes of the Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd Shareholders Committee (Pages 153 - 154)
13. Minutes of the Standards and Business Committee (Pages 155 - 156)
14. Motions to be debated by the Council
 - (a) The Samaritans (Pages 157 - 158)
 - (b) Mountainview Centre (Pages 159 - 160)

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on
Tuesday, 1st February, 2022 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor;
(Councillor Nicholl) (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire);
Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey,
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, Howard, Hussey,
Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Long, Lyons,
Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer,
McCabe, McCullough, McCusker,
McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin,
McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy,
Newton, O'Hara, Pankhurst, Smyth, Spratt, Verner
and Walsh.

Summons

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Councillors Heading and Whyte.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Pankhurst declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was a PhD student and a teaching assistant at Queen's University Belfast and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor Howard declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that she was employed by the Belfast Metropolitan College and that she would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor Spratt declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was an employee of the Northern Regional College and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor Hutchinson declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was on the Board of Governors of the Northern Regional College and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

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Councillor Hussey declared an interest in item 14a, Motion – Proposed Cuts in Higher Education, in that he was a tutor at Queen’s University Belfast and that he would therefore not take part in the discussion or vote on the item.

Councillor McCabe declared an interest in Item 7, namely, “A City Imagining Cultural Strategy – Update on St. Patrick’s Day Programme”, in that she was an employee of Féile an Phobail, and if the issue arose that she would leave and not take part in the discussion or vote.

Minutes of the Council Meeting

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

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Monthly meeting of the Council of 10th and 17th January be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Condolences

A number of Members expressed sympathy and condolences to Councillor Carson on the recent death of his mother.

Congratulations

A Member advised the Council that a contestant from Belfast, Blu Hydrangea, would be competing in the upcoming television series, RuPaul’s Drag Race: UK versus the World, and wished her all the best for the competition.

Sympathy

A Member advised the Council that, regretfully, another woman had lost her life in Poland due to the country’s strict abortion laws.

Councillor Magennis

A Member advised the Council that it was the last Council meeting for Councillor Magennis, who would be stepping down later in the month to take care of his family. A number of Members wished Councillor Magennis well.

Monthly Letter

The Lord Mayor read out a letter from Ms. Mollie-Rose McCartan Regan, a child who lived in Stranmillis and who had written to the Lord Mayor as she was concerned about a number of trees which had recently been cut down along a lane in the Stranmillis area.

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Minutes of Committee Meetings

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Groogan
Seconded by Councillor McAllister

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st January, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Flying of the Union Flag

Moved by Councillor McAllister
Seconded by Alderman Kingston and

Resolved - That the Council agrees not to fly the Union Flag on the City Hall on 19th February, 2022, to mark the birthday of Prince Andrew, and, instead, to fly the Union flag on 1st July, to mark the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Amendment

Motion - Playing Pitches in Belfast

A Member requested that the report which was to be submitted to a future meeting would include consideration of lighting at some of the pitches.

Amendment

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2022-23

Moved by Councillor Beattie
Seconded by Councillor McAllister and

Resolved – That the decision on the setting of the District Rate 2022-23 be deferred and, unless the People Before Profit Party offers proposals for striking the rate by 4th February, 2022, the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee shall stand ratified. If such proposals are made, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee shall be convened and, thereafter, a Special Meeting of the Council to consider the same.

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**Local Government Ability to Hold
Remote Meetings – Call for Evidence**

In response to a Member's comments, the City Solicitor confirmed that the consultation was open until 15th February and that a link to submit comments would be circulated to the Members.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the aforementioned amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st January were approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Cobain
Seconded by Councillor Smyth

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 11th and 25th January, subject to the omission of the minute of 11th January, under the heading “Erection of Dual Language Street Sign at Clifton Street”, which was subject to a valid call-in requisition and was not before the Council for approval, be approved and adopted.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy
Seconded by Councillor Maskey

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th January be approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Donnelly
Seconded by T. Kelly,

Resolved – That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Carson
Seconded by Councillor Hanvey

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Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 18th January, 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. Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor McCabe
Seconded by Councillor McAteer

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster hall Shareholders' Committee of 24th January be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McCullough
Seconded by Councillor Black

Resolved - That the Minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 6th and 27th January, 2022, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Motion to be Debated by the Council

Proposed Cuts in Higher Education

(Councillors Howard, Hussey, Hutchinson, Pankhurst and Spratt, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting for the duration)

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

“This Council notes with alarm the budget cut proposals put forward by the Department for the Economy to reduce university places, massively increase tuition fees, slash student financial support, cut the number of apprentices, and reduce or end the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

The Council supports an end to tuition fees and an increase in EMA and student financial support. Therefore, the Council agrees that these proposed actions and cuts are completely unacceptable, especially at a time when students across the city are already struggling to make ends meet. As noted by the NUS-USI, these cuts ‘have the potential to decimate the hopes and opportunities of an entire generation’ and could take away ‘their ability to survive day to day, and many will simply drop out of education’.

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Therefore, the Council considers the proposals to constitute an unacceptable attack on students, young people, their futures and our education provision; and stands in solidarity with demands from the NUS-USI to oppose these cuts.

The Council will write to the Economy Minister to express our anger and opposition to these proposals and to encourage the Minister to abandon them. In that letter, the Council will invite the Minister to a meeting with Councillors and representatives of the student population, in order to fully understand and appreciate the breadth of our concerns and the danger his proposals present.

The Council calls on the wider Stormont Executive to refuse to give consent to these proposals and cuts and to take all necessary action to defend student places, student financial assistance, apprenticeships, the EMA and to oppose any increase in the cost of student tuition. Accordingly, the Council will write to each Executive Minister to this effect.

The Council also calls on the Finance Minister to work with the Minister for the Economy to find a sustainable solution to funding issues within the higher and further education sectors. The Council considers it utterly unacceptable that young people in our city should be made to pay the price for budgetary pressures and include in our letter to the Minister for Finance a demand that funding is found to secure the future for young people.

Finally, the Council recognises the role of Westminster budgets in creating difficulties for public spending locally and agrees to write to the treasury on behalf of local students to demand increased budgetary funding to stave off these proposals.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Matt Collins.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Kingston
Seconded by Councillor Brooks

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins be amended, whereby the entire wording of the original motion is replaced with:

“This Council notes with alarm the draft budget settlement; notes the severe impact it could have on many Departments across the Executive, and in particular notes with concern the impact this is likely to have on young people in university, apprenticeships and training; and calls on the Finance Minister to recalibrate the budget settlement in order to focus on both health and skills of our young people.”

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The proposer of the motion did not accept the amendment and the Council therefore proceeded to vote on it. Fourteen Members voted for the amendment, twenty-eight against and with nine no votes it was declared lost.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor McLaughlin
Seconded by Councillor Beattie

That the motion standing in the name of Councillor Ferguson and seconded by Councillor Matt Collins be amended to insert the following between the final 2 paragraphs:

“This Council recognises that many of these proposed budget cuts are as a result of the loss of EU funds due to Brexit.”

Therefore, the motion, as amended, would read:

“This Council notes with alarm the budget cut proposals put forward by the Department for the Economy to reduce university places, massively increase tuition fees, slash student financial support, cut the number of apprentices, and reduce or end the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

The Council supports an end to tuition fees and an increase in EMA and student financial support. Therefore, the Council agrees that these proposed actions and cuts are completely unacceptable, especially at a time when students across the city are already struggling to make ends meet. As noted by the NUS-USI, these cuts ‘have the potential to decimate the hopes and opportunities of an entire generation’ and could take away ‘their ability to survive day to day, and many will simply drop out of education’.

Therefore, the Council considers the proposals to constitute an unacceptable attack on students, young people, their futures and our education provision; and stands in solidarity with demands from the NUS-USI to oppose these cuts.

The Council will write to the Economy Minister to express our anger and opposition to these proposals and to encourage the Minister to abandon them. In that letter, the Council will invite the Minister to a meeting with Councillors and representatives of the student population, in order to fully understand and appreciate the breadth of our concerns and the danger his proposals present.

The Council calls on the wider Stormont Executive to refuse to give consent to these proposals and cuts and to take all necessary action to defend student places, student financial assistance, apprenticeships, the

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EMA and to oppose any increase in the cost of student tuition. Accordingly, the Council will write to each Executive Minister to this effect.

The Council also calls on the Finance Minister to work with the Minister for the Economy to find a sustainable solution to funding issues within the higher and further education sectors. The Council considers it utterly unacceptable that young people in our city should be made to pay the price for budgetary pressures and include in our letter to the Minister for Finance a demand that funding is found to secure the future for young people.

This Council recognises that many of these proposed budget cuts are as a result of the loss of EU funds due to Brexit.

Finally, the Council recognises the role of Westminster budgets in creating difficulties for public spending locally and agrees to write to the treasury on behalf of local students to demand increased budgetary funding to stave off these proposals.”

The proposer agreed to accept the amendment. The Council voted on the motion as amended by Councillor McLaughlin, which was now the substantive motion. On a recorded vote, thirty-seven Members voted for it, thirteen against and with one no vote, it was declared carried.

<u>For 37</u>	<u>Against 13</u>	<u>No Vote 1</u>
The Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl); Councillors Baker, Beattie, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, de Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Groogan, Hanvey, M. Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, Maskey, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, O’Hara, Smyth and Walsh.	The Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Haire; Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, T. Kelly, McCullough, Newton and Verner.	Councillor Kyle.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on
Monday, 7th February, 2022 at 4.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillors Ferguson, Hussey and M. Kelly.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie, Lyons and O'Hara declared an interest in relation to the motion under the heading 'Irish Sea Border Checks' in that they were on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting while the motion was under consideration.

Motion

Irish Sea Border Checks

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

"This Council wishes to place on record its concern with the actions of Minister Poots relating to the withdrawal of checks required for the implementation of the Protocol and his failure to comply with an International Treaty and legal obligations negotiated by the British Government with the EU.

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The Council further notes with concern that this is likely to impact its ability to meet the legal obligations for which it is responsible, relating to inspections at the Port.

This Council authorises the City Solicitor to commence legal proceedings to compel the Minister and the British Government to comply with Protocol requirements, subject to any current derogations in the grace period.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McCabe.

On a recorded vote, twenty-nine Members voted for the Motion, and eighteen against, and it was declared carried.

<u>For 29</u>	<u>Against 18</u>
The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Nicholl); and Councillors Baker, Black, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Matt Collins, Michael Collins, Corr, Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Heading, Long, Magennis, Maskey, McAteer, McCabe, McAllister, McKeown McLaughlin, McMullan, McReynolds, Mulholland, Murphy, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire); and Aldermen Copeland, Dorrian, Kingston, McCoubrey, Rodgers and Sandford; and Councillors Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Howard, Hutchinson, T. Kelly, Kyle, McCullough, Newton, Pankhurst and Verner

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th February, 2022

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

In attendance: Mr. R. Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director
of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Physical Programmes;
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 21st January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Haire declared an interest in respect of agenda item 7b – Request from the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, on the basis that he was a member of that organisation and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Presentation – Draft Amenity Bye Laws

The City Solicitor informed the Members that he had received a request for a deputation consisting of representatives of local retailers to address the Committee on the proposed Draft Amenity Bye Laws, which were due to be considered later in the meeting.

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The Committee agreed to hear from the deputation and, accordingly, Ms. G. Duggan, City Centre Manager, Belfast City Centre Management Company, together with Mr. J. Clark, Gordons Chemists, Mr. P. Connan, McDonald's, Ms. B. Hunter, Linenhall Library and Ms. B. McMaster, Starbucks, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Clark informed the Members that persistent disruptive on-street activity, in the form of protests, street entertainers, preaching and lobbying and often involving the use of amplifiers, was increasingly creating difficulties for retailers and businesses operating in the general area of Cornmarket. The level of noise nuisance, general disorder and interference was such that retailers were often unable to, for example, leave their doors open, keep the area in front of their premises free from bystanders or conduct confidential customer consultations. Staff also felt intimidated, which was having a detrimental impact upon their mental health and general wellbeing. Potential customers tended to avoid the area and its tourism potential was not being fully realised. He went on to state that the high buildings around Cornmarket amplified noise even further and called upon the Council to designate an area where the activities listed above could take place with minimal impact. He concluded by welcoming the bye laws being proposed by the Council.

Ms. McMaster provided further examples of the level of disruption alluded to by Mr. Clark and welcomed the approach being taken by the Council to address the issue.

Ms. Duggan pointed out that business impact statements which had, over the past twelve months, been collated by the Belfast City Centre Management Company and the Police Service of Northern Ireland reinforced the need for effective regulations to be put in place and also welcomed the Council's approach.

The Chairperson thanked the deputation, following which the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Restricted Items

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

Financial Reporting – Quarter 3 2021/22

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 3 and year-end forecast for 2021/22, based upon the five step Finance Strategy which had been approved in June, 2020.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 3, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £3,875,109 (3.5%), which included absorbing Covid expenditure

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and income losses of £6,532,725. The key contributory factors continued to be savings from the under occupancy of office buildings, underspends in employee budgets and additional expenditure controls which had helped to offset incomes losses. The Quarter 3 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £261,513, representing 0.2% of the net expenditure budget.

He went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves position, rates finalisation and the overall Investment Programme and, in terms of reallocations, confirmed that Members would, at the year-end, be in a position to consider the use of the Covid-19 reserve to cover a proportion of Covid costs and income losses. That would, in turn, free up unused Departmental budgets for re-allocation, on a non-recurrent basis, to other priorities.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the financial position for Quarter 3 and year-end forecast for 2021/22;
- ii. agreed that the use of the Covid-19 reserve and reallocations of forecast underspends would be considered as part of year-end reporting;
- iii. agreed that Party Briefings be held in advance of the report on the year-end financial position for 2021/22 being presented to the meeting in June; and
- iv. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the number of current vacancies for permanent staff across the Council, on a Departmental and Unit basis.

Annual Leave 2022/23

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources informed the Committee that he had received communication from the Trades Unions requesting that all staff be granted an additional day's leave for 2022/23, in recognition of their contribution over the course of the pandemic. He outlined the estimated cost to the Council and recommended that the Committee consider the request.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. granted approval for permanent and temporary staff to be awarded an additional day's leave in 2022/23;
- ii. noted that the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources would examine the feasibility of also awarding an additional day's leave to agency staff; and

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- iii. agreed that the Council would examine a way of officially recognising, in due course, the contribution made by all staff during the Covid-19 period.

Update on Draft Amenity Bye Laws

The City Solicitor drew the Committee's attention to significant issues which had, over a number of months, been raised, including earlier in the meeting, around the activities of buskers, preachers and various interest groups in the City centre, primarily within the retail core. Those activities included the use of amplification equipment and the display of offensive images.

He reported that Council officers had, upon reviewing the existing powers, highlighted the need for additional measures to be put in place to regulate these activities, which were regarded as having an unacceptable impact upon visitors, workers and businesses generally. With that in mind, he submitted for the Committee's consideration new draft bye laws, which included provisions around the regulation of noise in streets, the confiscation of intoxicating liquor and psychoactive substances, the display of images in public places which may be deemed to be offensive and street preaching deliberately targeting/engaging with members of the public on account of their perceived sexuality.

He pointed out that the bye laws were not intended to prevent street preaching or public interest causes being promoted in streets in the district but rather to avoid the unacceptable nuisance which was being caused by the cumulative impact of these various activities.

He went on to explain that the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972, required bye laws to be approved by the Department for Communities before being adopted. Officers were of the view that it would be prudent to carry out some informal consultation with that Department and with other relevant statutory agencies, in advance of the bye laws being issued for wider consultation and he recommended accordingly.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Alderman Kingston,
Seconded by Councillor Pankhurst,

That the Committee agrees to defer the matter to allow Party Group briefings to be held to consider the draft bye laws in greater detail.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed that the draft bye laws be submitted to the Department for Communities and other relevant statutory agencies for initial consultation.

Update on Physical Programme

Proposed Movement on the Capital Programme: New Cemetery (Move to Stage 2: Uncommitted)

- The Committee noted the update on the project and agreed that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) for the next phase of the project be progressed in order to inform the development of a preferred option.

Proposed Movement on the Capital Programme: IT Programme – Building Control Replacement System (Move to Stage 3 – Committed)

- The Committee noted that a satisfactory tender return had now been achieved and agreed that a maximum budget of £250,000 be allocated to this project. (The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.)

Capital Programme: North Foreshore – Development Sites Infrastructure Works (Stage 3 – Committed)

- The Committee noted that a satisfactory tender return had now been achieved for North Foreshore Storm Drainage Infrastructure Installation at the North Foreshore site and that it was within the overall budget already allocated to this project. (The Director of Finance and Resources has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.)

Forth Meadow Community Greenway

- The Committee noted the potential negative impact of any delay on this project.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

- The Committee agreed that the eligibility criteria for the fund be amended to include co-operatives and social enterprises and that it now read; *'the project proposer must not be an individual, sole trader or profit-making organisation unless registered as a co-operative or social enterprise'* and noted the launch activities which were underway in relation to the new fund.

Alleygating Scheme – Phase 5

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th March 2021, it had agreed a budget of £500K for Phase 5 of the Council's alleygating scheme, with the funding to be divided equally between North, South, East and West. The Committee had,

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at its meeting on 21st May, 2021, agreed a framework to be used to identify potential locations for alleygates.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that Council officers had been developing data analysis to support the aforementioned framework and had invited Members to nominate streets for consideration. He drew the Committee's attention to a 'long list' of potential locations which had subsequently been produced for each quadrant of the City and pointed out that each location had been ranked in order of need, to reflect the outcome of the data analysis. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee:

- i. approve the identified 'long list' of possible alleygate locations for North, South, East and West, based upon the framework agreed by the Committee on 21st May 2021; and
- ii. agree to refer each 'long list' of possible alleygate locations to the relevant Area Working Group for prioritisation, based on the available budget of £125,000 for each quadrant of the City.

During discussion, several Members pointed out that a number of locations which they had suggested had been omitted from the lists presented to the Committee, including some from the previous phase.

In response, the Director of Neighbourhood Services confirmed that only those areas which had been assessed and ranked against the previously agreed framework had been included on the long list, given the need for the Area Working Groups to further refine and shortlist suitable locations within the agreed budget.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter to allow for a full list of location requests to be circulated to Members and a comprehensive list of potential locations to be drafted and agreed. It agreed also that the next report should include details of the scoring matrix used in the assessment process.

Bonfire Management

Restricted Minute

In accordance with the Council's Bonfire Governance Arrangements, this decision is to be regarded as confidential and sensitive and must not be disclosed, unless the Committee has agreed that it may be put into the public domain. Any disclosure of information or of decisions not agreed by the Committee may be considered as a Code of Conduct issue.

In addition, as the Committee has full delegated powers in the matter, the decision is not subject to ratification by the Council.

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 re-opening and recovery plan.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion – Unauthorised Clothing Banks

The City Solicitor informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 27th January, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Alderman Dorrian and seconded by Councillor Brooks, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration:

“This Council will introduce appropriate regulations to prohibit the siting of unauthorised ‘clothing banks’ on its land and will work with other public landowners to present a united approach.

Registered charities operate professional collection and retail operations, incurring significant costs, with their profits going on to support many worthy causes. In contrast, many ‘clothing banks’ appear overnight, with no permission and with minimal signage. This is unfair and many worthy causes lose out as a result.

If the operator is legitimate, they will have no difficulty in properly registering their collection banks in a managed site. Thus, a level playing field is created”.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the motion and agreed that the report to be submitted to a future meeting should include the potential for establishing a licensing scheme for the operation of clothing banks and engaging with other statutory agencies.

Governance

**Local Government Boundary Commissioner –
Revised Recommendations**

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Local Government Boundary Commissioner’s Revised Recommendations which were published on 18th January and to seek approval of the draft Council response to the revised recommendations.

The Commissioner has asked for written feedback to be submitted by 1st March 2022.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the Local Government Boundary Commissioner’s Revised Recommendations and approve the Council response outlined in paragraph 3.4 below.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

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

The Council provided a detailed written response to the Provisional Recommendations in relation to the district boundary and Political Parties were encouraged to respond individually with respect to the provisional ward boundary recommendations. Council officials reiterated the position outlined in the written response during the public hearing in the Belfast council area which was facilitated by an Assistant Commissioner on 5th October 2021. A copy of that response has been circulated.

Summary of BCC Response to the Provisional Recommendations

In its response to the Provisional Recommendations, Belfast City Council indicated that it did not agree with paragraph 7.3.1 of the Provisional Recommendations report, which states that the district boundary line should remain unchanged.

The Council highlighted the fact that, following the previous Local Government Boundary review in 2008, the Final Recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commissioner (Dick Mackenzie) had a recommendation to place the area containing Forestside shopping centre and the Castlereagh Council Civic HQ building within the new Belfast district boundary.

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

The Council referred to the following two issues in relation to the district boundary:

Galwally Area (including Forestside)

The Council requested that the Local Government Boundary Commissioner reassess the findings of the 2008 Local Government Boundary Review including the 'Final Recommendations' report and the 'Report of the Assistant

Commissioner Sarah Havlin on Belfast City Council district' which made clear recommendations that the Galwally area containing Forestside should reside within the Belfast district boundary.

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

Harbour Area

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

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

3.2 Revised Recommendations – District Boundary

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

Galwally Area (including Forestside)

The following excerpt outlines the Commissioner's findings in relation to the Galwally area:

'I note the submissions on this issue and the analysis of the Assistant Commissioner. I am in agreement with the rationale of the Assistant Commissioner on the importance of the fact that the boundary line at this point was mandated by a process of the Northern Ireland Assembly following the last Review in 2008/09. It is true to say that the boundary line at this area does not correspond to the recommendations made by my predecessor in the 2008/09 Review, however, it is the line which was passed into law after consideration and amendment by the legislature during the passage of the 2012 Act.

My approach in this Review is one of minimum intervention where possible. In the absence of a compelling reason, I am not persuaded to interfere with existing District boundary lines. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that the submission made by Belfast City Council (BCC) does not constitute a

compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary between the District of Belfast City and the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh.

I also note that there was another submission to alter the same District line at the area around Drumkeen to bring a small number of houses into Belfast from the District of Lisburn and Castlereagh. I agree with the Assistant Commissioner that there is no compelling reason to interfere with the District boundary line on this basis’.

Harbour Area

The following excerpt outlines the Commissioner’s findings in relation to the Harbour area:

‘I note the findings of the Assistant Commissioner and I am in agreement that the submission of Belfast City Council raises a compelling reason to realign the District Boundary at Duncairn and Sydenham wards on the grounds of defacement. As stated by the Assistant Commissioner:

I believe that there is defacement to the existing district line between the District of Belfast City and Belfast Lough. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.

I have addressed this issue and the realignment of the District boundary at this point can be seen in the attached map’.

3.3 Revised Recommendations – Wards

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

There is a total of 230,236 electors within the district which averages at 3,837 electors per ward and my Revised Recommendations balance the electorate across the 60 wards. The revised ward and district boundaries changes that have been proposed can be viewed at the following link. [Belfast Wards](#)

3.4 Belfast City Council Response

District Boundary

Galwally Area

The Council would argue that any independent review into the placement of any district boundary line should be based on

the Schedule 4, Part III 'Rules in accordance which recommendations of a commissioner are to be made', the first of which is:

'Regard shall be had to the desirability of determining district and ward boundaries which are readily identifiable'.

The Council would reiterate that those features which the Local Government Boundary Commissioner correctly determined in 2008 to constitute 'readily identifiable boundaries' in respect of this area (namely the A55 Outer Ring Road and the upland topography in this area) have not changed.

The Council recognise that all of the extant district and ward boundaries for all 11 councils, including those in relation to Belfast, were mandated by a political process of the NI Assembly following the last review in 2008/9. The Council would argue that this fact does not exempt any of the boundaries from future review as this would negate the requirement for any future review and would render the rules set out in Schedule 4, Part III of The Local Government (Boundaries) (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 redundant.

The Council would, therefore, recommend again that the Commissioner refers to the principles upon which the 2008 Final Recommendations were made and the Schedule 4, Part III Rules including the first rule which places prominence on the desirability of determining district boundaries which are readily identifiable.

The reason put forth by the Council, therefore, appeals directly to the first rule in Schedule 4, Part III which defines the rules in accordance which a Commissioner will make recommendations, therefore ensuring that such a reason is not only valid but is a material consideration.

Any argument that Belfast's district boundary was 'mandated by a political process' or reference to 'the fact that the boundary was a decision made by the NI Assembly which is historically agreed' will equally apply to all district boundaries which are subject to the review. As such, the Council do not agree that this is a valid argument for determining that such reasons as those which directly relate to legislated Rules such as Schedule 4, Part III (14) are not compelling.

The Council would note that no other argument, other than previous political agreement has been presented against the suggested change to the district boundary.

Harbour Area

The Council welcomes the revised recommendation in respect of the Harbour area and the proposed suggest that the district line should be amended to encompass existing and future development of the Harbour estate.

Wards

In line with previous decisions in relation to the Review of Local Government Boundaries in Northern Ireland, responses to the Commissioners recommendations in relation to ward boundaries will be left to individual parties. Parties are encouraged to review the map accessible via the link in paragraph para 3.3 above.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

No financial implications attached this report

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

None”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Council Improvement Objectives for 2022-23

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present the draft corporate improvement objectives for 2022-23 and to seek Committee approval to issue these for public consultation in line with our statutory performance duty obligations.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to agree the draft improvement objectives for 2022-23 and approve their issue for public consultation in line with statutory guidance. The proposed improvement objectives for 2022-23 are as follows:

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Our Services
We will continue to adapt and improve our services
Our Communities
We will work to support our communities, helping them to become stronger, healthier and more resilient
Our Economy
We will work collaboratively to support businesses, jobs and inclusive growth
Our Environment
We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast
Our City
We will continue to support our city to recover and innovate in a safe, inclusive and sustainable way

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an annual improvement plan by 30th June each year. The Improvement plan does not represent everything that council plans to do, but instead focuses on a smaller set of key improvement priorities, as informed by resident priorities and evidenced by need. Normally, we align our improvement objectives to the key priorities within our corporate plan and the Belfast Agenda. However, last year we realigned the improvement plan to the recovery plan and, due to the covid restrictions in place, had to adjust or refocus our improvement actions. This year as we transition from the impacts of the pandemic, we have once again adapted our improvement objectives so that they provide an appropriate balance between our corporate planning and recovery work.**

- 3.2 The strategic structure used in 2021-22 to explain our improvement objectives appeared to be well received by residents. Therefore, we have retained this format for 2022–23 as it allows us to incorporate Covid-19 considerations and articulate council specific improvement in a meaningful way for the public. However, rather than retain our digital innovation as an improvement objective on its own, we have amalgamated this work into the ‘Our City’ objective. Whilst digital innovation is a significant programme of work, this brings it into line with other similar programmes (such as leisure transformation and customer focus) and improves strategic focus. The proposed improvement objectives for 2022-23 have been circulated, including how they align to our corporate plan and the emerging Belfast Agenda refresh, and the indicative improvement actions that we propose to deliver during the coming year.

Next Steps

- 3.3 Councils are legally required to consult on their improvement objectives and to publish an Improvement Plan by 30th June each year. Subject to approval, we will issue the improvement objectives for public consultation via our on-line engagement platform for a period of 8 weeks. During this time, we will work with departments to develop detailed actions, milestones and performance indicators and update as needed based on public feedback. This improvement activity will be reflected within the corporate plan, committee plans or other strategic programmes, thereby ensuring that improvement is embedded within our planning and delivery processes. A final report and draft improvement plan will be brought to the Committee for ratification and publication in June.

SP and R – Draft Improvement Objectives for consultation	18th Feb 2022
Improvement Objectives: 8 week consultation	Mar - Apr 2022
Services refine actions and PIs	Mar - May 2022
SP and R approves Improvement Plan for online publication	June 2022
Publish Improvement Plan	By 30th June 2022

3.4 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial implications.

3.5 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

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 October 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 29th March 2021. The Committee was advised that an independent health check was being commissioned to review the operational set up of the Customer Hub and to assess future capacity needs.

1.2 This report provides the Committee with an update on:

- the health check of the Customer Hub function;
- the approach to development of facilities for Elected Members; and
- the Customer Focus programme approach to onboarding services and phase 2 planning.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to note:

- 1. the in-depth review of the Customer Hub operation and supporting infrastructure carried out by Navigation Partners in November 2021;**
- 2. the recommendations and planned improvements to further optimise the Customer Hub operation including proposed measures and KPIs;**

3. the approach set out for transitioning and transformation of services and that further work is being undertaken to define how this approach may be implemented in line with the agreed approach to service design and in line with corporate priorities. This approach will inform the Phase 2 plan; and
4. the update on development of facilities for Elected Members.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Summary of Recommendations and Findings from an Operational Review of the Customer Hub

In March 2021, the Council launched a Customer Hub to manage customer communications and service requests. When the Customer Hub had been in operation for 6 months, Navigation Partners were appointed to complete an independent health check to assess how efficiently and effectively the Customer Hub is delivering this service. The objective of the work was to provide a review and subsequent report on where the operation is currently, where it should strive to be and to identify a blueprint for future onboarding of services.

The review highlighted that the Customer Hub benefits from a strong committed team with a dedicated management team. Despite challenging delivery timescales during unprecedented times, the service was delivered to schedule. Initially following implementation there was some service disruption however, the experience delivered to customers is improving and the service has now stabilised. Prior to the Christmas period the average call wait time for November and December was 90 seconds and average call handling time for the same period was 1 minute 50 seconds. These are within industry best practice standards.

The review identified a number of areas where there were quick wins to improve performance and areas where industry best practice could be employed. The review also recognised areas of good practice across the Customer Hubs technology and processes.

As the Customer Hub enters the next phase of implementation and gets ready for growth, the quick wins identified focus on ensuring the Customer Hub's success as it grows and additional services are added.

The Customer Focus Oversight Board and CMT considered the Navigation Partners report findings and agreed the recommendations. It was agreed that further discussion is required to refine the approach to transitioning and transformation of services in the context of service design and the corporate prioritisation process. Delivery of the improvements will be managed and monitored through the Customer Focus Delivery Board and Oversight Board.

3.2 Summary of Findings and Recommendations:

In considering the review, Navigation Partners used industry benchmarks and averages to measure the current delivery of the Customer Hub.

The review report acknowledges the achievements to date in establishing the Customer Hub within the agreed time scale and given the challenging environment created by Covid 19.

The review and the recommendations focus on delivering a balance of customer service while retaining a focus on value for money. Recommendations consider the aspirations for Customer Hub growth and the actions needed to support that. The review considers recommendations in each of the following areas:

- **Interactive Voice Response (IVR) – This is the call menu that is heard when contacting the Customer Hub – this report suggests changes and improvements that could be made to the IVR to improve its efficiency;**
- **Operations – Changes to the Customer Hub operation that could increase efficiency for the Customer Hub Assistants;**
- **Performance – Tools and measures to prepare the Customer Hub to manage resource requirements against future demand as that demand grows. Currently, there are no formalised operational performance measures in the Customer Hub. The aim is to have standard measures as used in other customer service environments. The reporting will assess the overall service delivered within the Customer Hub function and will aim to drive improved customer services by focussing on staff development and training requirements;**
- **Measures and Key Performance Indicators – reporting that would benefit the Customer Hub’s operation;**

- **Process and prioritising change – how the base data collected within the Customer Hub can be used to quantify and make a case for future process improvements (service design);**
- **Onboarding process – a repeatable on-boarding process that ensures that all aspects of onboarding a new service are understood and delivered with minimal disruption including staffing requirements.**

Appendix 1, which has been circulated, sets out the recommendations for improvements in each of these areas.

Appendix 2, which has also been circulated, provides a high-level plan for implementing the report recommendations which will be overseen by the Customer Focus Delivery Board and Customer Focus Oversight Board. It is proposed that the majority of actions to optimise the Customer Hub operation will be completed by end of March, 2022.

Performance Tools

3.2.1 As the Customer Hub grows and inbound demand increases (higher volumes of calls, emails, online forms and in the future face-to-face visits), a greater focus must be placed on demand volumes and arrival patterns.

- **The use of forecasting and workforce management processes would aid the Customer Hub management in understanding and matching demand with resources required. This is particularly important as the Customer Hub takes on further services. Workforce management (WFM), otherwise known as scheduling tools, utilise all processes that are undertaken to ensure the right number of staff are available at the right time on the right contact channel – phone, email or webforms.**
- **This tool will be used on a day-to-day basis to ensure staff are allocated effectively to meet demand across customer channels and applied when assessing staffing levels and any revisions to the staffing model as part of the onboarding process.**

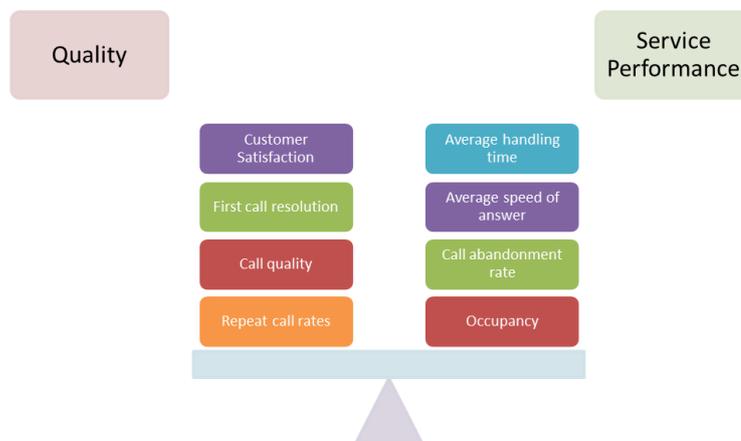
There are two ways this can be addressed:

- **The current Mitel licence includes workforce management and scheduling so this could be utilised. Some work would be required to implement this**

- An Erlang model is the most widely used tool across the industry to deliver resource planning and can provide an initial view of the demand. Erlang provides a mathematical formula that would allow the Customer Hub Co-ordinators to calculate the number of staff needed for a given number of calls and to achieve required service levels. Using such tools allows the development of Measures, that become the operational reporting that is done by Customer Hub Management and provides the data to assist in the day-to-day management of Hub activity.

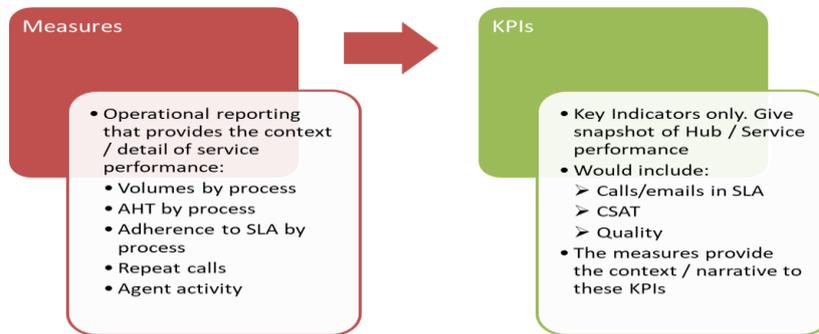
KPIs and Measures

3.2.2 It is common to focus on performance metrics, however, to get the best service and value for money it is important to gain the right balance of quality and performance measures. Too much focus on performance could impact the customer service delivered and too much weighting on quality could be costly with limited pay back in efficiency.



KPIs are the performance indicators that give a snapshot of overall Customer Hub performance and have specific targets. As many of these are new targets and not currently measured, a target should be set to enable reporting to commence, be refined and any immediate improvement actions be taken. The split of measures and KPIs is shown in the diagram overleaf

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The proposed measures and KPIs for Customer Hub have been circulated.

Prioritising Change

3.2.3 The Customer Hub has been implemented as one element of a wider focus on Service transformation. The Customer Hub and the infrastructure implemented within it will act as a facilitator for this transformation. In particular, the metrics which are produced relating to process and service performance enable future process changes to be identified, quantified and delivered.

The current planned Service improvements and changes identified as part of future Service design activity will require prioritisation as resources are limited and the Council will be looking to achieve the best value for the investment made.

The metrics available once a Service has transitioned to the Customer Hub will enable the benefits to be quantified which gives a number of advantages:

- It enables the benefit of making process improvements to be quantified and prioritised – where do you focus resources?
- It enables benefits to be quantified and measured – so benefits realisation can be evidenced
- It avoids people reacting to problems and focusing resources on knee jerk requirements
- Improvements/development could be prioritised based on their impact on; customers/quality and efficiency (FTE/Cost)

In summary, this enables changes to be measured against three areas:

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3.2.4 Onboarding Process and Planning of Phase 2

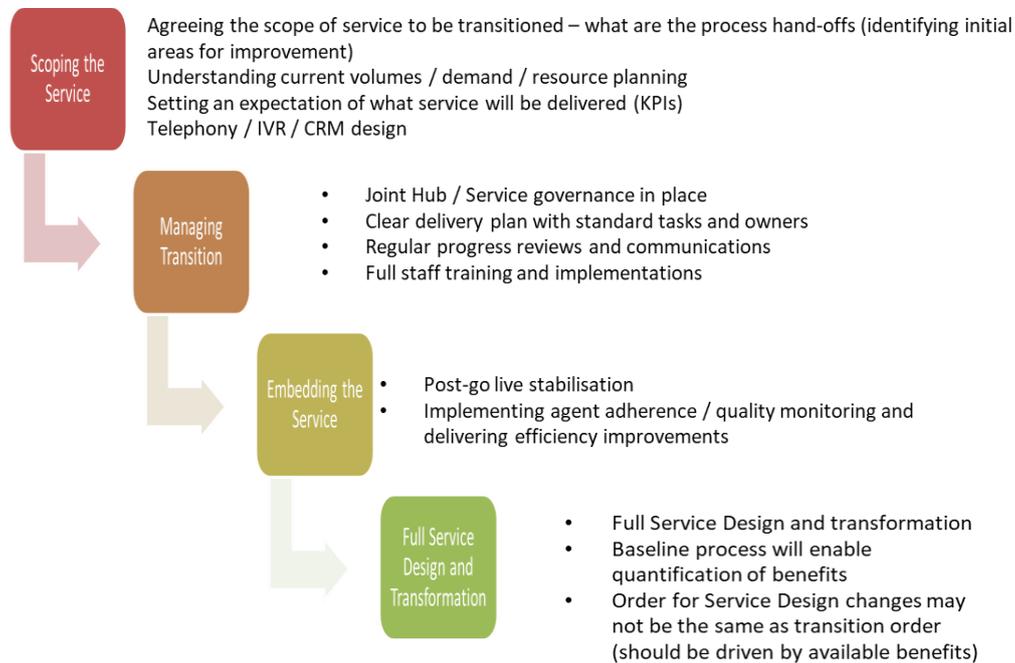
This initial phase of the Customer Hub has delivered the infrastructure and processes to enable the Hub to meet the needs of more than the initial areas included in scope. The infrastructure and processes provide the capability to onboard additional services. In planning for future phases and new service on-boarding there is an opportunity to create a repeatable process that can be used to ensure that all areas are considered in any future service on-boarding.

The growth of the Customer Hub and the upcoming service design/transformations need to be considered in line to ensure that resources are employed most effectively.

To enable successful growth of the Customer Hub, whilst ensuring that there is minimum impact on business-as-usual operations the following phased approach is proposed. The phased approach enables up front work to be completed to understand the scope of the change and the impacts across the organisation. Full-service Design follows at a later stage when the performance data has been captured and potential savings areas can be quantified.

The approach to on boarding services as outlined below will be progressed as a pilot with the onboarding of Building Control. The plans for Phase 2 of the Customer Focus Programme are currently being formed with a key dependency being the award of contract for a new Building Control IT system which it is envisaged will be awarded by end of March 2022.

3.2.5 Service Onboarding Approach



The activities required during each phase have been circulated. The benefit of this approach is that it ensures that the roll out of the Customer Hub can continue, and the benefits of transitioning new service areas into the Customer Hub be realised. Transitioning the services into the Customer Hub will allow the capture of additional baseline performance data on the processes which will support the service design activity. Where the full Service Design activity can also be prioritised and effort focused where the most benefits can be achieved.

3.2.6 Onboarding / Transition Vs Transformation (Full Service Design)

There are dependencies between the process improvements identified in transition, the full-service design activity required in transformation with the corporate change programme and clear alignment is required with key enablers. e.g. Digital Services and Digital Delivery.

Transition refers to the definition and transition of a new Service into the Hub. It does not require a full-Service design

- Scoping of service may identify immediate improvements that can be delivered, such as automation of online forms

- Initial scoping may identify changes that should be delivered pre-transformation
- Benefits can be delivered by transition alone and so Service transition to the Customer Hub should be decoupled from transformation

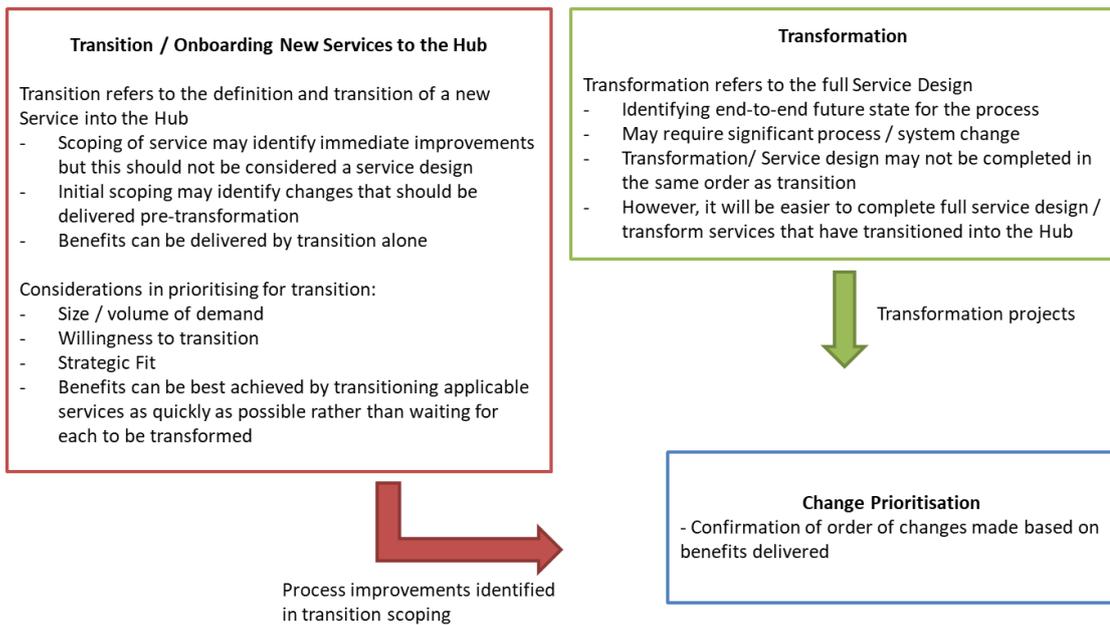
Transformation refers to the full-Service design process

- Identifying end-to-end future state for the process
- May require significant process / system change
- Transformation/ Service design may not be completed in the same order as transition
- However, it will be easier to complete full-Service design / transform services that have transitioned into the Hub.

It is important to note that we have an agreed short term corporate change strategy where structural stabilisation is critical in areas being prioritised, with some resource focussed on full transformational service design. As we complete the urgent structural stabilisation more resource can be deployed on transformational service design. This will be governed through the Corporate Change Board.

It is recognised that both transition and full-Service design will identify initiatives that require allocation of limited resources (i.e. Digital, Continuous Improvement and HR teams). The readiness of the service itself needs to be considered as part of prioritisation, this includes having departmental subject matter experts available to contribute to design and management capacity to own delivery of change. Additionally, both transition and service design may result in potential changes to existing staffing structure. Any potential changes will be managed in line with CI and HR processes as part of the IR framework. As a result, there is a requirement to feed both needs into a corporate prioritisation process as outlined in the diagram below:

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3.3 Approach to further Development of Facilities for Members

Work to date has involved working with the Elected Members Task and Finish Working Group to develop a future blueprint. The first Phase of delivering the blueprint has delivered several contact channels for members and a members' app which had its second software release in July, 2021 to include additional features identified by members.

The next stage of development agreed with the Task and Finish Group will focus on information requirements. We will work with the Task and Finish group to understand what information members need at their fingertips to help in day-to-day work with constituents. The Task and Finish group have highlighted:

- Council Services and key people responsible for them
- Information regarding other relevant agencies, their responsibilities, and their contact details.

It is further proposed that we conduct a survey of Members to gather information requirements and feedback on use of the members' app with a view to identifying enhancements to the app and options to improve mobile access to information.

3.4 Financial and Resource Implications

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.

3.5 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

No implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Update on JobStart Scheme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To bring to the Committee’s attention the Council’s participation in the Department for Communities JobStart Scheme.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the update on the Council’s participation in the Department for Communities JobStart Scheme.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that for over twenty years, the Council has provided a variety of employability outreach activity, including work placements, job opportunities, the ring fencing of posts to the long term unemployed, delivery of pre-recruitment and training programmes and participation in government funded programmes such as Steps to Work and the Young Persons Employment Initiative. Many of these programmes support our work on Inclusive Growth by targeting those furthest removed from the labour market and they aim to help people get ‘job ready’ to apply for positions in the council and elsewhere as they become available. In July 2021, the Council was approached by the Department for Communities (DfC) to participate in a new initiative, the JobStart scheme

Overview of the JobStart Scheme

3.2 JobStart is designed to support young people facing additional employment challenges due to the impact of Covid-19. It will help to create job opportunities for 16–24-year-olds by funding positions with employers across all sectors, for a period of six months, increasing to nine months for those who meet

additional criteria (i.e., for young people facing multiple barriers).

3.3 The employer incentive scheme aims to develop employability skills for those at risk of long-term unemployment and to place young people in positions which align with their individual skills and interests. Participation on the scheme is voluntary. Employers will receive government funding for the temporary job opportunities they create.

3.4 To engage in the programme, the Council must ensure that:

- opportunities offered must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing employees, apprentices, or contractors to lose or reduce their employment;
- job opportunities must last for six months, with a possible extension to 9 months for those who meet certain criteria;
- job opportunities must offer at least 25 hours of employment per week; and
- employers must develop a training plan to assist participants to gain new occupational and employability skills.

(DfC will perform due diligence and financial checks on all employers)

3.5 To participate in the programme, the young person must be:

- 16-24 years old and on benefits or,
- if not on benefits, they must fall into the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) category. (If a person falls within this category, they must be 18-24 years old).

3.6 Several other public sector employers are engaging in the scheme e.g., Department for Communities, Department for Health, Department of Justice, and the Executive Office. The JobStart scheme is aimed at supporting young people who face multiple barriers e.g., disabled people, those leaving the care system, those leaving the criminal justice system and those at risk of paramilitarism. The job opportunity can be extended to 9 months for young people who meet these criteria.

3.7 Recruitment for the JobStart scheme placements is being managed through the Council's Youth Support Programme contracted provider, Workforce. Following engagement with Departments, the Council identified 12 JobStart scheme placements and these opportunities were advertised from 27th January to 17th February, which included targeted outreach to employability organisations in all parts of the City.

3.8 Young people participating in JobStart will be supported by Youth Work Coaches in the Department for Communities Resources are also available within the Youth Support Programme to support participants by providing access to mentoring and a range of wraparound supports, to ensure that post JobStart, they have the capabilities to remain in secure employment.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

For each job opportunity offered the DfC will provide:

- 100% of the relevant wage for 25 hours of work per week
- the associated employer National Insurance contributions
- employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions

3.10 While these paid placement opportunities are funded by the Department for Communities, the Council will be required to contribute a small proportion as participants will be working to Belfast City Council job evaluated job descriptions. In addition, there is £1,500 of funding available for each participant which can be claimed for any other startup costs after a period of two weeks and after a training plan has been agreed.

3.11 Corporate Human Resources staff have worked with departmental HR staff to identify 12 suitable job opportunities. Departmental staff will be required to develop training plans for the successful candidates and provide adequate supervision throughout.

3.12 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Corporate HR will work closely with the Department for the Economy and Department for Communities, and other partners including the ECNI, to ensure equality of opportunity and alignment to our inclusive growth aspirations. Employability outreach will be targeted at young people who face multiple barriers to employment."

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After discussion, the Committee noted the report and agreed that a further report be submitted:

- i. outlining any implications arising from a decision being taken that the Council would meet the difference between the National Living Wage, which participants would receive, and the Real Living Wage; and
- ii. identifying potential permanent employment opportunities for those participants who successfully completed their placement with the Council.

Update on the Arrangements for dealing with Consultation Responses

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 17th December, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out the current arrangements for dealing with consultations, in the context of an issue which had been raised by a Member around the need to ensure that Members were afforded the opportunity to view consultations and contribute to responses at an earlier stage in the process.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy explained that the Council's Strategy, Policy and Partnership team maintained a central record of all consultations, with these being identified primarily as follows:

- the consulting organisation sends a notification to the Chief Executive inviting the Council to make a response;
- the consulting organisation sends a notification to a specific officer or officers inviting the Council to make a response; and
- officers search Government websites and identify consultations which it would be appropriate for the Council to respond to.

He reported that the Strategy, Policy and Partnership team provided the Corporate Management Team with a weekly list of currently open consultations, which identified where responses were required and the Department which would take the lead in making that response. He pointed out that a process had been in place for a number of years for uploading this list to the Members' Portal on a weekly basis.

He reported further that the majority of Central Government consultations closed after eight weeks, which left a short time scale for drafting a response, seeking Members' comments and obtaining approval through the Committee system. Members were, therefore, advised that, should they wish to discuss an open consultation, they should refer to the current list on the Members' Portal and contact the nominated Lead Officer. He added that draft responses to consultations would, in line with normal practice, continue to be brought before the relevant Committee, when appropriate, for consideration and approval.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

**Department of Education Consultation on Children
and Young People's Strategy Initial 3-Year Delivery
Plan 2021-2024 – Council Response**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the Northern Ireland Executive had, on 10th December, 2020, met its requirement under the Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 by approving the Children and Young People's Strategy. The Strategy, which had been published in January, 2021, identified eight outcomes for improving the wellbeing of children and young people and a Children and Young People's Strategy Delivery Plan had been drafted for 2021-24, setting out the actions to be taken to deliver them. Those actions could, he pointed out, be subject to change, depending on new or emerging priorities, the affordability of the actions and the resources to be made available in the 2022–25 budget period.

He went on to report that the Department for Education had launched a consultation on the aforementioned Delivery Plan and recommended that the Committee approve the draft response for submission to the Department ([available here](#)).

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

UK - Republic of Korea Innovation Twins Programme

(Mrs. D. Colville, City Innovation Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress on the 'UK-Republic of Korea Innovation Twins' programme, which is being delivered by the Connected Places Catapult to encourage SMEs to develop their capacity to sell innovative products and services both locally and internationally. Belfast and the South Korean city of Sejong were chosen to work together to explore options for bi-lateral trade and innovative collaboration.**
- 1.2 The report seeks Committee approval for the Lord Mayor (or her nominee) to attend the programme's virtual Innovation Demo Day on 30th March, where the Lord Mayor has been requested to sign a 'Statement of Intent' between both cities' local authorities.**
- 1.2 As the event is taking place during an Election period, the Committee is asked to agree that the Deputy Chief Executive attend the event in the Lord Mayor's place and provisionally agree a Statement of Intent subject to Committee approval. (The details of the signatory need to be confirmed with Connected Places Catapult by the end of February.)**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked:

1. to note progress on the UK-Republic of Korea Innovation Twins programme;
2. to agree that the Deputy Chief Executive will attend the event on the Lord Mayor's behalf and provisionally agree a Statement of Intent; and
3. to note that a further report will be presented to the Committee in March providing final details of the Demo Day and Statement.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the Committee meeting in November, Members were presented with details of the Council's participation in the '*UK-Republic of Korea Innovation Twins*' programme¹ which was set up by the Connected Places Catapult (CPC) and funded by BEIS and UKRI. The programme aims to build relationships between smart cities with high potential for accelerating long term R&I collaborations and generating opportunities for trade and FDI.

3.2 The programme has a number of phases with a first 'research and evidence gathering' phase now complete. The current phase is looking at improving the delivery of innovations in both cities and, at the local level, involves the Council's City Innovation Team, Enterprise and Business Growth unit, Invest NI, and Innovation City Belfast.

3.3 The work strands of the project (which are being supported by CPC and PA Consulting) include:

1. Ongoing high-level engagement between Belfast and Sejong working towards signing a Statement of Intent between both cities on 30 March 2022.

While not legally binding, this statement will support ongoing collaboration and discussions between both cities. And make it possible to unlock further funding from BEIS post March 2022. This statement will require ongoing commitment from Invest NI who are currently considering their level of support. They are in the process of developing a presence in South Korea.

¹ <https://cp.catapult.org.uk/project/uk-republic-of-korea-innovation-twins-programme>

2. A £25,000 pilot with Belfast City Council to support a Litter Analytics solution. This will deploy IoT hardware and predictive algorithms to indicate when street bins need emptied. The pilot will inform how routes can be optimised for waste management and help understanding of future procurement of street bins including the need for recycling bins.
3. The delivery of a Belfast innovation competition which will provide seven local SMEs with £10,000 each to develop and show-case their most innovative product or service.

Selected by a panel made up of PA Consulting, Jacobs and Connected Places Catapult, the seven SMEs will showcase a range of products that relate to areas such as fitness hubs, virtual tourism, community rewards programmes, last mile delivery, safer cycling, and personal safety. The participating SMEs will also receive training in successfully engaging in challenge-led competitions with the public sector.

4. Training for council officers to build their capacity to define challenges and to engage with SMEs on collaborative innovation and procurement.
5. The development of an 'Innovative Procurement Playbook' which will capture the learning from the full programme and support local councils to find better ways to procure more innovative solutions and services.
6. The delivery of the international 'Demo Day' scheduled for 30 March 2022.

This virtual event will involve officers from both cities, BEIS, the Department of International Trade, Innovate UK, Connected Places Catapult, and The UK Embassy in South Korea. Full details to be confirmed at the Committee meeting in March.

Financial and Resource Implications

The programme requires officer time commitment from across the Departments.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Assets Management

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

**Forth Meadow Community Greenway -
Service Level Agreement**

- The Committee granted approval to enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Ulster Wildlife Trust in relation to Section 4 of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway project.

Percy Street Community Centre – Surrender of Lease

- The Committee noted the surrender of the lease between the Council and the Lower Shankill Group Welfare Committee, which had been responsible for the management of the community centre.

Cherryvale Playing Fields – Relocation of BT Pole

- The Committee granted approval for a BT pole to be relocated onto Council lands at Cherryvale Playing Fields to facilitate a new pedestrian crossing across the Ravenhill Road.

Whiterock Close– Temporary Licence of land to Glór na Móna

- The Committee approved the granting of a temporary licence to Glór na Móna for a site adjoining its existing premises on Whiterock Close for the erection of a portacabin.

In addition, the Committee noted that a report on the outcome of an audit, which was currently assessing the condition of the Council's independently managed community centres, would be submitted to a future meeting.

Update on Area Working Groups

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 3rd February, including the recommendation that match funding of up to £65,000 be allocated to the Braniel Church project from the uncommitted allocations within the East area, subject to the conditions stipulated within the minute being met by the church.

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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; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Estimated Total Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
MTC for mechanical services	Up to 5 years	£3.5m	S. Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned maintenance and minor works to mechanical services
The provision of Belfast Markets	Up to 5 years	£600,000 income	A. Reid	Contractor support for the planning, co-ordination and delivery of seasonal markets for BCC
Telephone service provision (Calls / Lines / Broadband / Support)	Up to 12 months	£83,810	R. Cregan	The corporate telephony solution requires that all devices and users have ongoing support
Provision of mobile phone service and mobile devices	Up to 3 years	£480,000	R. Cregan	Mobile phones are needed for Council staff working away from Council offices
Advice and support for improvement within the Council's financial management	Up to 2 years	£71,600	R. Cregan	The provision of ongoing advisory support tailored to individual mission-critical priorities, and access to research

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				covering the finance sector and roles
The implementation of a centralised Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS)	Up to 5 years	£40,453	R. Cregan	To protect IT equipment from power outages and spikes in the Cecil Ward Building.
Telephony support (T2247)	Up to 25 months	£88,159	R. Cregan	The corporate telephony solution requires that all devices and users have ongoing support. Approved Jan 2022 for up to 12 months £36,479, requesting increasing to a total of 25 months
Renewal of Server and Cloud Enrolment (SCE) agreement with Microsoft for the use of SQL Database products	Up to 36 months	£250,000	R. Cregan	Licensing agreement to allow the use of Microsoft SQL Database products (and any future releases) as well as entitling the Council to raise support calls if needed
Design, provision and management of a firework/pyrotechnic display at Halloween and other Council events	Up to 4 years	£160,000	S. Toland/ R. Black	Design, provision and management of a firework/pyrotechnic displays

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Total Value	SRO	Supplier
Clockwise system	£59,146	R. Cregan	SoftWorks
Supply and delivery of frozen fish (herring)	£35,000	S. Toland/ R. Black	Elmore Fish

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Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Value	SRO	Supplier
MTC mechanical services	Up to 12 months	£650,000	S. Grimes	WJM Building Services Ltd
Seasonal waste removal	Up to 3 years	£709,300	S. Toland/ R. Black	Confidential

Request from Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that a request had been received from the Grand Secretary of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland for funding of £15,000 towards the hosting in Belfast on 28th May of a major family event and parade. The event, which had been postponed in May, 2021 due to the pandemic, would bring the Centenary celebrations to a conclusion. The Council's contribution would be used specifically to enhance the experience of those attending, ease congestion, minimise inconvenience to residents and promote local shopping.

The Committee agreed to allocate £15,000 to the event.

Equality and Good Relations

Gender Identity and Expression - Guidance and Information for Managers and Staff

The Committee approved the 'Gender Identity and Expression – Guidance and Information for Managers and Staff' document ([available here](#)), which had been developed in consultation with transgender support groups and the Council's Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee.

Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

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

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- i outline a proposed programme of events to be organised by Council to mark HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee; and**
- ii consider a request for funding for events to be organised by local communities across the city which was included in the Motion referred to the Committee following the July 2021 Council meeting.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- i approve the proposed programme of events to be organised by the Council over the bank holiday weekend of Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June 2022, inclusive;**
- ii approve costs in the region of £35,000- £40,000 to deliver this programme; and**
- iii agree funding of £50,000-£100,000 for events to take place in local communities across the city over the Platinum Jubilee weekend. This fund will be administered by the Community Foundation NI, with a maximum of £1,000 for any group.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend will take place from Thursday 2nd June to Sunday 5th June, inclusive. Members may wish to note that the May Bank Holiday weekend at the end of that month will be moved to Thursday 2nd June and that an additional bank holiday will be held on Friday 3rd June, culminating in a four-day weekend.**
- 3.2 There will be a number of main themes to mark the Platinum Jubilee, including a focus on community, inter-generational activity and new communities. A specially designed Jubilee emblem in purple has been selected from entries to be used for official events and across digital and social media.**

Proposed Programme of Events

Thursday 2nd June

- 3.3 Belfast City Council has been invited to join other local authorities, amongst others, in lighting a Jubilee Beacon. The Spring Market will be held in the grounds of City Hall during the Platinum Jubilee weekend and, therefore, an alternative location will be identified if the lighting of a beacon is approved.**

Friday 3rd June

- 3.4 Themed Tea Dances will be held in City Hall during the afternoon and one retro dance in the evening, reviving styles and fashion of the time.

Saturday 4th June

- 3.5 Create a programme entitled 'Belfast 1952' and transform the venue at 2 Royal Avenue into Belfast of the 1950's. This event will showcase some of city's best local talent through photography, film, fashion, songs, and storytelling by taking a creative look at how lives were lived during that period. The programme of activities will include:

- Tales of the city – inter-generational workshops and story-telling events related to families growing up in Belfast in the 1950's. The café menu will be adapted and take on a 1950's theme;
- Songs of the city - Workshops and performances on music in the 1950's;
- Photography Exhibition of the city in the 1950's; and
- A film reel telling the story of the city from 1950's through to the present day.

Sunday 5th June

- 3.6 Host a Big Community Lunch, which is a key element of the Platinum Jubilee weekend, with a focus on encouraging celebration of connections to bring the Jubilee into the heart of local communities. A Big Community Lunch could be hosted at City Hall with the guest list focussing on the main themes whilst encouraging communities in the city who wish to join in by holding their own events.

Illumination of City Hall in purple, as the chosen colour for the Jubilee emblem and programme of activities, bringing the weekend to a close.

Members are also advised that a service to mark HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be held in St Anne's Cathedral on Sunday, 5 June at 3.30 p.m.

Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.7 All events will take equality and good relations implications into account.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 The cost of delivering the council's programme of events is estimated between £35,000-£40,000 and will be met from the existing civic hospitality budget if approved.

An additional budget of up to £100,000 would be required to fund events to take place in local communities across the City."

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations, subject to the maximum amount to be made available to the groups referred to in point iii. being increased to £2,000.

Minutes of Meeting of Shared City Partnership

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Shared City Partnership of 7th February, including the recommendations:

PEACE IV

Secretariat

- to stand down the Thematic Steering Groups, with all operational matters to be considered by the PEACE IV Programme Board; and
- to note the concern of the Partnership Members at the lack of co-operation from the Special EU Programmes Body on the proposed project modifications and its lack of flexibility in terms of delivery and extensions.

Shared Spaces and Services

- to extend the Interpretative Panels contract with Mediation NI to June 2022 and agree delivery amendments;
- to agree, in principle, a further delivery modification request to increase the tolerance for contact hours to 60% (7 hours), to engage with participants in schools through a "self-directed learning" approach and field trips and facilitated walks, as necessary; and
- to note that the approvals will be subject to the agreement of the Special EU Programmes Body.

Building Positive Relations

BPR1 - NIHE

- to diversify and extend the participant cohort for the South Belfast Network to include participants from the BAME and PUL communities; and
- to extend the recruitment areas across South and North Belfast to enhance participant uptake.

BPR2 - Creative Communities

- to condense delivery via residential activity facilitated by Corrymeela and the STA approach with Radius Housing subject, to Special EU Programmes Board approval.

BPR4 - Belfast and the World

- to realign the budget to enable extended delivery and staffing to April, 2022.

BPR6 - St. Comgall's

- to agree to receive a presentation on the digital and education resources associated with the St. Comgall's project by Copius and Redhead, its partner, and;
- to amend the Study Visit from Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland due to Covid 19 concerns and impacts, subject to Special EU Programmes Board approval.

Good Relations

- that the Good Relations Manager engage with the Youth Co-ordinator on their return, to explore ways in which the Partnership can engage with the Youth Council productively in the current context which will ensure the views of young people are taken on board;
- that a report be brought back to the Partnership on the outcome of those discussions;
- that the status of the nominations of Youth Champions from each Political Party be confirmed to ensure that the views of young people on good relations can be shared;

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- to approve the response to the consultation on the draft Refugee Integration Strategy for NI 2021-26 produced by The Executive Office ([available here](#))
- to note that the response would be forwarded to The Executive Office in draft form, pending Council approval, to ensure that it would be received by the deadline of 20th February; and
- to note that the virtual briefing session on issues facing Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Belfast, led by The Red Cross, would be held on 22nd February from 10 a.m. – 12 noon and that the relevant Council Officers will be invited to ensure maximum impact across the delivery of Council services.

Extended Cultural Programme

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- **Update Members following a discussion at Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum, after which officers were asked to formulate a proposed programme of events to be organised by Council in partnership with local organisations to celebrate the city's cultural heritage.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. **approve outline programme of events to be organised by Council over Spring-Summer 2022 and agree to receive a future report outlining allocation of funding to delivery partners; and**
- ii. **agree to allocate £200,000, as outlined in paragraph 3.7, to support the proposed programme of activity.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 Members of the Committee will be aware that a number of Council's strategies in line with the Belfast Agenda, support increasing the cultural vibrancy of the city and promoting cultural expression. In recognition of the diversity of the city's cultural heritage and as part of an ongoing programme of enhancing support for participation in the cultural life of the**

city, an extended programme of activities is proposed for Spring – Summer 2022.

- 3.2 This will build on the recent success of 2 Royal Avenue that has demonstrated both a demand and need for such a facility including the number of community culture and arts organisations that have requested use of the building. This has included a breadth of activities such as music gigs, artisan markets, workshops, exhibitions and tea dances attracting a range of audiences. To date the model for delivery has been a combination of events programmed directly by Council as well as support for partnership organisations.
- 3.3 Given the success of this programme and to complement the activities planned for summer 2022, it is proposed that an extended programme would be delivered to include:
- Cultural engagement programmes with community participants;
 - Cultural showcases open to the wider public;
 - Cultural connections programme including events focussed on fusion and shared heritage;
 - Celebration of the city’s recent designation as a UNESCO City of Music through increasing opportunities to promote the city’s music heritage.
- 3.4 The venue at 2 Royal Avenue is an ideal location for these activities and benefits from levels of footfall and in turn this programme can support summertime animation of the city centre. However, there will also be an opportunity to deliver community-based programmes of engagement activities.
- 3.5 Similar to the existing programming model, whilst elements of the programme will be delivered directly by Council it is also envisaged that this opportunity should be opened up to partner organisations. Criteria will be developed by officers in the Culture Development Team working with colleagues in Good Relations. The outcome of this process will be presented to a future meeting of Committee for consideration and approval.
- 3.6 Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

All events will take equality and good relations implications into account and will be reflected in any agreements issued to partner organisations.

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3.7 Financial and Resource Implications

The cost of delivering the programme of events is £200,000 to be allocated as follows:

- Traditional Irish groups and activities - £100,000
- BAME groups and activities - £50,000
- LGBTQ+ groups and activities - £50,000.”

After discussion, during which the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources confirmed that the proposed programme would be financed through the Departmental underspend and that a percentage would be set aside for project management, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

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 10th February.

**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 7th February, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2022 Events						
Dept for Communities and Eventful	7th June 2022	Welcome Reception and entertainment showcase for Harkin Belfast 2022 –a globally significant International Disability Employment Event Numbers attending - 150	A &B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

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Irish Legal History Society	6th July 2022	Welcome Reception for guests attending the 3-day Irish Legal History Society conference taking place in QUB. Numbers attending - 150	A & B	No (waived as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Church of Ireland Young Men's Society Rugby Football Club	26th November 2022	Centenary dinner to celebrate the last 100 years of the club, its history and contribution to sport and social life in the city. Numbers attending – 250 - 400	C	No (Voluntary/NFP)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception <i>or £500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on tables</i>
2023 Events						
Belfast Solicitors Association	10th June 2023	80th Anniversary Gala Dinner to celebrate the BSA promoting highest standard of legal practice. Numbers attending – 130	C	No (Voluntary/NFP)	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No charge Wine Reception <i>or £500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on tables</i>

**For all events noted above numbers and room layout will be reviewed and revised in line with COVID19 social distancing guidelines at the time of each event.*

**Request for use of the City Hall Grounds
– Belfast Mela Festival Carnival**

The Committee acceded to a request from ArtsEkta, the organiser of the Belfast Mela, for the use of the City Hall grounds on 20th August to hold a Belfast Mela Festival Carnival, with an event management plan and risk assessments to be submitted by the organiser in advance of the event.

**Minutes of Meeting of Climate
Crisis Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Climate Crisis Working Group of 31st January.

**Minutes of Meeting of Customer Focus
Task and Finish Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Customer Focus Task and Finish Working Group of 9th February.

Addressing Period Poverty

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of possible interventions to address the issue of period poverty.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested:

- i to approve the provision of free sanitary products in designated staff and public toilets;**
- ii to approve the provision of free sanitary products in identified leisure centres, city centre toilets and parks and open spaces; and**
- iii to note that work is ongoing with community and voluntary sector partners to address this issue as part of overall approaches to lessen the impact of poverty.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 Members may be aware that the provision of free sanitary products has been a consideration for the Council over the last

few years. Officers have considered how best to address this issue within the Council area and brought a report to the Women's Steering group on 2nd December outlining options. Following consideration of available resources, it is recommended that the following actions should be undertaken by the Council;

- the provision of free sanitary products in designated staff and public toilets
- 3.2 Given the costs and anticipated level of use, it is recommended that the Council provides access to free sanitary products in two female bathrooms in both the Cecil Ward and 9 Adelaide buildings, as well as in one female staff bathroom in the City Hall and the accessible bathroom on the ground floor of the City Hall (6 in total). This would not require installation of a vending machine and facilities management staff would ensure stock replenishment.
- 3.3 There would be minimal cost associated with this element, which could be covered through existing budgets.
- Provide access to free sanitary products in identified leisure centres, city centre toilets and parks and open spaces that are the most appropriate locations to ensure availability of products for those in greatest need
- 3.4 Free to access products will be provided in identified locations for an initial one-year pilot. Officers have identified that providing access in a range of Council facilities (which can be accessed without charge) will allow those who are most in need to access free products. This approach will be reviewed to assess demand and emerging issues and officers will bring back further recommendations to the Committee on whether the scheme should be extended or reviewed, alongside an assessment of associated costs.
- 3.5 For a number of years and particularly as part of community responses to the Covid pandemic, community/voluntary and other organisations across the City have and are providing free sanitary products to those in need. This is usually through individual care packs which may include sanitary products, as well as underwear and hygiene products. These care packs are provided to different groups, including rough sleepers, refugees and asylum seekers, people who live in homeless hostels, teenagers living in poverty, people who depend on food banks and community/youth groups.

- 3.6 The Council has allocated considerable resources to support this activity in this financial year and anticipates that further resources will be made available from DfC to support this work in the next financial year. In the past number of weeks, the Council has made another allocation of almost £250,000 to support the provision of food and essential supplies. Partners have reported that the cost of sanitary products mean that they are a key need that any response to poverty has to consider.
- 3.7 In addition to the areas of work outlined above, the Community Awareness and Waste Education teams are currently developing a business case that will provide a pilot initiative that provides access to free or reduced cost reusable sanitary products. This project will raise awareness and encourage increased use of these products, which will reduce ongoing costs for individuals and also have a benefit to the environment by reducing the amount of sanitary waste that is produced.
- 3.8 A further detailed report on this issue will be brought to the People and Communities committee for consideration. Given that this is a new concept, officers anticipate that there will be significant public interest.

Financial implications

Costs for the initial pilots can be provided through existing budgets so there is no requirement for an additional financial resource at this stage. Further detail on ongoing costs will be provided following the review of the pilot.

Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications

Many of the individuals who would benefit from this project are from S75 groups, in designing the project, consideration will be given to ensuring access to all groups.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that the scheme be extended to include the Council’s independently managed community centres.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Bloody Friday - 50th Anniversary Commemoration

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

“This Council remembers with great sadness the horror of the events of 21st July 1972, which became known as ‘Bloody Friday’, when the Provisional IRA exploded over 20 bombs across this City within a period of 80 minutes, resulting in the deaths of 9 people and physical injuries to over 130 others. The Council commits to providing its citizens with the

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opportunity to engage in a programme of commemoration but also education, designed to build positive relationships for the future.

On this 50th anniversary year, the Council will reach out to survivors and family members of those killed or injured on 'Bloody Friday' through organisations such as the South East Fermanagh Foundation which have supported them, to organise acts of solemn remembrance for all victims and survivors of this atrocity, and to organise other suitable events which will capture our rejection of terrorism in this City, both during 'The Troubles' and in the future.

The proposal was seconded by Alderman Kingston.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor McLaughlin,

"This Council recognises the hurt and trauma of all victims, families and survivors from the past conflict here in the City of Belfast.

The Council notes that throughout the following years and decades there will be significant anniversaries for citizens of this City regarding the conflict on this part of the island.

The Council reiterates its commitment to doing everything in its power to ensure that violence is a thing of the past.

Belfast City Council will ensure that all those who were affected by our recent past are recognised equally.

That is why the Council will dedicate one day a year in which we remember the past and create a space for victims and survivors of all communities to commemorate and remember the past, while encouraging reconciliation between our communities.

Lastly, the Council will seek to erect a memorial for all those impacted by our past and will be dedicated to all victims, survivors, and families."

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

At the request of Councillor McAllister, Councillor Pankhurst agreed to amend his proposal to reflect that the Party Leaders would discuss the potential for holding a separate day of reflection to remember all of the victims of the Troubles in Belfast.

Accordingly, the original motion, as amended and set out below, was put to the meeting when twelve Members voted for and seven against and it was declared carried:

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“This Council remembers with great sadness the horror of the events of 21st July 1972, which became known as ‘Bloody Friday’, when the Provisional IRA exploded over 20 bombs across this City within a period of 80 minutes, resulting in the deaths of 9 people and physical injuries to over 130 others. The Council commits to providing its citizens with the opportunity to engage in a programme of commemoration but also education, designed to build positive relationships for the future.

On this 50th anniversary year, the Council will reach out to survivors and family members of those killed or injured on ‘Bloody Friday’ through organisations such as the South East Fermanagh Foundation which have supported them, to organise acts of solemn remembrance for all victims and survivors of this atrocity, and to organise other suitable events which will capture our rejection of terrorism in this City, both during ‘The Troubles’ and in the future.

In addition, the Party Leaders will discuss the potential for holding a separate day of reflection to remember all of the victims of the Troubles in Belfast.”

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 8th February, 2022

REMOTE MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Cobain (Chairperson);
Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey;
Councillors Baker, Black, Bunting, Michael Collins,
Corr, Garrett, M. Kelly, McAteer, Mulholland, Newton, Smyth
and Verner.

Also attended: Councillors Brooks and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. R. Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were recorded on behalf of Councillors Flynn, Magee and McReynolds.

Condolences

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, extended his condolences to Councillor Magee on the recent death of his father.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 11th and 25th January were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the omission of the minute of 11th January, under the heading "Erection of Dual Language Street Sign at Clifton Street", which was subject to a valid call-in requisition.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following 4 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 Committee meeting during discussion on the following 3 items as, due to their nature, there would be a disclosure of exempt

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information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, in May 2021, the Council had agreed to provide £128,500 of funding to the Belfast Advice Group (BAG) towards the provision of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS). Following due diligence, the Council had allocated this financial support with an initial allocation of £75,000, followed by an additional £53,000. The total funding request for the service had been £257,000.

In addition, the Council had also received an allocation of £70,400 towards Welfare Reform Mitigations - Tribunal Representation which had also been paid to the BCTS. This had represented a total allocation of £198,900 in 2021/22. The final £53,000 payment was dependent on completion of a business case and the BCTS had appointed a contractor to produce this. The Director advised that officers had been working with the BAG and had provided feedback on the development of the business plan, however, the final draft of the report was still not available for consideration.

The Committee was asked to note that the BCTS had advised that it was experiencing financial pressures and was therefore asked to consider if it wished to release the agreed £53,000 funding now, in advance of receipt of the business plan, to enable ongoing service delivery. In addition, the Director advised that the BCTS had also requested £2,349.00 of funding to cover the identified deficit for the service in 2021/22.

Several of the Members praised the work of the Belfast Tribunal Service and Department of Communities for the excellent work both undertook in the delivery of these essential services.

The Committee

- noted the previous recommendation that Council would provide up to £128,500 funding to the BCTS for 2021/22 and agreed to release the final £53,000 element of this funding and noted that officers would continue to work with the BAG to bring its final business plan to the Committee; and
- agreed the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service request for £2,349.00 funding to cover the identified deficit in 2021/22.

**Requests for the Use of Parks
for 2022 Events**

The Committee considered requests seeking permission for the use of various parks and facilities during 2022, as follows:

- AVA Festival Bespoke Campsite – 3rd – 4th June at Victoria Park;
- Féile an Phobail annual events programme at Falls Park and Dunville Park;
- Circus Extreme – 21st October– 6th November at Boucher Road Playing Fields; and
- Belfast Beer and Cider Festival – 18th – 21st May at Botanic Gardens.

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Detailed discussion ensued regarding the need for Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken in regard to events on Council land, specifically in relation to the Féile an Phobail Festival. During discussion several suggestions and proposal were made, however, following consideration all were withdrawn to enable the matter to be further considered by the Party Leaders.

Following a query from a Member, the Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that reviews were carried out after all events and those events that had requested multiple year approval would be subject to such a review, he added that any necessary changes would be implemented in advance of the next year's event and, if necessary, the event permission could be revoked.

The Committee granted authority for the aforementioned requests and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to:

- i. negotiate an appropriate fee which recognises the costs to Council, minimises negative impact on the immediate area and takes account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Manager;
- ii. negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and 'take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:
 - o the promoter resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
 - o compliance with Coronavirus restrictions in place at the time of the event; and
 - o the promoter meeting all the statutory requirements of the Planning and Building Control Service including the terms and conditions of the Park's Entertainment Licence.

The Committee further agreed that those events that had sought multiple year approval would be subject to annual review, pending a satisfactory initial pilot year. The Director of Neighbourhood services would liaise with the relevant officers and take advice on appropriate changes to event management were necessary and this would include the removal of permission if required.

The Members noted that the above recommendations were taken as a pre-policy position, in advance of the Council agreeing a more structured framework and policy for 'Events', which was currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Council's Commercial team

Finally, the Committee agreed that the issue of Equality Impact Assessments in relation to events on Council land be referred to Party Group Leaders for further consideration.

Waste Update

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Committee with a comprehensive update on the following matters:

- Recent Collection Issues - Bryson House Recycling;
- Ongoing Safety Remedial Work Programme at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) – temporary closure of the Blackstaff Way HWRC to facilitate essential maintenance works;

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- Draft Consultation response on Amending Options for the Assessment of Technical Competence available [here](#) ; and
- Consultation on the introduction of mandatory digital waste tracking available [here](#) (consultation closing date for submission - 15th April, comments welcome for consideration for inclusion within the Council response to be received by 28th February).

During discussion the Director addressed several queries in relation to the proposed temporary closure of the Blackstaff Way HWRC. The Director advised that the closure was necessary to enable essential maintenance works to be progressed and she highlighted that there was a very small window of opportunity to undertake the works in advance of the onset of the busy Easter period and the resumption of the gardening season.

Several Members of the Committee expressed concern at the displacement of the existing users of the facility during the closure and the lack of alternative recycling facilities in the area, especially given that Belfast residents were still not allowed the access Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) HWRC's. In addition, concern was expressed that there was currently no access for vehicles at the Springfield Avenue HWRC and the Member urged officers to review this decision in advance of the proposed closure of Blackstaff Way HWRC.

Following consideration, the Committee:

- endorsed the DRAFT Belfast City Council Response to the consultation on amending options for the assessment of technical competence and agreed that it be submitted as the Council's response by the 10th January deadline, subject to Council ratification at its meeting on 1st March; and
- agreed that the Director of Resources and Fleet would investigate further the proposed temporary closure of the Blackstaff Way Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) and the displacement that this would have on the existing users of the facility. She further agreed to establish if cars could be permitted to enter the Springfield Avenue HWRC.

Mullaghglass Update

(Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was referred to a report which provided an update regarding the legal proceedings that had been issued against the Council in respect of the ongoing odour nuisance associated with the Mullaghglass Landfill Site, Lisburn.

Moved by Councillor Michael Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Garrett,

"That the Committee agrees to write to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) urging it to adopt the same arrangements as Belfast City Council and to redirect its waste away from the Mullaghglass Landfill Site."

Discussion ensued, during which several Members discussed whether it was appropriate for the Committee to write to LCCC whilst the legal proceedings were ongoing.

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The Divisional Solicitor suggested that it might be appropriate to leave issuing the letter until after the outcome of the judicial review on 4th March, she added that if the Members did decide to proceed with issuing the correspondence, she would recommend seeking Senior Counsel advice before doing so. The proposer of the motion agreed to amend his proposal to reflect this advice, with the proposal now reading:

“Subject to Senior Council advice, the Committee agrees to write to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) urging it to adopt the same arrangements as Belfast City Council and to redirect its waste away from the Mullaghglass Landfill Site.”

On a vote, thirteen Members voted for the proposal and none against and it was declared carried.

Governance

Addition of Legislation to Council's Scheme of Delegation

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The Committee will be aware that Part 3 of the Council’s Scheme of Delegation delegates a series of functions associated with performing the Council’s statutory role under specific legislation, as listed in Appendix B to the Scheme of Delegation, to the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services or their appropriate nominee. New legislation is required to be added to the Appendix to enable the authorised officers to legally enforce the provisions therein.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee

- Approve the addition of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 to Appendix B of the Scheme of Delegation.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Under the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 new Regulations have been made to prevent smoking in vehicles with children and to prevent children from purchasing nicotine inhaling products. These requirements will come into force on the 1st February 2022 and aim to protect young people.

Smoking in Vehicles with Children

- 3.2 Council Officers currently enforce legislation which prohibits smoking in certain premises, places and vehicles including on public transport and in work vehicles used by more than one person. These new regulations extend the current smoke-free provisions to private vehicles where children are present (anyone under the age of 18), when there is more than one person in the vehicle, and the vehicle is enclosed. It will also be an offence for a driver to fail to prevent smoking in a smoke-free private vehicle. The Regulations will be enforced by both district Councils and the PSNI.
- 3.3 Studies have shown that children and young people are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke as they have a smaller lung capacity and body weight meaning that they breathe more rapidly and inhale more pollutants per pound of body weight than adults. Smoking in a vehicle can generate high levels of airborne particulates and due to the confined space opening windows and air conditioning is not sufficient to remove these.

Preventing the sale of nicotine inhaling products to people under 18

- 3.4 Council Officers also currently enforce legislation which prevents the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18. The Act brings in a similar offence in relation to nicotine inhaling products, which includes e-cigarettes, making it an offence to sell to persons under the age of 18. A further offence in relation to the proxy purchasing of nicotine products is also being introduced. This makes it an offence for a person over the age of 18 to buy, or attempt to buy, a nicotine inhaling product, such as an e-cigarette, on behalf of someone underage.
- 3.5 The long-term health impacts of using e-cigarettes is unknown and there are concerns that they may act as a gateway by some young people into smoking tobacco. Similar legislation already exists across the UK and this will bring e-cigarettes into line with other age-restricted products, such as tobacco and alcohol.
- 3.6 It is envisaged that enforcement of these provisions will align with the existing tobacco control work undertaken by the Tobacco Control Officers. This work is funded by a grant received from the Public Health Agency.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.7 Financial and Human Resources

There are no additional resource implications. This work will be

undertaken under the existing contract between Belfast City Council and the Public Health Agency.

Asset and Other Implications

3.8 None – works aligns with current tobacco control work.

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

3.9 None.”

The Committee approved the addition of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 to Appendix B of the Scheme of Delegation.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Multi Agency Demonstrator

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To further update on the progress of Phase 2 and Phase 3 Department of Justice offer of funding to Belfast City Council to undertake a multi-agency demonstration project to support those at risk of paramilitary attacks in West and North Belfast and their families.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- Note the Phase 2 update and;
- Agree the extension of this demonstrator as detailed in the report.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 A number of years ago the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) requested Belfast City Council (BCC) to act as the lead co-ordinating agency for organisations who had a role in addressing the systemic issues associated with paramilitary style assaults in the Lower Falls geographical area of Belfast.

- 3.2** It was hoped that the sharing of such information would provide an opportunity for early intervention by the organisations to protect victims, their families and improve how organisations involved could react and provide an adequate co-ordinated service. The following work has been undertaken in progressing this.
- 3.3** As the Tackling Paramilitarism work (arising from the Fresh Start Agreement) developed in central government they met regularly with Belfast to better understand if the work in the city adds value, and the Department of Justice subsequently asked Belfast City Council to make an application for funding to further develop this work as they believed there were important lessons to be learned from it.
- 3.4** DoJ allocated £69,000 for this work to be undertaken in Belfast in the 20/21 financial year and Members were updated in February 2020 through Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on the Phase 1 approach. No funding is used to cover the support from existing statutory services, but to bolster the support needed from the community. Additionally, all funding is conditional on working only with accredited (by DoJ) restorative justice schemes as there are high degrees of vulnerability and safeguarding/legal issues with individuals at risk and their families and the appropriate levels of assurance need to be in place.

Phase 2 (April 21 – March 22)

- 3.5** DoJ allocated a further £95,000 for this work to be undertaken in West and extended into North Belfast in the 21/22 financial year and Members were updated in March 2021 through the People and Communities Committee on the Phase 2 approach;
- Memorandum of Understanding developed and signed by all relevant statutory partners clarifying roles and responsibilities and information sharing arrangements agreed.
 - Inclusion of Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA) to work alongside Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) as the accredited restorative practitioners and lead community partners for delivery in West and North Belfast in Phase 2.
 - All partners agreed a safeguarding approach to a community information/intelligence reporting process. The core objectives of the process were to safeguard the individual, their family and protect the community;
 - Fortnightly case management meetings have taken place throughout (including during COVID-19) with both statutory partners and CRJI sharing information regarding young

people at risk of paramilitary style attacks and more importantly taking action to minimise that risk

- An academic from Queens University Belfast is currently undertaking an evaluation with early feedback extremely positive and the final report due by March 2022.

The agreed objectives of the DoJ funded programme are to:

- 3.6 Deliver a targeted, co-ordinated piece of work to address the needs of those under or at risk of threat from paramilitary groups with a particular focus on:-
1. Improve communication, co-ordination amongst service providers creating a process, which allows the sharing of information, whilst meeting all legislative requirements.
 2. Improve the management and flow of information between agencies, administer, monitor and measure threat levels and support for individuals and their families. Update and liaise with all statutory partners recording actions and progress.
 3. Gather the required data and statistics to demonstrate the impact of the PSA multi-agency group.

Phase 3 (April 22 – March 23)

- 3.7 Given the very positive feedback from Phase 2, the Department of Justice have offered a further £90,000 for the 22/23 financial year to cover the following:
- Continuation of the existing work in West and North Belfast led by CRJI and NIA
 - The Phase 3 objectives continue as per Phase 2 and are entirely focussed on preventing paramilitary style attacks in North and West Belfast and supporting/protecting those affected by them.

Financial Implications

- 3.8 The allocated budget for Phase 3 is £90,000 during 22/23 and is entirely provided by external funding received from the Department of Justice.

Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.9 None at present, but given the sensitivity of this work, this will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.”

The Committee noted the Phase 2 update and agreed the extension of the Multi Agency Demonstrator.

Operational

Proposal for Naming New Streets

(Mr. I. Harper, Building Control Manager, attended in connection with the following two items.)

The Committee approved the application for naming a new street in the City as set out below:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Hamilton Road	Between Queens Road, BT3 and Sydenham Road BT3	Nikki McDowell, Titanic Quarter Lim

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

As at least two thirds of the total numbers of persons surveyed in the streets were in favour of the proposal to erect a second street nameplate in Irish at Koram Ring, the Committee approved the application.

Update on Education Around Responsible Dog Ownership

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview, as requested by Members, on the amount spent on advertising on the education of responsible dog ownership, which helps to tackle the problem of dog fouling. The report also demonstrates the return on investment of advertising and how it sits with operational support to educate, advise and regulate this issue.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- Note the overview provided as requested.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

Up until the 2019/20 financial year the marketing budget for department initiatives that required marketing and communication support was determined by and paid for by City and

Neighbourhood Services. Following the marketing and communications structural review and related centralisation of spend in 2018, spend is now determined by the marketing and communications function in consultation with the business area/ department.

3.2 Previous campaign spends

17/18 - £108,300
18/19 - £57,680
19/20 - £25,000 (Jan 2020)
20/21 - £25,000 (Oct 2021)

3.3 Campaign objectives/strategy

The advertising objectives are to generate awareness and to tap into the need to act responsibly, as a dog owner, and to raise awareness of the fines related to enforcement. The key message is 'Pick up or pay up, dog wardens are patrolling your area' and to reduce the number of dog fouling incidents in our city and show our citizens that the council takes this issue seriously. We generally advertise in the winter months as there is an increase in dog fouling in the dark evenings and mornings.

3.4 Media placement

We use a combination of the following to deliver our messaging on dog fouling:

- Radio to reach a large audience quickly and deliver repetition of message
- Bus stops in residential areas and in close proximity to parks and schools, and ads outside newsagents to target dog walkers
- External bus advertising to give an on-street presence and build awareness
- Internal bus panels to target a captive commuter audience
- Online advertising to target people at home

3.5 Our advertising activity allows us to target all Belfast City Council residents during all aspects of their life – showing them that the council is addressing the dog fouling problem in their local area.

3.6 Research

Independent research undertaken by Cognisense in 2019 to evaluate the impact and awareness of the dog fouling campaign (17/18) reported a very low incidence of individuals admitting to having allowed their dog to foul in the last six months. 70% of those asked said they had seen the campaign. The most prevalent

area of recalled advertising was the '£80 fine'. This level of ad recognition is well in excess of the relevant UK awareness norm. Overall prompted awareness was greater than seen in the previous 2017 research. External bus advertising was particularly prominently recalled (85%).

3.7 Results from October 21 campaign

We review all statistics during, and post campaign. We then feed findings into future planning.

- Bus externals – 82% of Belfast adults saw our ad on average 3.4 times
- Bus internals – 30,800 Belfast dog owners notice advertising inside a bus each week
- www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk delivered 320,000 impressions and 423 clicks (click through rate of 0.13% much higher than UK average of 0.13%)
- Belfast Live and Daily Mirror online activity delivered 100,012 page impressions and 144 clicks (click through rate of 0.14%).
- Panels at bus stops and newsagents - 73% of all adults in Belfast saw our ad on average 12.5 times.
- Facebook – strong engagement rates

3.8 In September 2021 there were 128 instances of illegal dog fouling incidents recorded (as part of the 5% random sampling of streets). In October 2021 this had decreased to 101 incidents – a 22% decrease. (It should be noted that the second surveys for Central and City were not carried out due to illness in the section so this may have affected the figures recorded and may have contributed to the decrease in dog fouling incidents recorded).

3.9 Dog Warden Service & Fouling Fines

The Dog Warden Service operates from 08.00 hours to 20.00 hours seven days a week. The team consists of 12 dog wardens and 2 Supervisors. They work in teams of three, with two teams operating daily.

3.10 The service was impacted by COVID 19 restrictions but was partially recovered by August 2020 and has continued to resume activities in the intervening period.

3.11 It should be noted that, as part of an overall transformation project across the City Services Department, management are conducting a resource analysis with the support of Human Resources and the Continuous Improvement teams which includes our Dog Warden Service.

3.12 With approximately 12,000 dogs in the Belfast City Council area, the Dog Warden's role incorporates many activities including:

- Responding to service requests.
- Investigation of complaints.
- Investigation of dog attacks.
- Detecting and dealing with straying or uncontrolled dogs.
- Detecting and dealing with infringements of the legislation, including issuing notices.
- Preparing investigation/evidence files and court attendance where necessary.
- Detecting and dealing with dogs prescribed under the Dangerous Dogs (NI) Order 1991.
- Collecting stray or unwanted dogs and taking them to the appropriate kennelling facility.
- Making recommendations for enforcement action with regards to dog attacks and the imposition of control conditions.
- Assessing conditions of dogs in our care, and dogs seen on properties and referring them to animal welfare where necessary.
- Inspecting and making recommendations for the registration of breeding establishments and guard-dog kennels under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011.
- Patrolling streets and public places.

3.13 To detect owners who let their dog foul in public places and don't pick up their mess, the dog wardens are deployed on routine proactive monitoring patrols. However, securing detections is challenging as in order to effect a prosecution we must witness an irresponsible dog owner in the act, which is unlikely. It is widely recognised that the problem of dog fouling cannot be addressed solely by enforcement intervention. It requires a three-pronged approach which recognises the need to encourage behavioural change, supported by enforcement and underpinned by a regular cleansing regime.

3.14 In order to enhance the patrols undertaken by the Dog Wardens, the following operational arrangements have been reinstated:

- The Dog Warden Supervisor and the Dog Wardens will liaise with the Area OSSS management teams and other enforcement staff in their respective areas to discuss priority areas and hotspots.
- Scheduling of patrols most days at particular times has resumed in the last number of weeks, including early mornings and evenings when resources permit in response to complaints and/or information that identifies a 'hot spot'.

- 3.15 The table below indicates the level of enforcement activities relating to dog fouling offences within the last four years. Covid-19 restrictions have impacted the number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling in the last two years for a number of reasons. The public health restrictions have impacted on staffing levels due to a number of officers having had to isolate due to contact with Covid or having tested positive for Covid. Due to concerns around contracting the virus, the teams had to approach individuals with caution and only where absolutely necessary. Also, the general public when approached were reluctant to engage and sometimes hostile, due to fear of infection.

Year	Total Number of Dog Fouling Fines
17-18	79
18-19	62
19-20	99
20-21	5
21-22YTD	15

3.16 Community Awareness Team

A summary of the Community Awareness Team (CAT) activities focused on responsible dog ownership is outlined below:

- The team has incorporated responsible dog ownership including dog fouling in all their school activity sessions.
- During the Covid recovery phase we are undertaking outdoor playground litter/ waste education sessions which includes dog fouling, in addition we have adapted our resources to be able to offer online workshops with schools.
- A supply of dog bags are regularly distributed to Community Centres for members of the public – this is a resource that the public can avail of if they find themselves without a dog bag in the locality.
- This summer we offered litter game sessions to community centre based summer schemes. This included a dog fouling game to reinforce the dog fouling message and the consequences of noncompliance.
- We have worked with the Dogs Trust supporting them with their microchipping promotion sessions at community centres.
- We normally attend a number of community and parks events with our animation Scoop Dog, including Family Fun Days, Spring and Autumn Fair.

- We launched the Green Dog Walkers project in Belfast. On signing, individuals pledge to commit to the principles of good dog ownership.
- We work with our Dog Wardens Service to ensure compliance with licensing requirements which has resulted in a number of unlicensed dogs being identified.
- We delivered the pilot dog fouling stencilling project in the parks.

Other initiatives

- 3.17 As part of our campaign monitoring, Corporate Communications review all social media comments and feed back to the department with information on parks and streets where dog fouling is a problem. One of the reoccurring messages was that the public did not see dog wardens on our streets. Dog wardens patrol in Belfast City Council marked vans, however at times they need to be discreet to enable them to detect offences. Therefore, we designed magnetic panels for their vans which can be attached when commuting from area to area and removed when required.
- 3.18 There has also been a high level of messages on social media about dog fouling within our parks. To tackle this issue dog fouling related stencils were placed in 19 of our parks in the summer months.
- 3.19 Whilst we recognise that marketing and communications alone does not eliminate and dramatically reducing dog fouling, what it does do is reinforce a message which needs high levels of awareness in order to try and influence behavioural change. As per the research results mentioned above, our campaigns perform well in terms of advertising recall and reach the intended audience. We also work closely with the department to determine 'hot spot' areas which see high levels of dog fouling incidents and as such we are then able to target our messaging and advertising within these areas using the appropriate channels to do so. As dog fouling is a behavioural trait it is vitally important that we continue to generate awareness of the issue and the consequences via ongoing marketing and communication support.

Financial & Resource Implications

- 3.20 There are no additional financial implications associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.21 There are no implications associated with this report."

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Several of the Members welcomed the report and drew reference to the ongoing and unacceptable levels of dog fouling throughout the City. The Committee discussed at length possible further measures that could be adopted to try and encourage responsible dog ownership through education and enforcement.

During discussion thanks was expressed to the staff in the Dog Warden Service for their ongoing efforts and commitment.

It was moved by Councillor Garrett, seconded by Councillor Verner and unanimously agreed that an operational review and refresh of the 'Responsible Dog Ownership Campaign' be undertaken by officers that, along with other areas that might be identified, should include Education, Enforcement and Cleansing, with the findings to be submitted in due course to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

**Update on the Reference Group
on Older People**

The Committee was advised that a meeting of the Reference Group on Older People had been held on 24th January and the Director of City Services provided a brief overview of the items that had been considered:

- Update on Age-friendly Belfast;
- Update on Older Volunteers Celebration 2021; and
- Update in respect of Safe Seniors Packs.

The Committee:

Approved and adopted the minutes and the recommendations from the Reference Group on Older People meeting held on 24th January, 2022.

**Update on Vandalism at
Bloomfield Football Club (Verbal)**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with an update regarding the recent incident of vandalism to the dugouts at Bloomfield Football Club. He advised that officers were currently liaising with officials from the Club and that consideration was currently being given as to what additional measures could be put in place to prevent further incidents.

The Members noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would outline the options available.

Noted.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 9th February, 2022

REMOTE MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson);
Aldermen Dorrian and Kingston; and
Councillors, Beattie, Brooks, Donnelly, Ferguson, Gormley,
Hanvey, Heading, Howard, T. Kelly, Long, Lyons,
Maskey, McLaughlin, McMullan and O'Hara.

In attendance: Mr. A. Reid, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Ms. E. Henry, Senior Manager - Culture and Tourism;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 12th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor McMullan declared an interest in respect of item 5(a) on the agenda, under the heading 'External Market Application - Banana Block', in that he was on the Eastside Partnership Board.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the report associated with the following two items was 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 five 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.

**Continental Market -
Proposed Procurement Approach**

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee of the contract status of the Continental Market and the intention to issue a new procurement exercise in the coming months and gave the Members an overview of the impact the 2021 Christmas Market had on the city.

The Committee:

- Noted the contract status of the Continental Market and the intention to issue a new procurement exercise in the March 2022, subject to approval by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee;
- Noted the early feedback on the 2021 market and performance in previous years; and
- Noted the emerging issues for consideration as part of the upcoming procurement exercise and agreed with the proposals included in the report.

A City Imagining Investment Programme Update

The Director of Economic Development and the Culture and Tourism Senior Manager provided the Committee with an update on the outcome of the most recent two-year cultural multi-annual grants funding process.

The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report and agreed to the recommendations for cultural multi-annual grants 2022-2024 and extension of Pathfinder grants; and
- agreed to operate and exercise Delegated Authority for small grants including Arts and Heritage Project Funding and Community Festivals Fund 2022/23.

Matters referred back from Council

**Notice of Motion - Free Public Transport for
Young People - Responses**

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reported that correspondence had been received from the Minister for Infrastructure and Translink in response to a Motion which had been passed by Council at its meeting on 10th January, which requested the implementation of a pilot scheme of free public transport for young people in Belfast.

The Committee:

- noted the correspondence as set out in the report; and

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- agreed to write to the Finance Minister, with reference to the Council's ambition for a greater allocation of funding towards public transport infrastructure.

Regenerating Places & Improving Infrastructure

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy referred to the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy (BCCRIS) which had been produced by Belfast City Council in 2015 and had, subsequently, been adopted by the Department for Communities and represented the agreed regeneration policy for the city centre and outlined the aspirations for continued growth and regeneration.

He informed the Committee that the Belfast City Centre Regeneration Tracker provided a snapshot of regeneration activity during 2021 and provided the Members with a presentation which outlined progress linked to each of the undernoted eight core policies of BCCRIS:

- Increase the residential population;
- Increase the employment population;
- Manage the rental offer;
- Maximise the tourism opportunity;
- Create a regional learning and innovation centre;
- Create a green centre, accessible to cyclists and walkers;
- Connect the surrounding city; and
- Enhance shared space and social impact.

The Committee noted that a further comprehensive summary report on the Belfast City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy would be brought back to the Committee, which would provide a detailed update on the various thematic areas, projects and Special Action Areas as identified within BCCRIS.

All Island Strategic Rail Review Consultation Process

The Director of City Regeneration and Development reported that the Infrastructure Minister, Nichola Mallon, and the Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan T.D., had announced the launch of an all-island Strategic Rail Review in April 2021 and that a consultation paper had been subsequently published in November, which aimed to consider how the rail network on the island of Ireland could improve sustainable connectivity between major cities, enhance regional accessibility and support balanced regional development.

She pointed out that the New Decade New Approach Deal, which had been published in 2020, to restore the power-sharing Executive included a commitment to achieve greater connectivity on the island of Ireland, by road, rail and air, and that officers had, through the Department for Infrastructure and the initial consultancy team, provided the outworkings from the pre-feasibility stage into the Strategic Rail Review and would

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continue to engage through these forums and report back to the Committee at the appropriate stages.

She referred the Members to the Council's consultation response to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review which invited respondents to rank a number of policy opportunities that a better connected and high-speed rail network would present for an island economy. She informed the Committee that the Council response ranked the policy opportunities in the following order:

1. Improve All-Island connectivity between major cities;
2. Foster economic activity;
3. Contribute to decarbonisation;
4. Encourage sustainable mobility;
5. Achieve economic and financial feasibility; and
6. Enhance regional and rural accessibility.

She stated that, in line with the timeframes of the consultation, the response had been submitted with a caveat that the response would remain subject to agreement by the Committee and subsequent ratification by full Council at its meeting in March.

The Committee:

- Approved the Council's consultation response submission to the All-Island Strategic Rail Review;
- Noted that the response had been submitted by the closing date of 21 January 2022, on the basis that it would remain subject to the approval of this Committee and subsequent Council ratification in March; and
- Noted that the expansion of rail halts along the Shore Road, previously agreed by Council in its response to the BRT Phase 2 - Draft Consultation, would be included in the final response.

DfC Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Council's response to the public consultation by the Department for Communities (DfC) in relation to the Draft Housing Supply Strategy.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note that DfC has published a consultation on the Draft Housing Supply Strategy with a closing date of 9th February 2022 for responses.
- Approve the draft response to the consultation for submission to DfC, noting that this has drawn upon the extensive Call for Evidence Council submission from July 2021 (as per Council ratification in September 2021), as well as comments from Members at the CG&R Committee Housing Led Regeneration Workshop on 26th January 2022. Given the deadline for submission the response will be submitted as draft pending Council ratification in March 2022.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Draft Housing Supply Strategy

Members will be aware that the Communities Minister announced in her statement to the Assembly on 3rd November 2020 that officials were to commence work on the development of a fundamental Housing Supply Strategy (HSS), as a key part of the housing programme to help meet Programme for Government commitments to reduce housing stress and increase housing supply.

3.2 In May 2021, the Minister launched a public Call for Evidence (CfE) to inform this new Housing Supply Strategy. Council submitted an extensive response to the Call for Evidence in July 2021. This response was brought via Party Group Leaders and CG&R Committee in August 2021 and the final response ratified by Council in September 2021.

3.3 Members will recall that the Department outlined the development of HSS would be delivered in six phases as follows:

Phase 1 - Pre-development work (completed)
Phase 2 - Call for Evidence and Research Review (completed)
Phase 3 - Engagement (completed)
Phase 4 - Data synthesis (completed)
Phase 5 - Triangulation of Evidence/Policy Options (completed)
Phase 6 - Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy

3.4 This current and final phase, phase 6 Consultation on Draft Housing Supply Strategy, emphasises the central role of people, places, and communities in considering and delivering on housing needs and demands. The Department have advised that collaborative working across central and

local government and with the private and voluntary and community sectors, as well as the lived experiences of a range of users, have been used to help shape solutions to help ensure the Strategy will make a difference to the challenges facing the housing supply system. Responses to the questions within this consultation will be analysed, along with any other sources of evidence and information to help finalise the Housing Supply Strategy

- 3.5** The department published the consultation on the Draft HSS on 8th December 2021 with a closing date of 9th February 2022. The Department has highlighted that it welcomes and encourages responses from all interested parties, and they are keen to hear from a wide range of bodies, groups, and individuals from within the housing and related sectors as well as more generally across society.
- 3.6** The publication of this draft Strategy has been supported by a series of focused engagement events held throughout the duration of the consultation period, including public workshop sessions. This included a session held virtually on Friday 14th January 2022 attended by a number of Council Officers, as well as by representatives from other local Councils and community planners. Officers highlighted various issues which have also been reflected in the current draft response as appended. It is intended that the final Strategy will be published in March 2022.
- 3.7** The draft Housing Supply Strategy, informed by the Call for Evidence exercise in 2021 and other evidence, sets out a pathway and framework for action until 2037. DfC has indicated that this is the first step in a 15-year journey that will set a direction of travel to transform supply while recognising that the range of housing supply ‘whole system challenges’ identified require ‘whole system solutions’. This approach recognises that housing is an integrated system, with what impacts on one sector often having a ripple effect across the whole housing market. The key components of the Strategy are:
- **Strategic Context** - where we are now in terms of housing supply, where we need to be and how we are going to get there. This covers the Whole System Approach, the Strategy vision and objectives and potential indicators that will be used to measure our progress.
 - **Creating Affordable Options** - how we will supply the right number and type of affordable homes in the right places to meet our housing needs and demands.

This section addresses key issues including how we address our infrastructure constraints, optimise funding opportunities and create the right policy and legislative framework to support housing supply.

- **Prevention and Intervention** - how we can prevent homelessness and reduce housing stress, as well as providing the right housing solutions and support for those most in need. This section focuses on providing more diverse housing types and alternative models of housing to meet different housing needs and recognising the importance of a holistic approach to housing.
- **Quality and Safety** - how we will improve the quality, efficiency, and design of homes, to ensure a high standard for everyone regardless of the type of home. Consideration is given to diverse range of areas, including building regulation, work to improve the private rented sector and protect our social housing.
- **Better Places** - how we will build and maintain thriving and inclusive communities and places with community wealth building at the heart, which prioritises a people-centred approach to rebuilding our local areas into places that support the wellbeing of those who live there. The section considers options around mixed tenure, place-shaping, and the role of Local Development Plans in achieving this.
- **Decarbonisation** – sets out how the construction of new housing and the retrofitting of existing homes will play a key role in meeting our carbon reduction targets. Also set out is how we will support people in delivering these ambitions and ensure a just transition for everyone.
- **Delivering the Strategy** – how we will deliver the Strategy over its lifetime, including a focus on doing things differently and the role of action plans in achieving our objectives.

3.8 The Consultation consists of 14 questions under the following themes:

- **Strategic Framework**
- **Measurement**
- **Delivery and Oversight**
- **Action Planning**
- **Citizen Engagement**
- **Equality**
- **Rural**
- **General**

3.9 Council's draft response highlights a number of key considerations relevant in developing and delivering the Housing Supply Strategy to ensure the ambitions of the Belfast Agenda are realised in relation to Housing Supply, to meet the demands of attracting 66,000 additional residents to the city. The draft response is attached and it worth highlighting a number of key points made in the response:

- **There are currently a number of policy, financial and structural challenges to delivery of placemaking housing regeneration schemes via public /private partnerships and this is significantly impacting on the ability to delivery of regenerative housing at scale. Council would propose that a Task Group be set up to undertake a sharp, short, and focused review of these challenges and the mechanisms to overcome. This is critical to understand and deliver on optimal ways of working and delivery vehicles that involve the public sector working with the private sector and funders to bring forward appropriate housing development opportunities in a more agile way thus ensuring the required processes, delivery vehicles, funding and supporting infrastructure are aligned to deliver agreed outcomes to provide for appropriate housing development at scale whilst ensuring proper integrated placemaking.**
- **Homeless Demographic – According to NIHE figures at the end March 2021 at least 11,781 Belfast households were on the waiting list for a social home. At least 8,689 of them were living in housing stress, and of this group, at least 6,851, equivalent to 4.8% of Belfast households, were recognised as Full Duty Applicant homeless. It is therefore important to highlight that Housing supply is not just about mixed tenure (social, affordable, private) but the homeless demographic has an increasing level of unmet need also. There is a pressing need to articulate how this will be reflected within the Housing Supply Strategy.**
- **Infrastructure - There is a need to ensure that the resourcing deficit with required wastewater infrastructure including exploration of the potential for alternative funding models, is urgently addressed to ensure this does not prohibit housing development. The HSS should demonstrate that there is a clear route map to show how the housing growth ambitions can be facilitated in terms of all the requisite infrastructure**

requirements and particularly in relation to the wastewater infrastructure.

- **Innovation and Inclusive Growth Commission: ‘Reset for Growth’ Report** – highlighted a number of key points which are relevant to the development and delivery of the Housing Supply Strategy and of particular note are the strong recommendations around the need for structural models to support public-private collaboration and Housing Investment Funds, with relevant extracts as below:
 - ***Renewed Future City – Housing:*** There are a number of levers required to action the commitments of the Belfast Agenda at the pace and scale necessary to make an impact, which are not currently in place. A number of key gaps have been identified, principally in terms of the structural models required to support public-private collaboration and access to finance to bring forward developments. The Commission propose the establishment of a number of new institutions, namely Strategic Land Partnerships and Housing Investment Funds. The Commission feel that the scale of the task will require further intervention, particularly in stimulating private sector development, including affordable housing provision. For this reason, they suggest that the regional government and the Treasury should consider developing a Housing Investment Fund. This model has been successful in stimulating new housing construction at scale across a range of classes in many UK cities.
 - **Key Proposition:** Create sustainable, vibrant communities in the city centre, delivering 11,500 new homes by 2035. The Commission’s proposals to accelerate delivery include Council, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Department for Communities (DfC) establishing a delivery vehicle to utilise public sector land and undertake land assembly to facilitate new low carbon housing at scale across the city centre. (Note – as Members are aware a Housing Regeneration Group has now been set up under the Community Planning Partnership: City Development Board with BCC, NIHE, LPS and DfC, with a key focus of the group in identifying and utilising public sector lands). Vehicle should also develop housing mix,

amenities, and neighbourhood development plan for city core. Target: 11,500 new homes in 10 years. Create new financial instruments including Housing Investment Funds to address market challenges related to risk and yield.

- **Funding – Council advocate for consideration of how FTC and the Northern Ireland Investment Fund, Levelling Up Funds or other funding can be best utilised or refocused to support housing led regeneration priorities and unlock development. Of critical importance, particularly where there are viability issues and to underpin proper placemaking, there is a need for funding to facilitate enabling infrastructure for housing development. Specific funding for this should be prioritised in order to bring forward housing led regeneration schemes at scale.**
- **Collaboration – There is a need to ensure commitment to a collaborative public - private sector approach to unlocking key challenges with identified major city housing led regeneration schemes, recognising that these will not only contribute to housing supply but can act as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth. Council would advocate for optimal stakeholder/delivery vehicles for progression. This includes the need for the Department to continue collaboratively working with the Council, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Housing Associations, and the private sector to bring forward mixed tenure residential development across the city, and particular exemplar schemes within the city centre, including the strategic use of public sector lands and addressing current policies which inhibit Housing Associations to maximise housing led regeneration delivery.**
- **Planning Policy –the submission does question the credibility of the HGIs and the proposed regional housing target. Although the Strategy refers to the Review of the Planning Act and reform in planning, which are undoubtedly important to housing delivery, the evidence doesn't seem to support this overly simplistic assertion given the degree of extant permissions that exist as illustrated in the housing monitor annually.**
- **Current Policy and Legislation – in relation to ensuring the appropriate policy frameworks are in place to accelerate housing supply, it is understood that there**

are issues with the current Housing Association Guidelines, which strongly need addressed. Our current understanding would suggest that the following issues need to be addressed:

- **Land:** These require a housing association to have acquired land ownership prior to award/payment of grant assistance (land purchase, construction). However, where the land is currently in public ownership then there is scope, utilising the Development Brief process, for reflecting this public ownership of land as distinct from privately owned thereby potentially negating the need for the housing association to initially acquire a site. This ties directly into when a housing association would be expected to then pay to acquire publicly owned land and to explore potential for deferred terminal payment or equity ground rent payment approaches which will also assist with de-risking development.
- **Delivery of private sector tenure as part of a mixed tenure development is also currently impeded by Article 15 of the Housing Order with limitation on delivery of private housing by housing associations to the existing co-ownership model only (i.e., no private sales or rentals). With the desire for city centre development to be delivered across all three housing tenures there is an urgent need to address this policy issue if this objective is to be advanced.**
- **Barriers:** BCC have commented through the Call for Evidence response that the 3 main barriers to delivery of the Housing Supply are Funding, Delivery Vehicles & Land. Delivery of joined up policies and having supported and properly joined up infrastructure, with all 3 having to be overcome to support the development and growth ambitions of the Belfast Agenda, will be required.
- **Current lack of a policy on affordable housing, aligned to the revised definition of affordable housing, represents a risk to housing associations developing a business case in absence of affordable housing products.**
- **Whilst not policy per se – lack of a city centre waiting list impacts on clarity for housing associations on latent demand.**

- Rent Levels – welcome clarity on whether the housing supply strategy will cover rent levels and controls, however mindful that this may be picked up in other legislation.
 - A Bolder Vision – which has ‘*Promote City Centre Living*’ as one of its 4 key moves aimed at encouraging city centre living by ensuring the enabling infrastructure is in place to facilitate city centre living with place making at its heart. It highlights the importance of providing greater quality, choice and affordability of accommodation and of critical importance is establishing a city-wide network of people friendly routes and city parks to create and underpin a liveable city centre. Council believes that the delivery of A Bolder Vision priorities via the joint BCC/DfI/DfC approach will be critical to the successful delivery of city centre living. From a Belfast perspective therefore, Council would highlight that the future delivery of A Bolder Vision is intrinsically linked to the HSS and should be embedded within Central Government /Executive priorities.
 - High Street Task Force – city centre living is critical to the reimagining and future sustainability of the high street / city centre and should be central to the High Street Task Force recommendations and embedded within Executive funding priorities. Increased City Centre Living is also a key area within the Council’s Future City Centre Programme which is charting the way forward for the diversification and sustainability of city centre uses. The Future City Programme is a multi-faceted programme that seeks to bring together a number of strategic initiatives and projects within one overall programme approach to address the issues impacting upon the city centre. It includes projects and interventions across various pillars of work centred on regeneration and connectivity, increased city centre living, investment, inclusive economic and cultural growth.
- 3.10 Responses have been coordinated from across Council and draw on the Call for Evidence submission from July 2021, which was ratified by Council in September 2021, as well as comments from Members following the Housing Led Regeneration Workshop on 26 January 2022.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no finance or resource implications associated with this report.

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.”

Councillor Ferguson indicated that, although she would not dissent from the recommendations within the report, to allow submission of the response in accordance with the timelines of the consultation, she intended to make representation around additional issues in relation to addressing waiting lists and public housing on public lands.

The Committee:

- Noted that DfC had published a consultation on the Draft Housing Supply Strategy, with a closing date of 9th February 2022 for responses;
- Approved the draft response to the consultation for submission to DfC, noting that it had drawn upon the extensive Call for Evidence Council submission from July 2021 (as per Council ratification in September 2021), as well as comments from Members at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee Housing Led Regeneration Workshop on 26th January 2022; and
- Noted that, given the deadline for submission, the response would be submitted in draft, pending Council ratification in March 2022.

Supporting Vibrant Business Destinations: Update

The Director of Economic Development provided the Committee with an update on the work that was being carried out to support local commercial districts through the Supporting Vibrant Businesses Destinations Programme.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in October 2021, the Members had been advised that, following discussion with the Department for Communities, an opportunity had been identified to secure resources through the DfC Revitalisation Programme and that the Enterprise and Business Growth Team had subsequently secured funding of £475,000. He reported that the funding would be supplemented by a £30,000 contribution from Council resources for the delivery of advice and support to assist with the scheme and that the pilot initiative aimed to support up to ten business association to a maximum of £40,000 each for expenditure on a range of eligible activities.

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He reported that the initiative would operate over a 21-month period and would have a two-stage application process and outlined the basic eligibility criteria to the Committee.

He informed the Committee that the Enterprise and Business Growth Team had been coordinating the programme of work in partnership with the City Regeneration and Development Team with input from officers across the Council, DfC and DfI.

He added that Communications and marketing activity had commenced to raise awareness of the scheme and that officers had been receiving expressions of interest and were engaging with applicants, offering guidance and advice, as required.

The Committee:

- Noted the update on the work to support the delivery of area-based Vibrant Business Destinations;
- Noted that the pilot initiative was currently open to Expressions of Interest from local business/traders groups located outside the city centre and Business Improvement Districts; and
- Noted that this work intended to complement a wider programme of support and activity that was taking place within the city centre, including the targeted interventions to address vacancies and previous business support interventions through the Revitalisation Programme.

**City Place-Making and DfC Covid-19
Revitalisation Programme Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Committee on the ongoing DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme including an Extension of Time to the Programme and the reallocation of underspends. To also update Members on upcoming Ministerial Advisory Group Design Review Workshops and the ‘*Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City*’ Seminar being organised by Healthy North Belfast

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee Members are asked to:

- **Note that an Extension of Time has been formally granted for the DfC Covid -19 Revitalisation Programme until September 2022.**

- Note the current level of underspend within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and reallocation of funding to the Church Lane & Linen Quarter schemes.
- Agree the reallocation of underspend from the Council funded (Non-Recurring money agreed at June 2021 SP&R) from the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme underspend to the previously agreed Linen Quarter Bid projects, with the remaining underspend to be allocated to the wider Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme.
- Agree that given timescales, and in line with the CG&R Committee approval in August 2021 that future underspends realised within the programme are utilised to meet additional costs on previously agreed and committed projects, that this Committee delegate authority to the Director of City Regeneration and Development to reallocate the remaining unallocated underspend and any further underspends to meet cost increases on previously agreed and committed projects and to report back to this Committee retrospectively.
- Note the proposed Ministerial Advisory Group Design Review Workshops and agree the attendance of the CG&R Chair and Deputy Chair or their nominated representatives.
- Note the upcoming '*Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City*' seminar which is being held on 9 February.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The CG&R Committee have received regular updates and provided approvals relating to the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme, providing updates on the £4.039m capital programme including providing approvals on time and budget implications. In August 2021 Members were updated on the Extension of Time to the programme from September 2021 to March 2021, and Members agreed that any further underspends realised within the Programme are utilised to meet any additional costs incurred on previously agreed and committed projects with updates on these reallocations to be brought to this Committee at a future date.

3.2 Main Report

Extension of Time

A summary status update of the projects within the Programme are included within Appendix 1 of this report. Members are asked to note in particular the status of the Castle Place Kiosk and the Entries Phase 2 which are at risk of overrunning the Programme deadline of March 2022 due to ongoing Statutory Process. While officers are working with the Statutory Agencies to bring these issues to a close Members are asked to note that an Extension of Time until September 2022 has been requested and approved by DfC to enable these matters to be addressed. The remaining elements of the programme are expected to be complete by March 2022 although this is still very much dependant on ongoing Covid-19 and supply chain issues.

3.3 Reallocation of Underspend

The following underspends have been realised within the DfC Covid 19 Revitalisation programme:

- Covid-19 Business Grants – an underspend of £57,284 realised following applications withdrawing from the process or differences in awarded amounts vs actual spend as previously reported to Committee.
- Thrives Project – an underspend of £8k due to funding contribution from Dfl.
- In addition to the underspend a overspend of £7,548 was realised in the Public Safety Signage and Messaging project.

3.4 In order to keep schemes on programme, and in line with the approvals of this Committee in August 2021, £50k of the DfC Revitalisation underspend has been reallocated to the Church Lane project to provide additional lighting, murals and planting along Church Lane, and also encapsulating Coles Alley to address substantial ASB issues in the area, following ongoing engagement and development work with BIDOne and the areas stakeholders. It is also proposed to reallocate £7,736 to the Linen Quarter suite of projects as further defined in item 3.6 of this report.

3.5 In additional to the DfC funding for the programme it was agreed at SP&R in June 2021 that Council would allocate a further £450k from Non-Recurring Monies to meet the outstanding demand of the Business Cluster & Community Grant scheme. All applications have now been assessed and

notified, with 51 successful applicants. This process resulted in a £81,631 underspend within the Councils Non-Recurring allocation.

3.6 With regard to the remaining underspend Members are asked to approve the reallocation of Council provided Non-Recurring money from the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme to the wider Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme. It is proposed that this reallocation, in combination with the remaining identified Revitalisation underspend, will:

- Provide additional funding (£32.3k) to the suite of projects currently been brought by the Linen Quarter Bid (the Brunswick St Hub, the Linenhall Parklet and the Linenhall Boardwalk) to meet cost escalations and additional works provisionally agreed with Council Officers. This will be added to the £7.7k from the Revitalisation Fund as item 3.4 above to provide additional funding to the Linen Quarter projects of £40k. It should also be noted the Linen Quarter Bid have provided, through private funding, a total of £176k to meet the overall project costs.
- Be reallocated by Officers to meet any further cost escalations within the agreed and committed projects to ensure that the projects remain on track, with reports to be brought back to this Committee at a future date.

3.7 Members are also asked to note that the Belfast Entries Project won the 2021 Excellence in Place-making Award for the Ulster Region, recognising the extensive public-private partnership work across over 60 stakeholders, funders and contributors to bring forward a truly iconic project on our historic lanes and entries.

Ministerial Advisory Group Workshop

3.8 The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) have recently contacted Councils advising on proposals that they recognise can assist in delivering on net zero commitments through the influence of Briefing and Design Reviews.

3.9 Over the last year, MAG has been focussing its efforts on ways of increasing the impact that they can have on delivering positive outcomes of better urban and rural places across the region. Participation in the Design for Planet event as part of COP26 further emphasised the requirement for us all to re-double our efforts, putting Climate Change at the forefront of our attention.

- 3.10 MAG are now proposing to roll out a series of workshops with each Council to discuss how the Design Review processes can be optimised to deliver best outcomes. They are keen to run a series of sessions for key decision-makers/influencers in Councils, combining Elected Members and officers. They have expressed that they are keen for Belfast City Council to participate in such a session (hosted virtually), which is being planned for early this year.
- 3.11 MAG advise that to enable building capacity quickly across the region, they are planning to have two Councils per session. To enable sessions to be participatory, they are anticipating limiting numbers to 7 or 8 per council. It is proposed that Belfast City Council nominate two Elected Members (CG&R Chair and Deputy Chair or nominees) and six officers to participate. It is felt that the Council's participation in this series will help strengthen the work which Council are bringing forward in the built environment.

Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City Seminar

- 3.12 As reported to this Committee in January 2022 Healthy North Belfast, in conjunction with Ashton are bringing forward a seminar 'Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City' (previous working title was 'Joining the City' Seminar). This seminar will also include representatives from DfI, Ulster University and Council. This seminar will be specifically aligned to community-based discussions of major regeneration and infrastructure schemes, including the new Ulster University and the York Street Interchange, and how these projects and the outworking's of the Bolder Vision can be maximised or proactively designed and implemented to restitch communities to the city centre and in particular to maximise the positive impacts of these projects on the people who live closest to them. This workshop is now confirmed for the 9th February, 9:15am – 12:30pm, with log-in details as per this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/connecting-communities-in-north-belfast-to-wider-regeneration-of-the-city-tickets-251299111407>

- 3.13 **Finance and Resource Implications**

All costs associated with this paper will be met from the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Capital Programme, and, subject to

Committee approval, the reallocation of the SP&R agreed (June 2021) Non-recurring underspend from the Business Cluster and Community Grant scheme to the DfC Revitalisation Programme.

Any further underspends realised within this programme are proposed to be reallocated under delegated authority to the Director of City Regeneration and Development to meet any additional costs on previously agreed and committed to projects and will be reported back to this Committee retrospectively.

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

Equality of opportunity and good relations, and disability duties screening is complete on the overall programme with mitigating actions agreed and implemented.”

The Committee:

- Noted that an Extension of Time had been formally granted for the DfC Covid -19 Revitalisation Programme until September 2022;
- Noted the current level of underspend within the DfC Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme and reallocation of funding to the Church Lane and Linen Quarter schemes;
- Agreed the reallocation of underspend from the Council funded (Non-Recurring money agreed at the June 2021 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee) from the Business Cluster and Community Grant Scheme underspend to the previously agreed Linen Quarter Bid projects, with the remaining underspend to be allocated to the wider Covid-19 Revitalisation Programme;
- Agreed that, given the timescales and in line with the Committee’s approval in August 2021, that future underspends realised within the programme be utilised to meet additional costs on previously agreed and committed projects;
- Agreed to delegate authority to the Director of City Regeneration and Development to reallocate the remaining unallocated underspend and any further underspends to meet cost increases on previously agreed and committed projects and to report back to the Committee retrospectively;
- Noted the proposed Ministerial Advisory Group Design Review Workshops and agreed the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair, or their nominated representatives; and

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- Noted the upcoming 'Connecting Communities in North Belfast to the Wider Regeneration of the City' seminar which was held on 9 February.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

External Market Application - Banana Block

The Director of Economic Development informed the Committee that an application had been received on behalf of Firefox Events for a market to be held in Banana Block at Portview Trading Centre, Newtownards Road, and that the application requested that the market be held monthly from February to December 2022, involving up to 40 traders at each event.

He pointed out that the purpose of the market was to showcase the range of food and drink produced in Northern Ireland and that it would operate on Saturdays, from 2pm to 7pm, therefore, it would complement and not compete with the offer at St. George's Market.

He advised the Committee that the organisers had a strong working relationship with Eastside Partnership and other local stakeholders and that the businesses and residents in the area were fully supporting of the application.

The Committee granted a market licence to Firefox Events to hold monthly Saturday afternoon markets in the Banana Block, Portview Trade Centre, between March and December 2022

City of London Visit - 8th March 2022

The Director of Economic Development reported that, as part of the City of London Corporation's (COLC) regional strategy, it had committed to engage with cities across the United Kingdom, of which Belfast was one. Since the launch of the strategy, Belfast City Council had been working collaboratively with COLC to cultivate a positive working relationship and partnership to foster innovation, growth and economic prosperity.

He reported that a series of events had been delivered to showcase Belfast as a location of choice for the Fintech sector and that a further event had been scheduled to take place on 8th March, 2022 at the Guildhall, London. He informed the Committee that the aim of the event was to publicise Belfast and the region's leading role in Financial Services and Fintech, and to highlight future investment opportunities stemming from City Deal investments, such as, the Global Innovation Institute and Digital Twin.

He stated that event attendees would include senior representation from key stakeholders across the sector, fund managers and representatives from financial services and fintech businesses from Belfast and London.

After discussion, it was

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Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Howard,

That the Committee agrees to note the update on the aim of the event and the broad itinerary and approves attendance at the event by the Lord Mayor, Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or their nominees.

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

**Cultural Strategy Update - Artist Studios
and Maker Spaces**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the investment model for the cultural strategy and to set out proposals for a dedicated programme of work to support artist-led organisations in the city.

2.0 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- Agree to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support as set out at 3.7 subject to officer recommendations being approved at a future meeting of Committee.
- Agree to develop long-term options for the sustainable provision of artist studios in the city aligned to the priorities of the cultural strategy to be presented to a future meeting of Committee.
- Agree to write to the Department for Communities and Arts Council of Northern Ireland to request that a joint response is taken forward to the current crisis in studio provision.
- Agree for officers to operate a rolling support programme of micro-grants to artist-led organisations as set out at 3.13 to be approved by delegated authority.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 *A City Imagining* cultural strategy for Belfast recognises the need for long-term commitment over a decade in order to drive

transformation. It presents a dynamic model for change to ensure resilience to external factors and potential social, economic and environmental shifts. While the full impact of Covid-19 still remains unknown and the level of change to the city's cultural and community infrastructure is uncertain, the strategy remains valid presenting a strong framework for a robust and long-term recovery plan

3.2 In support of the ambitions set out in this strategy an Investment Model was agreed with phased implementation. To date this has resulted in the introduction of a number of funding strands and employment opportunities for cultural organisations and practitioners. These have included:

- Cultural multi-annual grants
- Small grants including Community Festival Funding
- Micro-grants and Leadership Awards
- Creative Bursaries
- Pathfinder Development Awards

3.3 The diversification of the investment model recognised that the one sizes fit all model of funding does not deliver the best outcomes for the city and fails to increase the sustainability of the sector. Therefore, the design of these new programmes has been based on engagement with the sector and learnings from other cities. However, from the outset it was recognised that a targeted programme of support was required for artist studios and maker-spaces. This in part is due to the value of artist-led spaces not being effectively captured through traditional metrics such as income generated through ticket sales or audience figures. With the cultural multi-annual grants (4 year and 2 year) being agreed in February 2020 it was agreed that an alternative form of funding would be developed for artist-led spaces with the latest audit identifying 17 studios/ artist-led organisations in Belfast directly supporting an estimated 450 artists. Belfast City Council's current support programmes do not include any of these organisations as annual or multi-annual clients. Therefore, as Council is due to enter into another two-year cycle of funding, it is proposed that a complementary three strand programme for artist-led organisations is introduced and is detailed below.

3.4 The need

The need for this programme has accelerated with the further decline in security of tenure for these groups with no organisation having a tenancy agreement for 3 years or more. Of the 17 organisations identified, 15 were on agreements for

less than a year with 7 of these less than 9 months and many on month to month rolling contracts including licenses and tenancy at will agreements. (Source: Jane Morrow, PhD Researcher: the precarity of artists' studios in Belfast).

3.5 Case study: The Council has been working with Flax Art Studio and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland since 2014 to develop an artist and needs led solution to the provision of sustainable, affordable and appropriately specified studio space in the city. These studies demonstrated the potential for growth and the economic and social impact of studios as well as recommendations to address challenges relating to governance, capacity building, financing and acquisition. This work considered examples from elsewhere including:

- WASPS Artist Studios, Scotland
- Broadstone Studios, Dublin
- Fire Station Artist Studios, Dublin
- National Sculpture Factory, Cork
- ACME Studios, London

3.6 From 2004 to 2018, Flax Art occupied premises on Corporation Street amounting to 1320 m² of space that accommodated seven large and 11 smaller studios for 21 visual artists. It also accommodated a space for international residencies and a small workshop area. When Flax was required to vacate the premises in 2018 and in the absence of funding to acquire new premises, the organisation took the decision to take on 5200m² at Havelock House as an opportunity to demonstrate proof of concept in relation to viable growth in provision. Since 2018, this pilot has confirmed many of the principles captured via the review of best/existing practice. It has confirmed that need exists, that visual artists are reliable tenants, and that Flax has the capacity and skills to diversify its income base through introducing new income streams. The result has been a main location at Havelock House where Flax provides subsidised studio space for almost 100 artists in Belfast. 31 emerging artists are supported at a temporary satellite site on North Street and 15 artists at a second satellite space on High Street. They also provide space for 7 production resident artists, 20 workshop members and 1 film-maker in residence, and co-working space for Nerve Belfast, the NI Screen Curator in Residence, Dumbworld and OGU Architects. However, in January 2022 Flax received notification of that their lease would not be extended and they must relocate their artists by the end of March 2022.

3.7 Cultural Mapping

As part of the implementation of the cultural strategy, the Council commissioned a cultural mapping of the city to assess current assets and gaps in infrastructure. The full draft of this report will be presented to Committee in quarter one of 2022/23 year. However, the draft report identifies *Space to Work* as the highest priority under short term recommendations as well as a key strategic priority for long-term action. Building on these recommendations and the investment model included within the cultural strategy a three-strand programme is proposed.

3.8 Proposed Programme

Strand one: organisational funding

The purpose of this strand of work is to provide financial and developmental support to organisations similar to the support offered under cultural multi-annual grants (CMAG). CMAG focuses on supporting wide ranging public facing programmes with criteria designed to assess impact against all of the themes of the cultural strategy. The most recent outcome of this process, with the failure of any studio or artist-led organisation to secure funding, reinforces the need identified in the wider investment model to establish more target schemes of funding. The criteria for a new programme will focus on the specific priorities within the strategy focused on supporting the cultural ecosystem of the city. Given that successful applicants will be in receipt of public funding, it is proposed that funding is accompanied by a health audit that identifies additional requirements in relation to a number of areas such as:

- Governance and management
- Sustainability including environmental planning and policies
- Inclusion including accessibility

3.9 Where organisations require assistance to identify potential premises there is scope to align this to the existing work programme being undertaken by City Regeneration and Development.

3.10 It is proposed that this scheme opens in March 2022 with recommended awards to be presented to Committee for approval in May 2022.

3.11 Strand two: strategic review

In line with the cultural mapping and the work undertaken to date it is proposed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast is undertaken with a number of long-term recommendations presented to Committee. The scope of this work will include:

- analysis of existing strategies, studies and reports as well as primary research, to ascertain resource needs.
- review of benchmarking with other cities with a focus on models of sustainability such as forms of financing.
- analysis and mapping of current and potential availability, quality, and suitability of sectoral accommodation within the city.
- recommendations on the role of artist spaces in city development with investment models to include public sector, private sector and partnerships.

3.12 This work will be aligned to key priorities with the cultural strategy, in particular:

- Priority 5: Embedding cultural impact in city development and local placemaking.
- Priority 6: Investing in connected, resilient and sustainable infrastructure of quality cultural spaces across the city.

3.13 This strand of work will be taken forward with the sector through an agreed programme of co-design to be agreed through a series of initial engagement sessions.

3.14 Strand three: Micro-grants rolling programme

Consultation and engagement with the sector have demonstrated a need for more agile funding schemes that are available year-round and operate at a micro-grant level. It is proposed that a scheme offering a maximum of £1000 is introduced to support career development and support for individual artists working within artist-led organisations.

3.15 As part of cultural multi-annual grants, organisations are required to demonstrate how they provide training and support for those artists that work with them. The fact that many artist-led organisations either do not receive funding or have much lower levels of funding, often managed on a voluntary basis, means that their business model does not allow for re-investment in infrastructure, equipment or skills

development. The criteria for this fund will align to theme three of the cultural strategy: *A City Exploring*.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

The existing departmental budget for Culture and Tourism includes provision for sector support. It is proposed that £150,000 is allocated to this programme as follows:

Strand One - Organisational Funding: £100,000

Strand Two - Strategic Review: £30,000

Strand Three – Micro Grants: £20,000

3.17 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

Officers will work with partner organisations to ensure that engagement includes a wide range of groups, artists and individuals across the city and criteria for funding will respond to the Equality Impact Assessment carried out as part of the cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*.”

The Committee agreed:

- to open a new funding scheme for artist led organisations to provide financial and development support, subject to officer recommendations being approved at a future meeting of the Committee;
- to develop long-term options for the sustainable provision of artist studios in the city aligned to the priorities of the cultural strategy to be presented to a future meeting of Committee;
- to write to the Department for Communities and Arts Council of Northern Ireland to request that a joint response is taken forward to the current crisis in studio provision; and
- for officers to operate a rolling support programme of micro-grants to artist-led organisations, to be approved under delegated authority.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notice of Motions - Quarterly Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy provided the Committee with an update on the Notices of Motion which had been assigned to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and referred the Members to five Motions which had been recommended for closure.

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion that the Committee was responsible for; and
- Agreed to the closure of five Notices of Motion.

**Consultation Response: The Local Government
(Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment)
Order (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 Members will be aware that, as part of Local Government Reform in 2015, responsibility for business start-up and support for under-represented groups in the field of enterprise support transferred to councils.

1.2 The Department for Communities (DfC) has recently launched a consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022. This consultation outlines proposed changes to how business start-up activity is measured. The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the consultation, identify the impact for Belfast City Council and set out a proposed response to the consultation on behalf of the council. The response will be submitted, subject to full Council approval.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- Note the current consultation process and the implications for Belfast City Council
- Approve the outline response to the consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, as set out in section 3.8.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Members will be aware that, as part of the transfer of functions and Local Government Reform, responsibility for business start-up and support for under-represented groups in terms of enterprise support transferred to councils. With the transfer of responsibility came a nominal financial allocation deemed

appropriate to support delivery of the relevant services and based on existing budget allocations.

- 3.2 At this time, DfE set the job targets based on the 2011-2015 Programme for Government (PfG) target for the existing start-up programme ('Go for It'). This was to create 6,500 local jobs, or 1,625 jobs per year. These jobs were then split across each council area, based on an economic appraisal carried out at that time. These job targets have remained in place since that date. For Belfast City Council, the annual performance target through the Go For It programme is 325 jobs created through the development of a client-led business plan.
- 3.3 The Department for Communities has now launched a consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022, to take account of proposed changes to these targets. The consultation period runs to 28 February 2022. The purpose of this consultation is to align targets with activity being delivered through the Regional Business Start-up Programme 2021-2023.
- 3.4 For Belfast City Council, there is no amendment to the annual job target figure, with the target remaining as 325. This is in line with the current annual programme targets in the Go for It Programme. As such, we have no specific objection to the current proposal, on the understanding that it is a short-term measure that will be reviewed in 2023. However we consider that there is an opportunity to use the existing consultation exercise to formally raise a number of concerns about the methodology associated with target setting, in order to ensure that there is alignment with the work underway across all councils to take a new approach to business start-up support when the current programme ends in March 2023.
- 3.5 Members will be aware that, as a council, we have acknowledged the shortcomings of the current start-up support programme. Among the issues that we have identified is the mechanism for measuring impact. Success is currently measured through a jobs outcome approach and the methodology for assessing the job outcome is to count the number of business plans generated through the Regional Business Start-Up Programme ('Go for It') and apply a proxy to determine the likely number of jobs created as a result. In our view, this approach is significantly flawed.
- 3.6 In May 2021, we presented to this Committee our vision of a future model of support that had the potential to drive more people towards self-employment, increase business survival

rates and help more businesses to grow and scale. Building on that model, we have been working with the other 10 councils to develop an options appraisal that can demonstrate how a revised approach can help us achieve a substantial shift in business start up activity aligned with our Enterprise Framework, the Belfast Agenda, the Belfast Region City Deal and the 10x Economic Vision. In November 2021, we secured funding from Invest NI to develop a business case based on this model and this will be used as a basis to engage with DfE, Invest NI and other funding bodies in order to support delivery post-March 2023.

3.7 In parallel with this work, we have also commenced our engagement with DfE on the findings of the research, given that they are working on an Entrepreneurship Strategy aligned to 10x.

3.8 In light of this work and the commentary around the shortcomings of the current methodology for target setting, it is recommended that officers develop a brief response to the consultation that focuses on a number of key points:

- Identifies the inappropriateness of using business plans as a proxy measurement for jobs created
- Recommends a wider range of metrics alongside jobs created, (e.g. total early-stage entrepreneurial activity, levels of female engagement in entrepreneurship, number of registered start-ups, 1 and 2 year business survival rates and numbers of scaling businesses)
- Identifies the need for the targets to reflect those identified in 10x – rather than being seen in isolation of wider government ambitions
- Need for government to review the financial settlement around the statutory functions transferred to councils – ensuring that it is reflective of changed economic circumstances and an articulated ambition around a globally-competitive economy. The financial transfer needs to acknowledge that councils have statutory responsibility for this area of work
- Consider how the targets are aligned to performance – with a degree of accountability built in to make the link between resources allocated and delivery
- Acknowledges that, given the timings, a more radical review is not appropriate at this point but asks that early consideration is given to the above points in order to ensure a more appropriate approach to standards and performance targets from the financial year 2023.

3.9 At a recent meeting of the SOLACE Economic Recovery Group, council officers agreed that there was considerable consensus across all council areas on these issues and that it would be appropriate to produce a joint response to this consultation. The commentary broadly reflects the points identified above. The response recommends that a longer-term review is carried out on the targets, including removing the link to a business planning programme and having a consistent approach across councils for allocating the target, taking account of the work that is ongoing to develop an approach to future delivery as highlighted above.

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

No specific financial implications associated with this report.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment

The Enterprise and Business Growth team is currently undertaking a process of equality screening on the overall work programme, this will ensure consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts throughout the delivery of this project.

3.12 Equality and Good relations will be considered as part of the business case development and a rural needs assessment will also be factored into this work.”

The Committee:

- Noted the current consultation process and the implications for Belfast City Council; and
- Approved the outline response to the consultation on The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.

Late Item

Request for Presentation – Visit Belfast.

The Director of Economic Development requested that the Committee would agree to receive a presentation from Visit Belfast at its meeting in March 2022.

The Committee acceded to the request to receive a presentation from Visit Belfast.

Chairperson

D2326

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 16th February, 2022

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Donnelly (Chairperson);
Aldermen Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Bradley, Bunting, Howard,
Hutchinson, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Magee,
McAteer, McCabe, McCullough, McCusker,
Mulholland and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Unit Manager;
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors Michael Collins and McKeown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mulholland declared an interest in relation to item 3a – Review of Reduced Fees for Entertainments Licences, on the basis that she worked for an organisation which held an Entertainments Licence, and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Delegated Matters

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(d)

Applications approved under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications for licences and Road Closure Orders which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
Licences issued under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of licences for Houses in Multiple Occupation which had, since its last meeting, been issued under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

Non-Delegated Matters

Review of Reduced Fees for Entertainments Licences

The Building Control Manager submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To seek agreement on a response to the Department for Communities (DfC) query regarding the continuation of a reduced fee of £1 for applications for the renewal of Entertainment Licences for the 2022/23 financial year.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether the reduced fee of £1 should continue to apply to applications for the renewal of Entertainment Licences for the 2022/23 financial year and determine whether:

- 1. to extend this measure for the financial year 2022/23;
or**
- 2. to revert to pre-April 2021 fee levels with effect from
6th April, 2022.**

3.0 Background

3.1 In February 2021, DfC determined that a reduced fee of £1 would apply to applications for the renewal of all categories of entertainments licence, both indoor and outdoor, received on or after 6th April, 2021.

3.2 This reduction applies for the duration of the 2021/2022 financial year and was introduced to alleviate hardship being experienced by the hospitality industry because of Covid-19 restrictions.

3.2 Following the first lockdown in March 2020 and the significant impact that this had on the hospitality sector, several interim measures were agreed with the City Solicitor to assist

licensees and primarily those with entertainment, cinema or street trading licences.

3.4 These included:

- accepting confirmation of an intention to renew, to ensure subsistence of the licence, and agreeing the application and associated fee may be provided at a later date;
- temporarily suspending the requirement to place a legal notice in the press;
- not requesting certificates that would normally be submitted with a licence application until a later date; and
- agreeing extended licence periods in recognition of lockdown restrictions.

3.5 These measures were in place for renewal applications between April, 2020 and June, 2021.

3.6 Since June last year, the Building Control Service has undertaken an extensive review of all entertainment licensing applications and has been in contact with licensees concerning the status of their licence. The Service has taken a flexible approach to assist them as equitably as possible, in a way that is seen to be supportive of business recovery and in a manner that will be legally defensible.

3.7 During that time, the Service has processed almost 300 entertainment licence renewals and has attempted, as far as possible, to enable the applicant to avail of the £1 renewal fee.

3.8 For any applications where objections have been received, these have not been renewed under these processes and will be subject to Committee consideration as normal.

4.0 Key Issues

4.1 In a letter dated 19th January 2022, DfC has asked for the Council's view on the reduced fee of £1 for applications for the renewal of all categories of entertainments licences, which only applies to the 2021/2022 financial year, and whether:

- there is a need to extend this measure beyond this period or,

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- if the fees should revert to their pre-April 2021 levels with effect from April 2022.
- 4.2 The new Coronavirus restrictions which came into force on 26th December 2021, amongst other measures, required nightclubs to close and brought further operating restrictions in all other licensed premises. It is clear that the hospitality sector continues to be impacted by the pandemic and no doubt it would welcome any additional financial support that can be offered.
- 4.3 DfC has asked if there is a need to extend the measure beyond March, 2022. To ensure that all licensees can avail of any further reduced fee it is suggested that any extension should be for the entire 2022/23 financial year. It is also suggested that the extension should only be for that period and anything thereafter will be subject to further review by the Council.
- 4.4 DfC has asked that a response be made by 9th February 2022, but has subsequently confirmed that, should Committee approval be required, that this is not an absolute deadline.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 Planned income for 2022/23 is based on our pre-Covid estimate for entertainments licensing income of £195,940.
- 5.2 Given the uncertainty around the sustainability of many hospitality venues due to the impact of Covid, it is very difficult to predict renewal fees income for 2022/2023.
- 5.3 However, if we make the assumption that all the applications we have received or are due to receive this year are renewed again next year and are subject to the £1 renewal fee it is estimated the Council will lose income in the region of £180,000.
- 5.4 The Council has secured funding from the Department for Communities to cover Covid recovery costs for 2022/23, which can be used to make up for any loss of income that extending the concessionary fee for a further year would create.
- 6.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**
- 6.1 None.”

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The Committee agreed to recommend to the Department for Communities that the reduced fee of £1 for applications for the renewal of all categories of Entertainments Licences be extended to the 2022/23 financial year in full.

Request to Create a New Film Classification Rating

The Building Control Manager submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider a request from a cinema operator to create a new classification rating of '15A' for the broadcast of 'The Batman' film in cinemas within the Belfast City Council area.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested, having heard representation from the applicant, to decide whether to:

a) depart from Standard Licence Condition 2 (b) which states that 'No persons under the age of fifteen years shall be admitted to any Exhibition when a '15' film is in the programme' and to permit cinema operators to impose a rating of '15A' for the Belfast City Council area in respect of 'The Batman' film which would mean that patrons under the age of 15 would be permitted entrance to view the film when accompanied by an adult.

OR

b) refuse the request to depart from the Standard Licence Condition and require the cinema operator to comply with the rating determined by the BBFC.

2.2 Whilst there is a general provision for appeals in relation to the conditions placed on Cinema Licences, there is no right of appeal in respect of this decision.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 Councils' licence cinemas and other venues under the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 for the exhibition of films. In general, the legislation relates to technical matters such as structural stability and fire safety and, as such, the

powers to issue licences are delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control.

- 3.2** Unlike other Licensing schemes, there is no public notification and representation process for Cinema Licence applications hence there is normally no involvement of the Committee with Cinema Licensing.
- 3.3** Belfast City Council ('the Council') has established Conditions of Licence regarding the general running and administration of the premises. One such Condition is that only films which have been classified with a Certificate issued by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) may be shown.
- 3.4** The BBFC is an independent body which classifies all films on behalf of local authorities, and they have strict guidelines and criteria in awarding films a classification. The BBFC Classification Guidelines have been circulated.
- 3.5** The BBFC system is used by all authorities within the United Kingdom and all commercial films will be classified through this process. The Council has adopted the BBFC classifications within the Licence Conditions on all Cinema Licences granted in its jurisdiction.
- 3.6** Article 3 (3) (a) of the Cinemas (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 states that it shall be the duty of a district council, in granting a licence under this Article as respects any premises to:
- 'impose conditions or restrictions prohibiting the admission of children to film exhibitions involving the showing of works designated, by the council or by such other body as may be specified in the licence, as works unsuitable for children'.**
- 3.7** Paragraph 2 (b) of the Council's Standard Licence conditions states that:
- 'No persons under the age of fifteen years shall be admitted to any Exhibition when a '15' film is in the programme.**
- 3.8** However, Paragraph 3 of those conditions goes on to provide that:
- 'Notwithstanding the conditions hereinbefore contained, a film may be exhibited, or children, or any class of children, may be admitted thereto, or admitted unaccompanied, if permission of the Council is first obtained and any conditions of such permission are complied with.'**

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- 3.9** A request has been received from the licensee of the Movie House at Cityside (Yorkgate) for the Committee to consider the creation of a new age rating of '15A' for a forthcoming film release, 'The Batman'. A rationale has been provided by the applicant in support of a '15A' rating and has been circulated.
- 3.10** Presently, such a classification does not exist in the BBFC ratings. The nearest equivalent is a '12A' which permits children under 12 to view such a film if accompanied by an adult. The proposal of the applicant in relation to the 'The Batman' would be to permit children under the age of 15 into the film if accompanied by an adult.
- 3.11** The film has recently been classified by the BBFC as '15' therefore no one younger than 15 years of age may watch the film in a cinema.
- 3.12** Officers are aware that the film has been classified as 'PG-13' in the US for 'strong violent and disturbing content, drug content, strong language, and some suggestive material'. It has been rated '15A' by the Irish Film Certificate Office on the basis of their assessment metric as follows: violence (Strong), drugs (Moderate), sex/nudity (Mild) and language (Strong).
- 3.13** The applicant has identified that the UK Cinema Association, which represents over 90% of UK cinema operators, has been requested to write to the BBFC on the creation of a new '15A' rating. The applicant has requested the Council consider this request while he awaits a response from BBFC.
- 3.14** In August 2012, the Committee agreed to accede to a request from Cinemagic (a film festival for children) to screen unclassified films for 2012 and subsequent years. Whilst this condition has been exercised previously for unclassified films it has never been used to admit children to a film which has an existing BBFC classification.
- 3.15** It is clear that from a technical legal perspective, the Council may depart from a BBFC classification should it wish to do so.
- 3.16** There are however a number of significant practical concerns which would cause concern for officers in so doing.
- 3.17** BBFC classification is imposed by the statutory body with the requisite expertise in this matter who are entrusted to provide guidance about whether a film is suitable for children to view. At its heart the classification process is about protecting

children and therefore a cautious approach should be adopted in considering departing from their decision in this regard.

- 3.18 All classification decisions are based on the BBFC's published and regularly updated Guidelines. The Guidelines are the product of extensive public consultation, research and the accumulated experience of the BBFC over many years.**
- 3.19 Films for cinema release are usually seen by at least two BBFC Compliance Officers, and in most cases, their age rating recommendation is approved by the Compliance Manager or the Head of Compliance.**
- 3.20 Compliance Officers look at issues such as bad language, dangerous behaviour, discrimination, drugs, horror, nudity, sex, violence and sexual violence, when making recommendations. They also consider context, tone and impact - how it makes the audience feel - and even the release format - for example, as DVDs, Blu-rays and VoD content are generally watched at home, there is a higher risk of under-age viewing.**
- 3.21 As the Committee will appreciate, the Council has no such internal expertise or processes in place to impose its own ratings. It is difficult to identify any other external agency with sufficient expertise in child protection in this area other than BBFC.**
- 3.22 It is recognised that this particular film is likely to appeal to children under the age of 15 and that the proposed rating would still require children to be accompanied by an adult. Officers also acknowledge the impact of Coronavirus restrictions upon cinema operators over the last 2 years.**
- 3.23 However, it is important to remember that the purpose of BBFC classifications is to protect children from viewing material which, in the view of those with established expertise in this field, is not suitable for them.**
- 3.24 There may also be significant reputational issues for the Council in applying a lesser classification to a film which it has not seen in advance, particularly bearing in mind the reasons for a '15' classification.**
- 3.25 Given the nature of this request, the matter has been brought to the Committee for determination.**
- 3.26 If the Committee were minded to depart from Paragraph 2 (b) of the Standard Licence Conditions, it is also asked to agree**

to impose the following additional special conditions upon any cinema operator who wishes to show the Batman film as a 15A:

- i. Any cinema operator who wishes to show the Batman film as a 15A must notify the Council in advance;**
- ii. The cinema operator must clearly indicate the nature of any certificate received from the BBFC in any advertisement of the film displayed at the premises, as well as the fact that the Council has agreed that accompanied children under 15 may be permitted entrance; and**
- iii. The cinema operator must provide appropriate advice in respect of '15A' films to enable an accompanying adult to decide upon the suitability of the film for children under the age of fifteen years.**

3.27 The applicant will be available at the Committee meeting to answer any questions which Members may have in relation to the film.

Financial and Resource Implications

None.

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

3.29 There are no issues associated with this report.”

The Committee was informed that Mr. M. McAdam, Managing Director, Movie House Cinemas, who had called for the creation of a 15A classification, and Mr. E. Lamberti, Policy Manager, British Board of Film Classification, were in attendance and they were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. Lamberti informed the Members that the British Board of Film Classification was an independent, not-for-profit organisation which had, since 1913, been working on behalf of the film industry to bring uniformity to the standards of film censorship and classification. The Board sought to protect children from harmful film content and assist families in making informed film choices by providing age ratings for cinema releases across the United Kingdom, as well video releases and videos on demand. Its ratings were also being reflected increasingly on streaming platforms.

He provided details of the specific and more general considerations which were taken into account by the Board in classifying film content and explained that each age

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rating decision was in line with its published classification guidelines and based on expectations and requirements communicated by the public. Those guidelines were reviewed and updated every four to five years, in response to feedback from a large-scale consultation involving around 10,000 members of the public. The Board also conducted research between consultations into specific areas of concern raised by the public and was required to take account of relevant United Kingdom legislation. Mr. Lamberti concluded by outlining the film classification and appeals process and by providing examples of the Board's wider engagement work.

Mr. McAdam pointed out that the increasing instances of families being refused entry to pre-booked 15 rated films, on account of some of those attending being under that age, highlighted the need to create a 15A classification in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom Cinema Association supported this view and had written to the British Board of Film Classification to call for its introduction.

He explained that families were able to view 15 rated films via streaming services in their own home or by travelling to the Republic of Ireland, which operated a 15A film classification rating. The creation of a 15A classification would, he argued, give parents the power to decide, on the basis of advisory warnings, if the content of a film was suitable for their child to view and would also enable local cinemas to compete commercially. He went on to urge the Committee to agree, whilst the Board was considering the United Kingdom Cinema Association's request, to create a new 15A classification rating for the Belfast City Council area, to facilitate the release on 4th March of the much anticipated 'The Batman' film. That would allow patrons under the age of fifteen to view the film, if accompanied by an adult, and would be in keeping with the classifications of 15A and 13PG, which had been awarded in the Republic of Ireland and the United States respectively.

Mr. Lamberti then outlined, at the Committee's request, the rationale behind 'The Batman' film having been given a rating of 15 by the British Board of Film Classification. He explained that, whilst the majority of movies in the 'superhero' category had been awarded a 12A rating, the threat and violence content within 'The Batman' movie far exceeded the level which the public would find acceptable for a 12A film.

In response to a Member, Mr. McAdam stressed that he was calling not for the classification of 'The Batman' film to be lowered but for it to be given a 15A rating. The decision on whether it was suitable for those under that age to view would rest with parents, in the context of the advisory warnings provided by the British Board of Film Classification.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor McCabe,
Seconded by Councillor Bradley,

That the Committee agrees to depart from Standard Licence Condition 2(b), thereby enabling cinema operators within the Belfast City Council area to impose a rating of 15A on 'The Batman Movie' and allowing patrons

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under the age of fifteen to view the film when accompanied by an adult, with the following special conditions to be imposed by the Council:

- i. any cinema operator who wishes to show the Batman film as a 15A must notify the Council in advance;
- ii. the cinema operator must clearly indicate the nature of any certificate received from the British Board of Film Classification in any advertisement of the film displayed at the premises, as well as the fact that the Council has agreed that accompanied children under 15 may be permitted entrance; and
- iii. the cinema operator must provide appropriate advice in respect of '15A' films to enable an accompanying adult to decide upon the suitability of the film for children under the age of fifteen years.

On a vote, seven Members voted for the proposal and eight against and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to refuse the request to create a 15A film classification for 'The Batman' film, thereby requiring cinema operators to comply with the rating determined by the British Board of Film Classification.

**Revised Model Terms, Conditions and
Restrictions for Entertainments Licences**

The Committee noted that the Divisional Solicitor would be writing to the Department for Communities to highlight issues around its recently published revised model terms, conditions and restrictions which may be specified by councils in Entertainments Licences and that a detailed report on the implications for the Council would be submitted to a future meeting.

Chairperson

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Planning Committee

Tuesday, 15th February, 2022

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hanvey (Deputy Chairperson);
The High Sheriff, Councillor Hussey;
Councillors Brooks, Carson, Matt Collins,
Garrett, Groogan, Maskey, McMullan,
Murphy, O'Hara, Spratt and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management);
Mr. K. Sutherland, Planning Manager (Policy);
Ms. N. Largey, Divisional Solicitor;
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

(Councillor Hanvey, Deputy Chairperson, in the Chair)

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Hutchinson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 18th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Spratt declared an interest in item 7c, namely LA04/2021/1702/F - 807 - 809 Lisburn Road and incorporating part of Kingsbridge Private Hospital at Nos 811- 815 Lisburn Road, in that he had met with Council representatives in respect of the application and had expressed an opinion. He therefore left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and did not participate in the vote.

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in item 7d, namely LA04/2021/2154/F - Change of approved design for Community Hub building for a community led mix use regeneration scheme at the site of the former St Gemma's School, in that he had previously engaged with the ABC trust on previous plans. He therefore left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and did not participate in the vote.

Committee Site Visit

The Committee noted that a site visit had taken place to the below application site on Monday, 14th February 2022:

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- LA04/2021/0911/F - Demolition of existing building and construction of 9 no. apartments and associated site works at 236 Upper Newtownards Road

Request for pre-emptive site visit and briefing on LA04/2021/2280/F for a mixed use, mixed tenure residential-led development of 778 apartments in three buildings with internal and external amenity space; flexible commercial/community floorspace; public realm including public square and waterfront promenade; cycle and car parking and associated landscaping, access roads, plant and site works including to existing riverside on lands adjacent to and south east of the river Lagan west of Olympic Way of Queen's road Queen's Island

The Committee agreed to hold a pre-emptive site visit and briefing in respect of the above application.

Request for a pre-emptive site visit to LA04/2021/1808/F – Residential development comprising of 14 dwellings, access from Lagmore View Lane and Lagmore Glen, completion of remaining areas of open space (including hard and soft landscaping), provision of parking bays, speed bumps and bollards to improve road safety along Lagmore View Road, and all associated site works on lands South and East of 148-163 Lagmore View Lane North and West of 37 81 82 and 112 Lagmore Glen and Lagmore View Road

The Committee agreed to hold a pre-emptive site visit in respect of the above application.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the receipt of correspondence in respect of a number of planning appeals which had been submitted to the Planning Appeals Commission, together with the outcomes of a range of hearings which had been considered by the Commission.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted a list of decisions which had been taken under the delegated authority of the Strategic Director of Place and Economy, together with all other planning decisions which had been issued by the Planning Department between 11th January and 7th February.

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DFI Provision of an Accessible/Disabled Parking Bay

The Committee noted that the correspondence had been considered last month and had been included in the agenda in error.

NIHE Notifications - Vesting order: Lands at Alloa Street

The Committee noted that correspondence had been received from the Housing Executive in relation to a Vesting Order for Lands at Alloa Street.

Planning Applications

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)

Withdrawn Items

The Committee noted that the following items had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- **LA04/2021/1808/F** - Residential development comprising of 14 dwellings, access from Lagmore View Lane and Lagmore Glen, completion of remaining areas of open space (including hard and soft landscaping), provision of parking bays, speed bumps and bollards to improve road safety along Lagmore View Road, and all associated site works on lands South and East of 148-163 Lagmore View Lane North and West of 37 81 82 and 112 Lagmore Glen and Lagmore View Road - withdrawn by officers in order to further examine relevant issues;
- **(Reconsidered Item) LA04/2019/0775/F** – 18 dwellings to include revision of site layout of previous approval Z/2007/1401/F at sites 2-8 (7 dwellings) and additional 11 No. dwellings, including landscaping, access via Hampton Park and other associated site works on lands approximately 50m to the north of 35 Hampton Park and approximately 30m to the west of 60 Hampton Park, Galwally - withdrawn in order that officers are able to provide more information to the Committee in relation to the detailed requirements of the proposed Section 76 Agreement.
- **LA04/2020/0559/F & LA04/2020/0562/DCA** – Renovation and single storey rear extension to dwelling, construction of a new detached garage and new entrance gates, pillars and boundary fence at 24 Malone Park - withdrawn by officers upon advice of the Divisional Solicitor.

LA04/2021/2285/F - Apartment Development at Parkside Gardens

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this item in order to undertake a site visit.

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**(Reconsidered Items) LA04/2020/0857/F - Demolition
of existing hostel building and redevelopment to provide
four-storey building comprising 15 No. residential units,
office space and ancillary development at Ormeau Centre,
5-11 Verner Street**

The Committee was advised that the application had originally been listed for consideration by the Planning Committee on 16th March, 2021. The application was withdrawn from the agenda and the Committee had agreed to hold a pre-emptive site visit. The site visit had taken place on 8th April, 2021. It was then on the agenda for the Committee meeting of 20th April, 2021. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed to defer consideration of it to allow further engagement to take place between the developer and local residents. It was subsequently on the agenda of the 14th September, 2021, however, it was again withdrawn to allow further engagement between the developer and local residents.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the application was originally deferred in April 2021 to allow for further engagement between the developer and the local community. She outlined that, despite considerable delays already, the agent had requested further time to complete a separate PAD process prior to the Council making a decision on the application. To date, she explained that no further information or amended drawings had been received.

The applicant had submitted a Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) in January 2022 in relation to alternative mixed use proposals for the site. The Members were advised that the proposals were fundamentally different to the scheme proposed under the application in front of the Committee and would therefore require a fresh planning application to be made if the applicant wished to pursue that option. She explained that officers considered that deferral through Committee was not the forum to consider alternative schemes which, in themselves, would be required to follow due process.

The Committee was advised that, having afforded an additional 10 months within the process to resolve any local issues, officers considered that the application should be presented to draw it to a conclusion as nothing new had been presented in respect of the application.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, whereby correspondence had been submitted from an objector stating that the PAD proposals should be shared with the Members. The Principal Planning officer explained that the PAD which had been submitted was not yet valid. She added that an additional 182 objections had been received to the proposed development and that Councillors Gormley and McKeown had both submitted objections in respect of the application.

The main issues raised by objectors included:

- a lack of consultation with the community;
- poor quality and amenity of living space;
- overdevelopment;
- overshadowing;
- fire safety concerns; and

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- the destruction of built heritage

The issues had been addressed within the Case officer's report.

The Principal Planning officer presented the details of the application to the Committee.

She outlined that the key issues which had been considered during the assessment included:

- the principle of demolition;
- impact on character of the area and nearby listed buildings;
- impact on residential amenity;
- impact on sewage infrastructure;
- adequacy of proposed amenity space; and
- social housing need in the area

The site was not zoned for a use within BUAP or draft BMAP, however, it was located within the Victoria Street / Oxford Street Area of Townscape Character (ATC), as designated within dBMAP. As the application site lay within a draft Area of Townscape Character (ATC), it was considered that the test to be applied to assess demolition was whether the proposed development would result in unacceptable damage to the character of the ATC. It was considered that the proposed redevelopment of the site maintained the overall character and respected the built form of the local area. The proposal was respectful of the surrounding context and was appropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance. She also highlighted that the proposed building incorporated some of the interesting features of the existing building. It was considered that the proposed development of the site did not result in a net detriment to the character of the ATC, and therefore the proposed demolition was acceptable.

The Committee was advised that, although the proposed amenity space was below the threshold advised in Creating Places, the application site was located within the city centre and was in close proximity to local amenities, such as City Hall Gardens and the River Lagan. On balance, therefore, it was considered that there would be no unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity for potential residents, with appropriate mitigation offered by way of condition.

The Principal Planning officer reported that NIHE was supportive of the proposed residential scheme and had advised that the proposal would help to address unmet social housing need in the catchment area.

NI Water had responded to the consultation request, advising it had no objections subject to conditions.

The Principal Planning officer advised that, on balance, the proposed development was considered to comply with the tests of the Development Plan and retained planning policy and therefore the officer's recommendation was to approve the application, subject to conditions.

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The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Councillor Gormley to the meeting. He explained that he objected to the application for the following reasons:

- there would be a lack of sunlight and amenity space in some apartments which was contrary to PPS 7, in that it failed to create a quality residential environment;
- the destruction of built heritage, contrary to PPS6, as highlighted by the submission by the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society;
- the lack of comprehensive community consultation;
- the Council had submitted a response to the Department for Communities draft Housing Supply Strategy last week, stating that the Council was “committed to early engagement with local communities and stakeholders to ensure from the outset that they were involved in shaping places to encourage sustainable, thriving and inclusive communities”; and
- he urged the Committee to reject the application.

The Deputy Chairperson then welcomed Mr. D. Worthington, representing the Market Development Association, and Mr. C Mackle, architect, who were objecting to the application.

Together they advised that they believed that the Committee should reject the application as:

- it constituted town cramming and it was contrary to Policy QD1 of PPS5 para 6.137 of SPPS;
- it contained wholly substandard levels of private open space which was contrary to Policy PPS 7 QD1 c and Creating Places, and it contained apartments which would experience constant overshadowing and inadequate light levels due to being located at the rear, contrary to Policy PPS 7 QD1 h and the SPPS para 412;
- private open space was essential for all residential developments, with minimum of 10 square metres per apartment – however, only 45 square metres of communal, un-landscaped hard surface was provided on the roof;
- the fact the development was deemed appropriate by officers was because it was for social housing, which suggested it was second rate;
- MDA had been engaging with the applicant to create a more suitable scheme and was supportive of social housing in the city centre;
- the applicant had submitted a PAD with a revised sketch proposal and it was not acceptable that the Planning Department had only clarified the process for the payment of the fee four weeks after the application date;
- the Council’s Local Development Plan and “Bolder Vision” documents were of material consideration, and one of the focus streets in Bolder Vision was Verner Street; and
- a refusal of the current application would clarify ambition for greater quality, people first and community focused regeneration.

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The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr. L. Ross, planning agent for the application, to the meeting. He advised the Committee that:

- he had been involved with the project since it had started 7 years ago, wherein a PAD application process had resulted in a scheme which didn't work;
- a further PAD application was subsequently submitted which had found favour with the statutory consultees and the planners;
- a consultation process had taken place with the Market Development Association, which had expressed concerns regarding the proposal, and had come up with an alternative proposal for the site;
- the applicant, Habinteg Housing Association, had agreed that the best way to continue was to conduct a parallel PAD process alongside the planning application given the large amount of time and money that was involved in a PAD process;
- the applicant was happy to facilitate looking at the MDA proposal but that it had invested a lot of time and money in the process to date and didn't want that effort to have been wasted; and
- requested that the Committee did not refuse the application this evening and instead deferred it to allow more time for the discussions to continue.

A Member stated that the Committee had already deferred the application on a number of occasions to allow further time for those discussions to continue and that officers had advised the Committee that the PAD presented had not yet been validated and would require a new application. He added that he felt that the applicant should have withdrawn the application and continued with the PAD process, however, the Committee had to deal with the application in front of it.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Garrett
Seconded by Councillor Maskey and

Resolved - That the Committee refuses the application as it is contrary to Policy QD 1 of PPS 7: Quality Residential Environments in that the proposal would, if permitted, introduce an unacceptable layout through the overdevelopment of the site which would fail to provide a quality residential environment to the detriment of the amenity of prospective residents in quantitative and qualitative terms. Furthermore, the proposal is considered contrary to Policy QD1(h) of PPS 7 as lower apartments would experience an unacceptable impact from overshadowing for prospective residents. The Committee agrees to grant delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control for the final refusal reasons.

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**LA04/2021/0911/F - Demolition of existing building
and construction of 9 no. apartments and associated
site works at 236 Upper Newtownards Road**

The Planning Manager (Development Management) presented the details of the application to the Committee.

The Members were advised that the site was located within the development limits of Belfast in both the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) and both versions of draft Belfast Metropolitan Plan 2015 (dBMAP). It was within a draft Area of Townscape Character (ATC).

The main issues which had been considered included the principle of the proposal at that location; demolition; impact on the character and appearance of the area; impact on built heritage, impact on amenity, access, parking and transport; infrastructure capacity; and impact on human health.

The Planning Manager outlined that the principle of residential redevelopment was acceptable on the basis that the site was within the development limits in both the extant and draft plans and historically would have been used as a dwelling. The Development Plan did not preclude housing from the location.

He explained that it was considered that the existing building made a positive contribution to the character of the area and its demolition would normally present concerns. However, the difficult history of building was a material consideration and justified the removal of the building. Notwithstanding, he advised that it was still necessary for the applicant to demonstrate an acceptable redevelopment proposal and “put back”. It was considered that the design of the proposed apartments, in terms of their design, scale, massing and site coverage, would be inappropriate for the site and locality and would harm the character and appearance of the area.

The Committee was advised that sixteen letters of objection had been received, citing issues with parking and traffic; failure to respect the built context/local character of the area; concerns regarding the design and layout of the proposal; overdevelopment of the site; impact on listed buildings; impact on residential amenity; inadequate amenity provision; noise; security and health and safety concerns; inaccurate plans; unacceptable use; that further engagement with victims of the abuse scandal was required and that it was contrary to planning policy.

The Members were advised that the Council’s Conservation Officer and Urban Design Officer had submitted objections in relation to the proposals. The Conservation Officer had concluded that the building made a positive contribution to the surrounding area and that its demolition would be contrary to policy. However, in this particular case, the building had a very difficult history as the site was formerly the Kincora Boys’ Home and had been subject to a Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in 2017. The Members were advised that that was a relevant material consideration which could be taken into account in the assessment of the application. Given the difficult history of the site, it was considered that the demolition of the building would be acceptable. However, the acceptability of the application was still dependent on a suitable redevelopment scheme.

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The Conservation officer raised concerns about the redevelopment scheme, citing issues around overdevelopment, scale and massing. They had commented that the extensive site coverage represented significant overdevelopment of the site in comparison to both the existing and neighbouring plots.

DFI Roads, HED and Environmental Health had also been consulted in respect of the application and had confirmed that they had no objections.

The Planning Manager advised the Committee that it was recommended that planning permission be refused on the grounds that the design of the proposed apartments was inappropriate and would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the Late Items pack, whereby NI Water had maintained its objection to the application, as a high level assessment had indicated potential network capacity issues in the local sewer. The Planning Manager outlined that NI Water had raised significant risks of detrimental effect to the environment and on existing properties and that connection to the public sewerage system should therefore be curtailed. If approval was granted, a condition was recommended to prevent development above sub-floor level until an extension to the existing surface water network could be provided.

The Members were also provided with further information from officers in relation to the density in the surrounding area. Whilst density varied in the area, the site proposed a density at around double the highest density in the area and four times the lower densities.

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr. S. Beattie QC, Mr. D. Stelfox and Mr. D. Ewing to the meeting, who represented the applicant and agent.

Mr. Beattie QC advised the Committee that:

- the current building on the site was notorious;
- the original application submitted comprised a traditional design which the planning department did not like;
- the award-winning architect Mr. D. Ewing was then brought in to create a new design, which was peer reviewed by Mr. D. Stelfox, a renowned conservation architect;
- the design created an enhancement to the area which should carry significant weight;
- the draft ATC was not of material weight and PPS6 did not apply;
- to suggest that LC1 was a reason to refuse the application was incorrect, as it was on a main arterial route and there was a presumption in favour of greater density on such a location, as supported by a recent PAC decision on the Antrim Road;
- the character of an area was not defined by abutting premises;
- there was a modern architectural building opposite, Hawarden House;
- it was a mixed use area;
- the PAC had recently described an unashamedly modern development in a draft ATC in Belfast as being acceptable and that policy did not compel proposals to replicate the design of neighbouring development;

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- QD1 paragraph 4.24 expressly stated that the policy did not preclude quality contemporary design using modern materials;
- it was ironic that the previous traditional design was rejected and that officers were recommending a refusal for the more modern design in front of the Committee;
- in Policy QD1 of PPS7 the applicable policy presumption was “unacceptable damage” in established residential areas, not detriment; and
- the assessment ignored the fact that the development was on the corner of North Road and that HED had found that the listed building adjacent to the site would not be adversely affected.

A Member requested further information on the design from the architects in attendance.

Mr. Stelfox advised the Committee that the current façade onto the North Road had a fairly plain return and a large open space which allowed an untidy view of the rear returns of a number of neighbouring properties, thus no attempt to create a streetscape.

He added that the proposal in front of the Committee created an attractive new road frontage and townscape onto both the Upper Newtownards Road and North Road, reflecting the scale and design of the properties on the opposite side of the road and that required extending the building footprint. He pointed out that HED did not find that it would affect the character of the nearby listed buildings or the townscape and did not have any objection to the proposal.

Mr. Ewing explained that the building had been designed to be respectful of the scale and proportion of the surrounding buildings and that the brick and aluminium which were proposed were low maintenance and sustainable for the busy corner site.

In response to a Member’s question in respect of the character of the area, Mr. Stelfox advised the Committee that the area comprised a variety of building styles with a mix of uses, including a number of modern retail units, a fire station and office buildings. He added that the application would enhance the busy junction.

A Member asked officers to confirm whether Policy LC1 applied on arterial routes. The Planning Manager advised the Committee that officers believed that it did apply. He explained that Annex E defined an established residential area as “residential neighbourhoods dominated by medium or low density single family houses with associated private amenity space and gardens... the areas may include buildings in commercial, retail or leisure service uses, usually clustered together and proportionate in scale and size of the neighbourhood being served”.

In response to a further Member’s question as to what the correct policy test was for QD1, whether it was “unacceptable damage” or “respecting the built form”, the Planning Manager advised the Committee that QD1 stated that “all proposals for residential development would be expected to confirm to all of the following criteria – (a) that the development respected the surrounding context and was appropriate to the character and topography of the site in terms of layout, scale, proportions, massing and appearance of buildings, structures and landscaped and hard surfaced areas”. He advised the Committee

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that officers believed that the application failed to respect its context for the reasons as outlined within the report.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Councillor Spratt,

That the Committee grants approval to the application, as it does not believe that Policy LC1 applies given that it is a mixed use area and not an established residential area, and that it is on an arterial route; and in respect of Policy QD1, that the application respects the built form in the surrounding area in terms of the use of brick and the design, and how it improves the turn on the corner, and gives delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to prepare and finalise the wording of the conditions.

On a vote, ten Members voted for the proposal and three against and it was accordingly declared carried.

**LA04/2021/0547/F & LA04/2021/0543/DCA –
Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment
of site for 2 commercial units on ground floor and
11no. 1 & 2 bedroom apartments, landscaped communal
courtyard and associated site works at 124-126 Lisburn Road**

The Senior Planning officer presented the details of the application for the demolition of no. 124-126 Lisburn Road and the erection of a 3.5 storey building with two commercial units at ground floor level and 11 apartments above.

The main issues which had been considered included:

- the principle of demolition of the existing buildings and the design and form of the replacement building in the conservation area;
- the potential impact on the character of the area and nearby listed buildings;
- the potential impact on residential amenity of existing and proposed residents;
- access, movement and parking; and
- infrastructure capacity

The Members were advised that the site was located within the Malone Conservation Area and involved the demolition of two buildings. It was not considered that the buildings made a material contribution to the Conservation Area and therefore their demolition was acceptable, subject to a suitable replacement scheme.

In terms of amenity provision, he explained that there was a communal courtyard of approximately 120 metres squared, which was above the minimum standards within PPS7 of Creating Places.

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The Senior Planning officer reported that the design of the proposed building reflected the traditional features of the street and appearance of the area. He outlined that the proposed replacement scheme would offer an enhancement to the Malone Conservation Area and that the setting of the nearby listed buildings would be protected.

HED, DFI Roads, Rivers Agency, BCC Environmental Health and BCC Conservation Officer had been consulted and had offered no objections to the proposal.

He explained that there had been an offer of Travel Cards for three years, along with car club and Belfast Bikes membership, to off set any requirements for parking, which would be secured through a Section 76 Planning Agreement.

The Members were advised that the applicant had engaged with NI Water to resolve the capacity issues to serve the development whereby a proposal of attenuation to the storm run-off rate had been proposed which indicated that there was a solution for the storm and water discharge.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to conditions, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions and the completion of a Section 76 Agreement to secure the green travel measures.

LA04/2021/1702/F - Alterations and 3 storey extension to existing private hospital including vehicular access and car parking (amendment to previously approved two storey permission granted under LA04/2017/0005/Fat 807 - 809 Lisburn Road Belfast BT9 and incorporating part of Kingsbridge Private Hospital at Nos 811- 815 Lisburn Road

(Councillor Spratt, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Principal Planning officer outlined that permission had previously been granted for a two storey extension to the private hospital, which was extant.

He explained that the key issues which had been considered during the assessment of the application included:

- the acceptability of the proposed use at this location;
- the acceptability of the design;
- impact on surrounding context – listed buildings and draft area of townscape character;
- access, parking and traffic management; and
- environmental considerations - drainage, contamination and noise

The Members were advised that the principle of a three storey extension to the existing hospital was considered acceptable given that permission was previously granted for a two storey extension on the site.

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The Principal Planning officer explained that the proposal had been the subject of a Pre-Application Discussion (PAD) and that it had been amended during the PAD process to address design issues raised by the Urban Design Officer, HED and the Conservation Officer. He confirmed that the Urban Design Officer, HED and the Conservation Officer were all now content with the proposed scheme.

The Committee was advised that the scale, height and massing of the proposed extension was considered acceptable and appropriate to the surrounding area. The design and materials had drawn cues from the immediate context and were considered acceptable.

The Members were advised that no third party objections had been received.

The Principal Planning officer drew the Member's attention to the Late Items pack, whereby a response had been received from DFI Roads on 14th February. It offered no objection to the proposed development, subject to conditions and to a minor amendment to the car parking layout which necessitated the removal of one car parking space. A revised plan had been submitted to address that technical issue.

He outlined that NI Water had objected to the application on the grounds of insufficient waste-water drainage infrastructure capacity.

A response had been received from NI Water in response to an officer's request for specific evidence to demonstrate the following:-

- lack of capacity for the specific development;
- resultant detrimental harm and how it would manifest;
- how the proposed additional floorspace over and above the previously approved 2 storey development on the site (LA04/2017/0005/F) would have a harmful impact; and
- how the specific proposal would have a harmful impact over and above developments that had already been committed in Belfast (i.e. extant permissions).

In response NI Water had stated that:

1. It had carried out extensive population and flow and load studies which had both confirmed that the existing Belfast Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) was operating above design capacity. As a result, NI Water had commenced the upgrade of the treatment works. The initial upgrade work would be completed by June 2023 and some additional capacity would be available from 1st July 2023. Further phases of upgrade work were planned throughout April 2021 – March 2027, subject to available funding;
2. Continuing to approve new foul connections would add additional biological loading to the existing overloaded treatment works, increasing

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the risk of failing its Water Order Consent Standards set by Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Its previous consultation response

3. had also confirmed a high level assessment had indicated potential wastewater network capacity issues. If confirmed, that established environmental risks, including pollution, flooding and detrimental impact on existing properties. In accordance with its advice, the applicants Drainage Consultant had applied for a Wastewater Impact Assessment and had submitted additional flow calculations. The application was currently being processed by NI Water;
4. The amended proposal included for 2 additional beds, 8 patient pods, endoscopy suite and administration facilities. It was NI Water's opinion that that would result in an increased biological loading. It was, however, acknowledged that the volumetric discharge (hydraulic loading) to the existing combined sewer could be reduced through on-site attenuation and flow control which would address the network capacity issues; and
5. NI Water had a duty to approve connections for all proposed development with extant planning. Although the site had extant approval for a 2 storey extension, and, it was highly likely the volumetric discharge could be reduced for the proposal (which would address the network capacity issues), it was NI Water's opinion that the additional storey would result in increased biological loading. Subject to successful hydraulic loading outputs from the Wastewater Impact Assessment, NI Water would consider a negative condition to permit the construction of additional storey to be constructed but not occupied until 1st July 2023 when additional biological treatment capacity would be available.

The Principal Planning officer explained that there were ongoing discussions between the applicant and NI Water on this issue. He advised the Committee that NI Water had not addressed the fall-back of the significant number of un-implemented planning permissions for residential and commercial development across the city.

In response to a Member's question, the Planning Manager advised the Committee that there were planned works on the Waste Water Treatment plant within 18 months and that officers did not feel that there were adequate grounds to refuse the application based on capacity for the reasons set out in the report.

The Deputy Chairperson put the officer's recommendation, to grant approval to the application subject to conditions and a Section 76 Agreement to secure an Employability and Skills Plan, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions and the Section 76 Agreement, to the Committee.

On a vote, eight Members voted for the proposal, one against and with three no votes, it was accordingly declared carried.

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**LA04/2021/2154/F - Change of approved design for
Community Hub building included within the extant
planning permission ref: LA04/2018/1832/F
(dated 21.02.20) for a community led mix use
regeneration scheme at the site of the former
St Gemma's School**

(Councillor Murphy, having declared an interest in this item, left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Principal Planning officer presented the details of the application to the Committee, for a revised design and layout for a community hub building, which had previously been approved as part of a larger regeneration scheme under reference LA04/2018/1832/F in February 2019.

The key issues which had been considered in the assessment of the proposal included:

- the principle of redevelopment;
- acceptability of community uses;
- loss of open space provision;
- impact on neighbouring amenity;
- impact on built heritage;
- traffic and parking;
- impact on trees and natural heritage;
- contaminated land;
- drainage and flooding; and
- pre-application community consultation

He advised the Committee that the site was located on unzoned land within the development limits of Belfast. The presumption was, therefore, in favour of development, subject to the planning considerations as discussed within the report. He outlined that the principle of the demolition of the former school building and a mixed-use development, which included housing, retail and community use on the site was acceptable and was established under planning permission LA04/2018/1832/F.

The scale, height and design of the proposed revised community hub building was acceptable when compared to the previously approved building.

The ground floor would comprise training rooms, a dual use area for a café/event space, community offices, gym, boxing ring/training area, with ancillary administration offices, foyer, and toilets. There was also a secure and enclosed external courtyard area for training purposes. The first floor comprised two flexible use halls, changing rooms and gym, with a multi-use sports/community hall at the rear of the building.

The mix of uses was considered acceptable at the location, given the previous approval.

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The Members were advised that consultees, including Environmental Health, had no objections.

The current application substantially removed a buffer landscape area which was an area of communal open space between the community hub building and the approved housing element due to a revised layout for the hub building and associated areas. The open space was relocated within the layout. He explained that the revision had been necessary for several reasons as discussed in the report, but principally they were required to allow the community groups currently using the site to continue to operate at the site during redevelopment works.

The Principal Planning officer explained that the proposal would provide a more extensive community benefit in terms of physical and economic regeneration to the area than what would likely have been derived from the grassed open space as part of the approved layout. He advised that the benefit of the previously approved open space was limited to the prospective residents of the new housing. In addition, the private amenity space provision for the new dwellings was compliant with policy and broadly exceeded provision within the locality. The proposed open space was broadly the same size and would still be provided for community use, albeit in a different layout. On balance it was therefore considered that the revised proposal was acceptable in terms of the loss of open space.

A total of 17 letters of support and no objections were received in respect of the application.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to conditions. Delegated authority was given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions subject to no substantive issues being raised.

LA04/2021/0264/F - Demolition of existing public house and erection of 7No. dwellings (social housing) at 475-487 Crumlin Road

The Senior Planning officer provided the Committee with the details of the application.

He explained that the site was within the development limits for Belfast in both the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001 (BUAP) and the draft Belfast Metropolitan Plan 2004 (BMAP). The site was unzoned in BUAP 2001 and was zoned as a commercial node and area of parking restraint and was set along an arterial route within draft BMAP 2004.

He detailed the main issues which had been considered during the assessment of the case, including:

- the principle of the proposal at that location;
- design, layout and impact on the character and appearance of the area
- impact on amenity;
- access, parking and transport;
- infrastructure capacity; and
- impact on human health

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The Members were advised that the principle of the proposal was acceptable on the basis that the site was within the development limits in both the extant and draft plans and had a history of planning approvals for housing in the past. He explained that the development plan did not preclude housing from the location.

He explained that the proposal followed the general pattern of development in the area and that the design and layout would not create conflict and was in keeping with the local character and would not impact on environmental quality or residential amenity in accordance with PPS 7.

In terms of prospective residents, each unit had adequate outlook to the public street and all units were proposed to be built to a size not less than Housing Executive standards.

The Committee was advised that the design, layout and separation distances proposed were acceptable and would not significantly impact on existing residential amenity by way of overlooking, dominance, loss of light or overshadowing.

The Senior Planning officer outlined that an objection had been received from the neighbouring Crumlin Star Social Club. It had raised a number of concerns, including those relating to impact on trade, access to its property, security issues, interface violence, potential for noise pollution complaints and additional running costs. The Senior Planning officer drew the Members attention to the report which had addresses each of those issues.

In respect of the impact on parking and traffic, he explained that DfI Roads was content. He added that Rivers Agency and Environmental Health had considered the proposal and offered no objections. The applicant had engaged with NI Water to resolve wastewater treatment capacity issues to serve the site and had provided correspondence from NI Water which indicated that there was a solution for storm and foul water discharge which could be addressed.

The Committee granted approval to the application, subject to conditions, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of conditions subject to no new substantive planning issues being raised by third parties.

LA04/2021/2802/F - Application under section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 in respect to planning permission LA04/2017/1216/F (residential development comprising 45 dwellings and 8 apartments and associated access road, parking and landscaping (53 dwellings in total) to vary condition 5 (seeking to vary the soft landscaping works to be implemented)

(Councillor Spratt re-joined the meeting at this point in proceedings)

The Committee was advised that the application sought to vary a condition under Section 54 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 to a previous approval relating to a

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residential development at Upper Dunmurry Lane, LA04/2017/1216/F. The previous approval was granted in February 2019 and the development was substantially complete.

The proposal sought to vary Condition 5 which related to soft landscaping. The condition required that all soft landscaping would be carried out in accordance with approved details as set out in the approved Drawing No. 22A. The current application sought to amend the Drawing number, to take account of revised proposals which proposed to replace 1 ash tree and a grouping of young sycamore trees removed with 4 semi-mature lime trees.

The Members were advised that the Tree Officer was satisfied that the proposed replacement trees were appropriate and had no objection to the proposed variation.

One representation was received in respect of the application, raising issues regarding the short period for consultation, that the main contacts were on annual leave over the Christmas period and a lack of detail on the planning portal on the proposed amendments and how they would impact on the aesthetics of the site and what had originally been agreed by the community.

The Principal Planning officer pointed out that details of the proposed amendments were articulated to the objector and the landscape plan and cover letter, which were available on the portal, had been forwarded to the objector to provide clarity on the proposed amendments. Taking account of the planning history on the site, the Committee was advised that the proposed changes were considered compliant with the development plan and other relevant policies.

The Committee granted approval to the application and agreed that delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the varied condition, subject to no new substantive planning issues being raised.

**LA04/2021/2416/F - Retractable canopy for
outdoor dining to restaurant at The Muddlers Club,
1 Warehouse Lane**

The Committee was advised of the proposal for the erection of a retractable canopy to provide cover for an outdoor seating area, on a temporary basis of two years.

The key issues which had been assessed included the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area; the impact on the setting of a listed building; and the impact on the amenity of the surrounding area.

The site was located within the Cathedral Conservation Area and within the setting of a number of listed buildings. The area was commercial in nature and the surrounding area was predominantly restaurants and bars.

The application had been neighbour notified and advertised in the local press and no objections were received.

Historic Environment Division had been consulted in relation to the proposal and had no objection to the proposed canopy.

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The Committee granted approval to the application for a period of two years.

**LA04/2021/2896/A - Building signage for
Walkway Community Association 1-9 Finvoy Street**

The Members were advised that the signage was to be positioned on the newly constructed Walkway Community Association Centre. Three brushed stainless steel signs were to be mounted on to the building, one on each elevation - front, side and rear.

The key issues which had been considered were amenity and public safety.

The Committee noted that the proposed signs would identify the new Walkway Community Association building and would integrate sensitively to the host building and would respect the amenity of the surrounding area.

DFI Roads had been consulted and had no objections. The signs would not prejudice public safety.

The Committee granted approval for the three signs, with delegated authority given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions.

(The High Sheriff, Councillor Hussey, left the meeting at this point in proceedings)

**LA04/2021/2779/F - Section 54 Application to
vary Condition 7 of Planning Permission
LA04/2019/2343/F (replacement new build
community centre) to amend external facing
and roofing materials at Walkway Community
Association 1-9 Finvoy Street**

The Committee was advised that a Section 54 Application to develop land without compliance with Condition 7 of previous Planning Permission LA04/2019/2343/F, which had been approved on 24th February, 2020. LA04/2019/2343/F was for the "Proposed demolition/removal of existing temporary building and erection of new two-storey Community Centre and associated works.". Condition 7 of LA04/2019/2343/F read, "All external facing and roofing materials shall be implemented as specified on the approved plans'. Reason: In the interests of the Character and Appearance of the Area.

The change proposed was to omit the noted 'PPC Aluminium Cladding Panels - Metallic Beige/Grey' at the rear upper block of the centre and to install a textured render system in an off-white colour instead.

The application had been advertised in the local press and neighbour notified. No letters of representation had been received. The proposal complied with the design requirements of the SPPS and would respect and be sympathetic to the overall character of the draft ATC in line with the Addendum to PPS6.

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The Committee granted approval to the application and agreed that delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the varied condition.

LA04/2021/2363/F - Side Extension to North-East Elevation for Fitness Suite, level area created to rear to accommodate 2no. shipping containers for Storage, additional site works & boundary fencing at Poleglass Community Association, Bell Steel Road

The Committee noted the details of the application which sought to construct an extension to the North-East side elevation of the existing community centre to create an additional 120sq metres space for a new fitness suite and associated changing facilities. An area of sloped ground to the rear of the site was to be levelled and hardstanding introduced to create space for two shipping containers for external storage. Given the nature, form and materials of shipping containers, it was recommended that they were removed after a period of three years with a more permanent storage solution, more fitting to the context, to be found.

The Department for Infrastructure Roads Service and Environmental Health Service had no objection. The application had been neighbour notified and advertised in local press and no third-party representations had been received.

The Members noted, in the Late Items pack, that a response from HED (Historic Monuments) had now been received and it was content that the proposal satisfied SPPS and PPS 6 archaeological policy requirements.

The Committee granted approval to the application, with temporary approval for the containers, subject to conditions and informatives with delegated power given to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the conditions.

(The Committee adjourned for ten minutes at this point in proceedings)

Miscellaneous Items

NI Audit Officer Report - Planning in Northern Ireland and DfI Report on the Review of the Implementation of the Planning Act (NI) 2011

The Director of Planning & Building Control and the Planning Manager (Development Management) presented the undernoted report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report relates to two separate reviews of the NI planning system, or aspects of it.**

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- Firstly, publication of the Northern Ireland Audit Office's report on its review of the wider NI planning system; and
- Secondly, the Department for Infrastructure's report on its review of the implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

1.2 The main purpose of this report is to summarise the findings of these two reports. It provides an officer analysis of the issues raised and sets out next steps for dealing with the issues identified by the two reports. The report also takes opportunity to set out some of the current significant impacts that issues raised by the reports, alongside other factors, are having on the Council's operation of its Planning Service.

2.0 **Recommendations**

2.1 The Planning Committee is asked to note this report.

3.0 **Background**

3.1 The current NI planning system has been operating for nearly seven following local government reform and the transfer of most planning powers to the 11 newly formed councils in April 2015. As mentioned in the summary, two separate reviews of the NI planning system, or aspects of it, have been carried out over the last 12 months. These reviews have resulted in the recent publication of two separate reports. The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) published its report on 27 January 2022 and the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) published its on 01 February 2022. These reviews are particularly timely given the criticisms levelled at the NI planning system that it is not delivering and is having an adverse impact on growth and investment.

3.2 The main purpose of this report is to summarise the findings of these two reports. It provides an officer analysis of the issues raised and sets out next steps for dealing with the issues identified by the two reports. The report also takes opportunity to set out some of the current significant impacts that issues raised by the reports, alongside other factors, are having on the Council's operation of its Planning Service.

4.0 **NIAO Review of the NI Planning System**

Background

4.1 Belfast City Council has been engaging with NIAO on its review of the NI planning system since first learning of the audit in 2020. The Planning Service initially met with NIAO in December 2020 then provided written feedback to NIAO in January 2021, also

responding to an information request to all councils. NIAO shared its draft report with the 11 councils in December 2021 to which Belfast City Council provided comments. NIAO then published its final report on 01 February 2022. A copy of the full report is provided at Appendix 1a. For ease of reference, the report's recommendations are listed at Appendix 1b.

Report's Key findings and recommendations

4.2 The overarching message of the NIAO report is that the NI planning system is not working efficiently and, in many aspects, is failing to deliver for the economy, communities or the environment. The report's key findings are summarised below.

- The planning system has not met many of its main performance targets
- The system is increasingly financially unsustainable
- The system is inefficient and often hampered by poor quality applications
- There is an urgent need for improved joined-up working between organisations delivering the planning system
- Many statutory consultees are struggling to provide information in a timely manner
- The system isn't meeting its plan-making objectives.

4.3 The report goes on to make a series of recommendations as set out at Appendix 1b. These recommendations relate to Plan-making, improving performance on the most important applications, enforcement, delegation and committee matters, review of planning fees, leadership of the planning system, skills and environmental ammonia levels.

4.4 The NIAO report is especially critical of the disjointed approach to planning in NI:

'Our review has identified significant silo working within the planning system. We saw a number of instances where individual bodies – councils, the Department or statutory consultees – have prioritised their own role, budgets or resources, rather than the successful delivery of the planning service. Each organisation is accountable for its own performance, and whilst the Department monitors the performance of individual organisations against statutory targets, there is little accountability for the overall performance of the planning system.' (par. 4.10)

Officer commentary on the NIAO report

4.5 Officers view the NIAO Report as excellent opportunity to highlight the shortcomings of the NI planning process, whether it relates to

Plan-making, Development Management or the general administration of the planning process. In this regard, the report is welcomed.

- 4.6 In terms of the NIAO Report's recommendations, these are generally supported. Although the recommendations can perhaps be criticised for being too high level, not time bound and that there is no indication as to how those recommendations should be implemented. In some regards, the report does not go far enough and in previous feedback the Planning Service has called for an independent review of the NI planning system.
- 4.7 Despite the overall negative tone of the NIAO Report, Belfast City Council fairs reasonably well overall. Major planning application performance is strong in the context of the other councils (although clearly there is room for improvement); this is despite the Council dealing with around twice as many Major development projects as the next most prolific council. The Council enjoys healthy levels of delegation (96%) and low levels of officer recommendations overturned by the Committee (2% compared to 31% for the highest council). The NIAO Report also makes specific mention of the Council's *Application Checklist*, published in 2018 to improve the quality of planning applications on submission, with the Department encouraging other councils to follow suit.

LDP Process

- 4.8 The NIAO recognises significant issues with the introduction and administration of the new Local Development Plan processes set out in the Planning Act 2011. The NIAO Report notes that the Department's unrealistic expectation was that all councils would have a fully adopted two-part LPD within 3.5 years of transfer contrasting this with the reality that after seven years no council has even an adopted first part Plan Strategy – with Belfast being at the most advanced stage. According to the latest projections, not all council areas will have an adopted plan until 2028 – some 13 years into new system when the life-cycle of a Plan is expected to be 15 years. The changes within the 2011 Act were intended to ensure NI has a plan-led system and it is imperative that all council areas have up to date plans to provide certainty, consistency and provide the foundation for investment. In emphasising the unrealistic expectations for the LDP processes the NIAO Report also recognise the underestimate for this part of the system from both a skills and resources perspective.

Development Management

- 4.9 Officers advise that the NI planning system is structurally flawed. Whilst the objective of local government reform was to enable

councils to make local planning decisions, the reality is that in a significant number of cases, this is not possible because local decisions cannot be made without input from central government departments through the statutory consultee process. Unlike planning authorities in England and Wales, councils do not have key areas of responsibility such as transport and regeneration. In addition, unlike in other areas of GB, advice on all Listed Building and archaeological matters comes from central government.

- 4.10 Councils are therefore largely dependent on central government to make decisions and there are substantial problems with the statutory consultee process in terms of poorly resourced consultees with often very slow response times, causing significant delays and uncertainty to the planning application process. In addition, statutory consultees are culturally desperate from councils with a lack of alignment in terms of overall objectives and service priorities. In these regards, the NIAO report accurately captures the 'silo working' and lack of overall accountability of the NI planning system.
- 4.11 If Belfast is to truly maximise its potential for place-making and effectively compete with other regional cities in GB and ROI, it must have unitary authority status with additional core responsibilities enjoyed by other major cities.
- 4.12 The NIAO report rightly places emphasis on improving planning application performance but officers disagree with the focus being on the most important application. Each and every application is important to the customer and City to one degree or another, and there must be emphasis on improving the application system as a whole.

Planning Committee

- 4.13 The NIAO Report recommends greater transparency around Committee decision making in NI, particularly the recording of why some normally delegated applications are referred to Committee and minuting the reason/s why the Committee has overturned an officer recommendation. These are matters that the Council already addresses.
- 4.14 NIAO also recommends that the Committee regularly reviews a sample of its previous decisions to enable understanding real-world outcomes, impacts and the quality of completed projects. This recommendation is welcomed and offers propose to build this into the Committee's continuous development programme. Other recommendations include the need for appropriate Member training with the Department ensuring regional consistency.

Financial Unsustainability

- 4.15 The NIAO report rightly highlights the financial unsustainability of the present system. In January 2021, the Council reported to NIAO that the net cost of its Planning Service is nearly £1.2m after fee income. Planning is far from cost neutral. NIAO's recommendation that the NI planning system works towards financial sustainability is therefore welcomed.
- 4.16 It is understood that the Council remains the only planning service in NI to currently charge for PAD advice, which it has done since 2017. This has helped to fund additional staff to provide a better Planning Service overall. The Department is currently scoping a review of regional PAD guidance, including potentially encouraging more widespread charging.

Departmental Oversight

- 4.17 The NIAO Report remarks that there is a lack of accountability for the NI planning system. Whilst DFI has overall oversight of planning, there is no one taking overall responsibility. This is particularly challenging given how fragmented the system is with different central government Departments playing key roles alongside councils. Whilst the Department has an important leadership role, given the range of significant stakeholders in the system, it cannot have sole autonomy in addressing the substantial issues raised by the NIAO Report. Officers are very clear that the solutions can only be found by the various stakeholders working together with a common goal of significant improvement.

- 5.0 Dfi Review of implementation of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Background

- 5.1 Section 228 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 ('the Act') requires Dfi to undertake a review of the implementation of the Act. Members may recall that the Planning Committee considered its response to Dfi's 'call for evidence' in respect of this review in March 2021. A copy of the Council's response is provided at Appendix 2. Further engagement with local government included a 'workshop' Dfi to the Heads of Planning of the 11 councils in June 2021. Dfi recently published its report on the review on 27 January 2022. A copy of this report is provided at Appendix 3a. For ease of reference, the report's recommendations are listed at Appendix 3b.

Scope of the Review

- 5.2 In its report, DfI confirms that it has not undertaken a ‘root and branch’ review of the Act given that seven years in from transfer of most planning powers to councils, it is still ‘relatively early days’ in the delivery of the new planning system. The Department’s focus is on whether the original objectives of the Act have been met. They confirm that this will inform whether it is necessary to retain, amend or repeal any provisions of the Act.
- 5.3 The original objectives of the Act were:
- the continued formulation and co-ordination of planning policy by the Department;
 - councils preparing local development plans;
 - councils determining the majority of planning applications for development and additional planning related consents; and
 - councils taking appropriate enforcement action where a breach of planning control may have taken place.

‘Call for evidence’

- 5.4 DfI issued an 8-week ‘call for evidence’ in February 2021. It attracted 55 responses. Almost two-thirds of the Act were not remarked on with the vast majority of comments relating to Local Development Plans (LDPs), development management (planning application process) and enforcement.

Report’s Key findings and recommendations

- 5.5 The regulations require DfI to report on the following:
- the objectives intended to be achieved by the Planning Act
 - to assess the extent to which those objectives have been achieved
 - to assess whether it is appropriate to retain, amend or repeal any of the provisions of the Planning Act or subordinate.
- 5.6 The Department’s review found that the vast majority of provisions within the Planning Act have been implemented and that the transfer of responsibility for the majority of planning functions to locally accountable councils has been achieved, together with the establishment of the two-tier planning system.
- 5.7 DfI notes that councils are preparing local development plans for their areas, have published statements of community involvement

and now determine the vast majority of planning applications. Changes to the decision-making process including pre-application community consultation and pre-determination hearings have further enhanced community engagement and have allowed greater public involvement and transparency in the determination of planning applications.

- 5.8 Councils are also exercising their planning enforcement duties, investigating alleged breaches of planning control and taking action as appropriate. The Department is determining applications for 'regionally significant development' under section 26, or applications 'called-in' under section 29 of the Planning Act.
- 5.9 Since the commencement of the Act, the Department has also published the Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS) setting out the Department's regional planning policies in a shorter more focused document and has published extensive guidance by way of Practice Notes on the reformed planning system.
- 5.10 The review also found that 162 sections of the Act, or just under two-thirds of its provisions had not been remarked upon in the call for evidence and DfI has, therefore, drawn the conclusion that these should largely be retained as structured.
- 5.11 DfI reports that key issues emerging from the responses to the call for evidence include:
- the timeliness of councils bringing forward their local development plans and delays in processing times for some planning applications, particularly major applications; and
 - the need for potential legislative changes which might address perceived obstacles in the system.
- 5.12 In seeking to address the findings from the review, DfI has made 16 recommendations / actions covering aspects of the Planning Act governing, Plan-making, Development Management, planning enforcement and additional planning control. For ease of reference, these recommendations are provided at Appendix 3b.

Officer commentary on DfI report

- 5.13 In commenting on whether the objectives of the Act have been met, DfI observes that the vast majority of provisions within the Act have been commenced, resulting in its successful implementation. Officers take issue with the suggestion that the implementation has been 'successful'. The NIAO Report clearly confirms that the NI planning system is not working efficiently and, in many aspects, is failing to deliver for the economy, communities or the

environment. Clearly, there is much further work to do to improve how the planning system operates in terms of the LDP process, Development Management and general administration of the system.

- 5.14 DFI acknowledges that the '*...planning system, in some parts, hasn't achieved the level of performance envisaged.*' It refers to indicative timetables for bringing forward LDPs not being achieved and whilst targets for processing Local applications have been met, targets for Major applications have not. The Department states that there are a number of factors that have contributed to this and that it is seeking to address these, albeit they are largely outside the scope of DFI's review.
- 5.15 The Department makes 16 recommendations (see Appendix 3b). None of the recommendations are time bound and DFI states that legislative change around these recommendations will have to be brought forward under the next NI Assembly mandate. Officers have concerns about how long it will take to bring about much needed change.

Local Development Plans

- 5.16 DFI acknowledges the calls for fundamental reform of the LDP process but does not consider that a fundamental review is required until a number of council LDPs have been adopted so as to better understand and evaluate the potential for change. The Department believes that the current process is appropriate and that issues can be addressed through better guidance and reviewing the statutory list of consultees.
- 5.17 Whilst it was recognised that there would be challenges arising from the introduction of a completely new process for the production of development plans this has been unnecessarily further complicated by the role the Department has adopted. The anticipated supportive and collaborative relationship between the Department, as the body responsible for strategic direction or oversight, and the councils as the new local plan making bodies, has not developed. The Department approach engagement and oversight has resulted in unnecessary delays as their role has become more interventionist than strategic oversight.
- 5.18 The new system sought to provide the flexibility for councils to respond to their unique challenges and circumstances through the introduction of plans and policies that reflect the aspirations of their Community Plans. However, the experience has not reflected this positive and innovative aspiration with a more controlling and directive position adopted by the Department in relation to both

guidance and engagement with councils in the development of their LDPs.

Development Management

- 5.19 DfI considers the existing framework of roles and responsibilities within the Development Management process remains appropriate. However, officers fundamentally disagree with this statement for the reasons set out previously, concurring with the NIAO Report's conclusions that the system is highly disjointed and involves far too much silo working. The long-term objective must be for Belfast to become a unitary authority with wider powers and increased responsibilities.
- 5.20 Responding to the Department's recommendations, officers welcome exploration of further digitisation of the planning process, over and above the implementation of the new regional Planning IT system, expected to 'go live' late summer 2022. This would follow English and Scottish Governments publication of white papers on promoting innovation and improving digitisation of the Scottish and English planning systems.
- 5.21 DFI's commitment to bringing forward proposals for both online and in person engagement in the Pre-Application Community Consultation process is also sensible, with temporary regulations having been introduced to facilitate online engagement during the pandemic. This will also consider the emerging recommendations from the regional Planning Engagement Partnership, providing opportunity for improved engagement in the process.
- 5.22 The commitment to review direction call-in criteria is also welcomed but this should be extended to a fundamental overhaul of the notification process as there are considered to be far too many instances whereby the Council has to refer applications to the Department before it can make a decision, resulting in uncertainty and unnecessary delay.
- 5.23 Officers welcome the Department's commitment to bring forward legislation to improve the quality of applications on submission. This would in effect make the Council's own *Application Checklist* a statutory document. However, it should be pointed out that the Council first raised the need for legislative change in this area as far back as 2016. It is very disappointing that it has take over five years for a formal decision to be made on this.
- 5.24 The Department states that it will explore further and give consideration to the legislative requirements around statutory consultations including timeframes for consultation responses, penalties for late responses and how councils can proceed if

statutory consultees do not respond within the required timeframes. The issues around consultees goes to the core of some of the major challenges the NI planning system faces. As previously stated, the long-term objective must be for Belfast to have unitary authority status so that it is not reliant on outside bodies to make local decisions. In any case, changes are essential to significantly improve the statutory consultation process now and make the system much more integrated and outcomes orientated. This must include ensuring that statutory consultees are effectively resourced. The Department has recently written to other government departments on foot of the NIAO Report, highlighting the need for significant improvement in these areas.

- 5.25 The recommendation to make Pre-Determination Hearings discretionary is considered to be very sensible as statutory PDHs are unnecessary and result in much uncertainty and delay for applicants.
- 5.26 The Department's recommendation to supplement existing section 59 provisions which would disallow the variation of a development proposal at appeal would be a good step forward. It would prevent appellants making changes (sometimes significant) at the appeal stage when the Council has not had proper opportunity to consider them. Moreover, it should focus applicants on improving the quality of the submissions when made to the Council. However, it is disappointing that DFI has not taken up the Council's request for legislative change that gives Planning Authorities discretion as to when they accept amended plans or additional information. This proposal was supported by a number of other councils and local government should continue to lobby on this issue, particularly in discussions about how to improve the quality of applications and overall performance.
- 5.27 In terms of enforcement, the Department's commitment to exploring use of Fixed Penalty Notices and multiple fees for retrospective applications is welcomed as deterrents to unauthorised activity.
- 5.28 Lastly, officers welcome the recommendation to undertake a general review of planning fees including an automatic annual inflationary uplift. The NIAO Report stresses the financial unsustainability of the current planning system. It will therefore be necessary to undertake a fundamental review of planning income, including a review of planning application fees, introducing charging for current no-fee applications (such as Discharge of Condition applications, Non Material Changes and PANs), and potentially allowing councils to set their own planning fees.

6.0 Current operational challenges

Development Management

6.1 The Council's Planning Service remains under significant operational pressure, brought about by many of the issues that the NIAO Report identifies in particular. The Council currently has around 1,200 live applications, up from around 850 since before COVID-19. This 40% increase in live applications initially resulted from the impacts of the first lockdown between March and June 2020. The office was initially closed and applications could not be received or processed, some staff were furloughed, site visits were temporarily suspended for health and safety reasons which meant that assessments could not be completed, and new IT had to be rolled out to support remote working.

6.2 However, despite having been almost fully being operational since summer 2020, it has proven extremely difficult to reduce live application numbers back down to more manageable, pre-COVID numbers. This has been due to a range of factors including:

- Planning application numbers returning to normal pre-COVID-19 levels fairly quickly after the initial lockdowns. This has meant that whilst a healthy number of decisions are being made, this has been more or less matched by new incoming applications, meaning that it has not been possible to make meaningful inroads into reducing the total live number of planning applications.
- In some areas there has actually been in a rise in applications, most notably an increase in householder applications as people are trying to achieve more space in the light of the pandemic (this is a trend experienced throughout the UK). The Planning Service also continues to receive a high volume of Lawful Development Certificate applications for HMOs under the new HMO licensing requirements.
- A marked deterioration in the quality of service provided by statutory consultees. In many cases there are very slow consultation responses, holding up applications and resulting in significant delays to applications decisions. This is a key issue identified by both the NIAO and DfI reviews.
- Intermittent technical problems with the NI Planning Portal Public Access and back-office software (this was particularly an issue towards the end of 2020 and since January 2022).

Planning Consultations

- 6.3 The most significant challenge – which is also outside the control of the Council – is the statutory consultation process. As mentioned, for many applications, the Council is reliant on advice from central government departments before it can make a planning decision. In many cases, there are significant delays in statutory consultees providing consultation responses, often borne of lack of resources. It is understood that DfI Rivers is only operating at 40% staff capacity. There are also staff shortages within DAERA. DfI Roads (the most prevent consultee in terms of the number of consultation requests) continues to provide many of its consultation responses well outside the statutory consultee period.
- 6.4 Unverified data for Belfast indicates that around only 40% of statutory consultee responses are provided within time for Major development applications. This rises to approximately 65% within time for Local applications with 63% overall for all applications.
- 6.5 In terms of official data, for NI as a whole, the latest statutory consultee performance for 2021/22 Q2 indicates the following:
- Total number of consultations issued was 7,195 (up 12% over the previous year)
 - Only 64% of statutory consultations were received within time (down from 77% the previous year)
 - DfI Roads – 66% consultations within time (77% previous year)
 - DAERA – 71% (68%)
 - DfI Rivers – 29% (64%)
 - NIW – 97% (88%)
 - DfC/HED – 61% (76%)
- 6.6 In some cases, it has taken consultees many months to provide a substantive consultation response. These delays preclude officers from identifying and resolving issues with applicants much earlier in the process, and prevent officers making a decision or referring applications to the Committee.
- 6.7 Belfast City Council has called for more sophisticated reporting on statutory consultee performance by the Department including measurement of how long it is taking on average for specific consultees to respond and reporting by District Council area.
- 6.8 Members will also be aware of the recent and widespread objections to applications by NIW, also a statutory consultee. Officers are continuing to work with NIW to try to resolve the wider

strategic issues around these objections, but as it stands approximately 100 applications (about 10% of all applications) are stalled in the system because of this issue.

- 6.9 There are also some internal challenges with around 110 applications awaiting a consultation response from Environmental Health (the Council is planning to procure temporary external consultancy support to reduce the backlog of consultations and assist with consultations on new applications).

Impacts

- 6.10 The impacts of these operational challenges are:

- Higher case numbers for individual case officers – this makes managing caseloads much more difficult, with a resulting negative impact on performance, less scope for feedback to customers and significant additional pressure on staff.
- Poor performance overall with slower decision making (current performance for the year to December is average 38.2 weeks to determine Major applications against a target of 30 weeks; and average 16.8 weeks for Local applications against a target of 15 weeks. These statutory targets are not themselves especially stringent).
- Significant reduced customer satisfaction with frequent frustration about the length of time to process planning applications.
- Delays to, and potential withdrawal of, investment in the city.
- Belfast is seen as a less attractive place to invest and do business.

7.0 Next Steps

- 7.1 This is a pivotal time for the NI planning system and publication of the NIAO and DfI reports represents a significant opportunity for much needed change and improvement. It is also essential that the right decisions are taken now – both locally and regionally – to address the fundamental shortcomings that have been identified.

- 7.2 Officers advise of the following next steps.

- i A Public Accounts Committee at the NI Assembly on 'Planning in NI' is scheduled for 10 and 17 February 2022 on foot of the NIAO report. A small number of local government Chief Executives have been invited to give evidence and BCC has nominated itself to be part of this group.

- ii Mobilisation of the 11 councils as a cohesive unit through the Heads of Planning group to ensure a strong, united local government voice, with potential support from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA).
- iii Formation of a cross sector group tasked with identifying solutions and addressing the fundamental issues identified by the reviews. It is essential that the core sectors of central and local government, development industry, elected members and communities are fairly and equally represented. There should also be an independent 'outside voice' on this group to widen experience and scope for improvement. The Department and local government should have co-ownership of implementing the necessary changes.
- iv Engagement with the RTPI and IPI professional bodies

7.3 The aforementioned steps are regionally focused. At a local level, the Council's Planning Service will continue to bring forward the following actions.

- Ongoing development and implementation of the Continuous Improvement Plan;
- Implementation of the new regional Planning IT system in late summer 2022 (to replace the current NI Planning Portal and bring forward significant digital enhancements and improved working practices); and
- Redesign of Development Management processes using lean systems principles to significantly improve the efficiency and quality of service.

8.0 Financial & Resource Implications

8.1 The existing NI planning system is inefficient and underperforming and this inevitably means that it also costly and not value for money. The NIAO report rightly highlights the financial unsustainability of the present system. In January 2021, the Council reported to NIAO that the net cost of its Planning Service is nearly £1.2m after fee income. Planning is far from cost neutral. NIAO's recommendation that the NI planning system works towards financial sustainability is therefore welcomed.

9.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

9.1 No adverse impacts identified."

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 15th February, 2022**

A Member thanked the Planning Department for their hard work in respect of their consideration of the review.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

(Councillor Spratt left meeting at this point in proceedings)

Update on Local Development Plan

The Director of Planning and Building Control and the Planning Manager (Policy) presented the Committee with an update on documentation which had been received from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the results of the Independent Examination and the main issues which had arisen from the statutory Direction which had confirmed that the Planning Appeals Commission conclusion that the Local Development Plan draft Plan Strategy (LDP dPS) could, with modifications, be considered “Sound”.

A number of Members paid tribute to the hard work of the Local Development Plan team for reaching such a significant milestone.

The Committee noted the update which had been provided.

Deputy Chairperson

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Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 21st February, 2022

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT
AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE
HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McCabe (Chairperson);
and Councillors Matt Collins,
Flynn, Magee, McAteer and Newton.

In attendance: Ms. J. Corkey, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance and Systems, ICC Belfast
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms V. Smyth, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from The Deputy Lord Mayor, (Alderman Haire), Alderman Copeland and Councillors Bradley, M. Kelly, Kyle and Mulholland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st February.

A Member requested an update on the company's contract with National Merchandise which had been discussed at the previous meeting.

The Director of Economic Development offered apologies in relation to the cancellation of the site tour which was to form part of the meeting. He advised the Committee that it would be rescheduled to a later date in March 2022. He explained that a report in relation to National Merchandise would go to the Board for its consideration in March and that the Shareholders' Committee would be provided with an update subsequent to that.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Condolences

The Chairperson extended her condolences, upon the passing of Christopher Stalford MLA, to his wife, children, wider family and party colleagues.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

Appointment of External Auditor

The Chief Executive of ICC Belfast advised the Committee that the current external auditors had been the company's auditors for the past five years. As the term had been completed, the company had issued a tender for the provision of external audit and tax services for the next three years commencing with the audit for year ending 31st March 2022, again with the option to extend by a further two years. The company believed that it was good governance practice and ensured that fees to be charged had been assessed for value for money.

She drew the Members' attention to the tender process and shortlisting criteria which had taken place and the firm which had been awarded the highest score.

Moved by Councillor McAteer,
Seconded by Councillor Flynn and

Resolved - That the Committee notes the contents of the report and approves the proposal to appoint PKF-FPM as the company's external auditors and to the company's Audit and Risk Committee, which had approved the appointment, subject to the approval of the Shareholders' Committee.

Chairperson

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 22nd February, 2022

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McCullough (Chairperson);
Aldermen Copeland and Kingston; and
Councillors Black, Bunting, Canavan, Corr, de Faoite,
Ferguson, Gormley, Groogan, M. Kelly, T. Kelly, Kyle, Lyons,
McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McDonough Brown and
Pankhurst.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mrs. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer;
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No Apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st February, subject to the omission of those matters which had been delegated to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

Notices of Motion Received for Council on 1st March

The Committee considered a report in relation to Notices of Motion which had been received for consideration by the Council at its meeting on 1st March.

The Committee considered each motion in turn and agreed the following:

**Standards and Business Committee,
Tuesday, 22nd February, 2022**

Energy Price Crises

That the motion in relation to the Energy Price Crises be referred, in the first instance, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration.

Illumination of Belfast Castle for the Samaritans

That the element of the motion specifically requesting the illumination of the Belfast Castle on 21st December be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as an 'Issue Raised in Advance', and that the remainder of the motion seeking the Council to commend and recognise the work of the Samaritans be referred to the Council for debate, with no restriction on the number of speakers.

Historic Belfast Street Signs

That the motion in relation to Historic Belfast Street Signs be referred, in the first instance, to the Planning Committee.

Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service

That the motion in relation to Belfast Citywide Tribunal Services be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Mountainview Centre

That the motion in relation to the Mountainview Centre be referred to the Council for debate, with no restriction on the number of speakers.

Chairperson

The Samaritans

“This Council commends and recognises the extraordinary efforts of the Samaritans during the period of Covid 19 and beyond. The ability of the volunteers to react quickly and effectively during the pandemic and to continue to offer support to anyone who needs a listening ear day or night, 365 days a year is to be commended.

Proposer: Councillor Kyle

Seconder: Councillor Lyons

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Mountainview Centre

This Council notes with concern that the childcare service at Mountainview Centre in West Belfast is due to close in the coming weeks.

This follows a recent announcement by the Ardmonagh Family Centre, also based on the Upper Springfield Road, that it too, is reluctantly having to terminate its services.

The Council recognises the vital resource that the Mountainview Centre has been to a large number of families over many years; by providing after schools activities and childcare services at an affordable rate.

The Council believes the closure of this service will have a negative impact on families in West Belfast.

This Council also expresses concern that several staff will face redundancy as a result of this closure.

Given the recent spiralling cost of living, and the inability for working class families to access affordable childcare, it is imperative that this centre remains open to provide after schools services and creche facilities at an affordable rate for parents.

The Council resolves to convene an urgent cross-party meeting, reaching out to both the Education and Communities Ministers and their officials, as well as Council officers and staff of the Mountainview Centre, in order to explore the possibility of keeping the doors of this invaluable service open.

Proposer: Councillor Matt Collins

Seconder: Councillor Ferguson

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