

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 10th May, 2022

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Smyth (Deputy Chairperson);  
Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey;  
Councillors Black, Bunting,  
Corr, de Faoite, Flynn, Garrett, M. Kelly,  
Magee, McAteer, McCusker, Mulholland,  
Newton and Verner.

Also attended: Councillor McMullan.

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

### **Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was recorded on behalf on the Chairperson, Councillor Cobain.

### **Best Wishes**

The Deputy Chairperson congratulated former Members of the Committee Councillors Baker and McReynolds on their election to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 5th April were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th May.

### **Declarations of Interest**

The following Members declared an interest in item 3 (b) in relation to the Community Support Programme Letter of Offer 2022-2024, as they either worked for or were associated with an organisation in receipt of funding from the DfC. All Members left the meeting whilst the matter was being discussed.

- Councillor Black, on the basis that she managed the Grosvenor Community Centre;
- Councillor Verner, in that she was an employee of the Greater Shankill Partnership (Spectrum Centre); and
- Councillor Corr, in that he was an employee of Falls Community Council;

Alderman Copeland declared an interest in respect of agenda item 3 (c), Request for the use of Belfast City Council facilities during the Orange Orders Centenary Parade on 28th May 2022, in that she was a Member of the Orange Order, she left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

**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 4 items as, due to their nature, 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.

**Presentation - Organiser of Bright Lights Event**

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed Mr. E. McCann to the meeting.

Mr. McCann commenced by thanking the Members for the opportunity to attend the meeting. He advised that following the 2021/22 event he acknowledged that there were areas where improvements could be made to enhance the 2022/23 event.

The representative proceeded to outline his draft proposals for change, which included a shorter running time, cheaper ticket price and new attractions.

Several of the Members highlighted the number of complaints that had been received around the price of tickets, lack of a family ticket and the overall environmental impact of the event in the area, specifically in regard to light and noise pollution.

During questions the promoter acknowledged that there had been little, or no public engagement and agreed with the Members that it was essential that neighbourhood consultation/notification was undertaken going forward, in keeping with clause 21 of the licence agreement.

A Member acknowledged and thanked the promoter for the 'quite time' that had been set aside for those with sensory issues. A further Member suggested that the provision of a changing places facility would be a welcome addition.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr. McCann for attending and he left the meeting.

Discussion ensued in regard to the issues that had been considered, following which, it was agreed to defer any further discussion on the matter to enable a report to be submitted to a future meeting that would consider the proposed areas for improvement as outlined by the promoter and how these could be successfully implemented and also to enable the receipt of legal advice from Legal Services as to whether those Members who had received complimentary tickets for the 2021/21 should declare an interest.

**Botanic Gardens Events 2022 –  
Request from Aiken Promotions**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that a request had been received from Aiken Promotions seeking permission in respect of the breakdown and egress of equipment (known as 'load out') up to 3.00 a.m. on the morning after each of the scheduled concerts at Botanic Gardens in June 2022.

As with the previous event, the Members again stressed the need for engagement with local residents to be undertaken to advise them of the events taking place and disruptions that might occur.

The Committee granted authority to Aiken Promotions Limited to conduct the 'load out' up to but no later than 3.00 a.m. after each of the concerts based on a number of mitigations being put in place. It noted that, as part of these mitigations, the promotor would liaise and seek advice from the Council's environmental noise team in order to limit the disruption to local residents.

The Committee further noted that satisfactory terms and conditions would be agreed and included as clauses within the overall licence agreement for use of the site which would include communication and engagement with local residents.

**DfC Community Support Programme  
Letter of Offer 2022-2024**

The Members were asked to note that a Letter of Offer had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) in regard to the delivery of the Community Support Programme (CSP). The letter of offer was a multi-annual covering the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years, previously it had been allocated on a year-by-year basis.

The Committee was reminded that the Council used all the CSP funding to match its investment in Community Provision Grants supporting the community and voluntary sector to provide a broad range of community and advice services.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the Letter of Offer made provision for a 2% increase in grant allocation for the 2022/23 financial year and again in 2023/24. This increase was specifically for salary related costs. All organisations that used the Council's Community Provision Grants towards salaries would be offered an additional 2% allocation, proportional to the Council's contribution.

The Members' attention was then drawn to the financial breakdown contained within Letter of Offer.

During discussion a Member referred to the status of the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) and whether its draft Business Case had been progressed.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that Council officers were continuing to work with the BCTS to produce a final draft of its Business Case and that in due course an update report would be submitted to Committee. The Members were also reminded that the DfC had not applied any increase to the Welfare Reform Mitigations Extension Tribunal Representation Appeals and that the Council had allocated £70,400.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive formally accept the Letter of Offer on behalf of the Council.

**Request for the use of Belfast City Council facilities during the Orange Orders Centenary parade on 28th May 2022**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that a request had been received from the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, seeking the use of the cobbled stone section at the front of the Belfast City Hall and the use of a Belfast City Council (BCC) standing podium, to facilitate a walk by leading up to the completion of the parade to mark the Orange Order's Centenary on 28th May.

The Members noted that they were content with this request providing the erection of the podium was at no cost to the Council and that the podium itself was plain (i.e. no BCC corporate logo).

Given the date of the proposed event, delegated authority was granted to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to grant permission to The Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland to use the cobbled section at the front of City Hall and to permit the erection of a podium to facilitate a 'walk by' on the 28th May, provided it was at no cost to the Council.

**Committee/Strategic Issues**

**Motion - Nutrition Support for Children in Out of Hours School Clubs**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

**1.1 To provide members of the People and Communities Committee with an update in relation to action taken to address issues raised via a Notice of Motion tabled by Councillor Black in November 2019 focussing on improving nutrition support within after schools' clubs, particularly in areas of disadvantage.**

**2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- **Note the contents of the report.**

**3.0 Main report**

**3.1 Key Issues**

**In November 2019 Cllr Black brought forward a Notice of Motion (NOM), seconded by Cllr McAteer, which stated; 'Practical healthy eating, supported by positive influence around lifelong food choices, improves children's wellbeing in physical and mental terms including their ability to concentrate and learn. Good nutrition is essential for children to grow properly, do their best in school and be happy and healthy in the future (Education Authority)'.**

- 3.2 A World Health Organisation Commission had described childhood obesity as a 'growing epidemic.' Department of Health survey statistics indicated that 25% of children in this region are deemed to be overweight or obese. The estimated costs of healthcare attached to weight problems are around £450 million, representing 2.8% of total healthcare expenditure.
- 3.3 Small changes across a range of arenas can help to turn the tide. Implementing healthy snack choices, as part of the daily routine, significantly increases the capacity of positive choices becoming embedded, ultimately resulting in wider savings to the health sector.
- 3.4 Belfast City Council supports a range of services and programmes for children, including summer schemes and out of hours school clubs in areas facing disadvantage and food poverty. Such spaces provide daily opportunities for children to undertake physical activity, learning and play. It is worth noting the capacity for such spaces to further improve the health of children via the provision of small healthy snacks.
- 3.5 It is within this Council's gift to contribute to the improvement of quality of daily life for children and to cement children's positive relationship with food and nutrition.

Accordingly the Council agrees that a report, looking at clubs located in areas of disadvantage and the potential for such spaces to incorporate healthy snacks, as part of out of hours schools provision during both term time and non-term time, be prepared.

#### February 2020 Update

- 3.6 Officers provided members of P&C Committee with an update report re. action taken/progress against this NOM in February 2020.
- 3.7 Almost all of the 22 BCC owned Community Centres have after schools' activities in place for 5-11 year olds. Activities include a combination of drama/arts/crafts/open play/music etc. as well, to a lesser extent, sporting activities. The main focus is on recreation and play. In general food (as in a meal) is not provided due to the short time period the child is present (less than 2hrs).
- 3.8 Food provision is different at summer schemes as children usually attend for a longer session (2 hours or more with a break included). They may attend either once or twice a day for 4 weeks. A snack is also provided morning and afternoon and there isn't currently a BCC-led healthy eating policy or guidance in place that the centres have to follow/adhere to in

relation to providing nutritious meals and snacks. BCC also fund community based summer schemes via a grants scheme and one of the criteria is that the scheme *'provides activities that improve health - including physical activity/exercise/mental health/healthy diet/health behaviours.'*

- 3.9 A sample survey looking at current practice was conducted by a Council officer which found that a number of after schools' projects accommodated a short break and provided some refreshments e.g. water, diluted juice (no added sugar), fruit, plain biscuits, toast. Overall, there appeared to be a general culture of encouraging healthy options however there were no prerequisites and no formal guidance/instruction in place. There would also be limits on what could be provided in Centres due to budget constraints.
- 3.10 The report concluded by outlining the proposed actions that BHDU staff had agreed to explore further with Council's community services staff, namely:
- Further engagement with the BCC Assistant Community Development Officers Forum
  - Resource development
  - Staff training
  - Information provided for parents – and children

#### Covid Impact

- 3.11 Unfortunately, further action was significantly impacted by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of Council's community centres and suspension of and/or restricted delivery of programming and activities within the centres when they were able to periodically open in 20/21 and 21/22.

#### Promoting Healthier Eating in Physical Activity and Sport resource

- 3.12 In April 2021 the two specialist dietitians based in the Belfast Health Development Unit (BHDU) supporting Active Belfast, produced a new guidance document. The resource (included as an appendix with this report) aims to provide guidance to physical activity leaders and coaches on healthier food and drink options in settings where physical activity or sport is taking place or is being promoted. This includes both indoor and outdoor activities for example in community centres, leisure centres, sports clubs and activity centres. Getting active can be a great opportunity to promote healthy eating

and drinking habits and as people become more active, they may also be keen to improve their diet. The nutrition information in the guide is aimed at healthy adults, young people and school aged children.

- 3.13 Food/drink may be eaten/drunk before or after activities. It might be brought by participants themselves or it can be provided as part of programmes, events or celebrations by the organisers. This can be a great opportunity to provide healthier food and drink choices and highlight important key health messages.
- 3.14 The guide provides practical guidance on;
- a) Drinks
  - b) Healthy snacks
  - c) Celebrations
  - d) Food allergy
  - e) Preparing food safely
  - f) Cooking programmes.

**April 2022 Update**

- 3.15 The BHSCT dietitian based in BHDU met with the BCC Assistant Community Development Officers Forum on 26th January 2022 where she highlighted the '*Promoting Healthier Eating in Physical Activity and Sport*' resource and its potential for use by Community Services staff as well as other links and support available on nutrition which community staff could avail of.
- 3.16 Further meetings have taken place to commence planning of a practical workshop for community staff to attend (to take place on 10th May) which will focus on healthy snacks. It is anticipated that once Council officers are familiar with the resource that they will also be able to promote it, and assist external groups, to use it. They will also be looking at ways in which Council, in partnership with Active Belfast/BHDU, can provide best practice information, advice and support in relation to physical activity and nutrition to those groups who apply for funding via Council's grants schemes.
- 3.17 Funding has also been made available via Active Belfast to support the provision of 'Go bags' – easy to carry outdoor activity equipment bags (for Community Development Officers/ Playworkers to use with children) a resource identified as a need by CDOs. A small group has been established to identify the resources and the Go bags should be used/targeted.

**3.18** The dietitian based in BHDU now also regularly shares information on training opportunities and other relevant opportunities to the CDO team. Some examples include:

- BHSCT Slow Cooker training
- Nutrition Awareness training for Teenagers
- Monthly Nutrition webinars (also posted on interlink and featured on BHDU's [www.makinglifebettertogether.com](http://www.makinglifebettertogether.com) website each month)
- A number of physical activity training opportunities such as 'Chi Me'
- Nutrition resources available to supporting Healthy Eating on a Budget

**3.19** BHSCT Dietetics Service in partnership with BHSCT Health Improvement Team are planning a nutrition training calendar for 2022/23 meaning that all training available on both physical activity and nutrition – the Active Belfast dietitian based in BHDU will share this resource once it becomes available.

**3.20** The Active Belfast dietitian continues to form relationships within and across Council and has linked in with the BCC Food Sustainability Group/Climate Plan Programme Board and provided feedback on a potential BCC/QUB Food Insecurity Project.

**3.21** Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial or resource implications attached to this report, given that promotion of physical activity and nutrition is an ongoing priority work area within the Belfast Agenda and therefore staff within BHDU will be able to continue to provide support and advice in relation to taking agreed work forward in partnership with Council community services staff.

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

None.”

The proposer of the original motion, Councillor Black, thanked the officers for their hard work in progressing the Motion.

During discussion it was proposed by Councillor de Faoite, seconded by Councillor Smyth and subsequently agreed to invite Unison to discuss its 'Free School Meals for all Campaign' to the Special Meeting of the People and Communities Committee with the Belfast Youth Council on 21st June.

### **Sanitary Waste Pilot Update**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that, in February 2022, as part of an update on period poverty to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, officers had reported that the Community Awareness and Waste Education teams were developing a pilot initiative that would provide access to free, reusable sanitary products.

The aim of the initiative was to raise awareness and to encourage increased use of reusable period products which would also have an environmental benefit as it would reduce the amount of period waste entering the waste stream. Whilst primarily focused on waste reduction, it also had the benefit of providing a sustainable resource for those affected by period poverty.

The pilot scheme had been launched on 30th March 2022 and was designed to provide free access to reusable sanitary products to people in the Belfast area. Council officers had worked with the social enterprise, 'Hey Girls' [www.heygirls.co.uk](http://www.heygirls.co.uk), to deliver the scheme, where participants could register and order reusable sanitary products online.

The Director advised that the Belfast pilot scheme had received unexpected and unprecedented levels of demand with over 2,750 orders made in less than 24 hours. Such was the level of demand that the notional budget officers had allocated to the scheme had required to be increased five-fold. Social media coverage and feedback on the scheme had been extremely positive and had praised the Council for bringing the initiative forward. Over 95,000 people had been reached through Council social media on the topic, with over 225,000 people having viewed twitter posts promoting the scheme.

The Members were advised that officers were currently evaluating the scheme and the ongoing levels of interest to determine how future initiatives would be delivered. The pilot scheme had delivered products at no cost to maximise uptake, but was it anticipated that future schemes might need to include some contribution from participants to try and increase the numbers ultimately able to benefit.

A Member welcomed the scheme and its overall success but stated that she would be keen not to see a charge introduced as she felt that this would go against the ethos of the scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor Mulholland, seconded by Councillor Kelly and subsequently agreed that, given the success of the initiative, a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee seeking it to find the budget to enable the provision of reusable sanitary products to continue to be funded and where possible that these products should continue to be offered free of charge or for a nominal charge at a minimum.

### **Active Belfast 2022/23 Approach**

The Committee considered the following report:

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to secure agreement on the use of Belfast City Council's allocation to support Active Belfast in 2022/23.**

1.2 Active Belfast (AB) is a multi-agency partnership supporting physical activity and healthy eating in Belfast. It is jointly funded by BCC (£90,000) and Public Health Agency (£146,000) per annum.

1.3 The overall funding allocated for Active Belfast is £236,000 per annum and remains unchanged from 2021/22, however officers wish to request to use part of the in-year BCC Active Belfast contribution (which up until 20/21 had been fully allocated to grants) to support the work of the Active Belfast Partnership (currently being re-established post Covid) and the identified key priority areas as outlined in section three of this report.

## 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The committee is asked to:

- Note the content of the report; and
- To agree that the BCC contribution (£90K) to Active Belfast is utilised as outlined in the proposed budget profile for 22/23 detailed in Table 2 Section 3.5.

## 3.0 Main report

### 3.1 Background

Members will be aware senior staff from Council, BHSCT and PHA have been considering the future of their joint working arrangements (staffing and financial resources) to address health inequalities in the Belfast area to include reviewing and reaffirming current commitments to the previous Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) and the reduction of life inequalities in line with the Belfast Agenda/Community Plan, Making Life Better and a range of forthcoming strategic developments focussing on public health. However, physical activity and healthy eating remain priority areas within the refreshed Belfast Agenda as well as wider health-focussed strategic documents. Active Belfast therefore, both as an approach and as a partnership, will continue to develop over the coming months and years.

### 3.2 20/21 Approach – Recap

Historically, the two main initiatives supported by the Active Belfast Partnership were the Active Belfast Grant Scheme and Jog Belfast (Couch to 5K programme) with staff in the Belfast Health Development Unit (BH DU) promoting, administering and monitoring both initiatives.

In 2021/22 People and Communities Committee agreed that;

- Active Belfast grant holders from 20/21 would be offered continuation funding in order to complete their original programmes/initiatives in 21/22 to increase likelihood of sustainability in the future. For some, completion/achievement of all objectives had not been possible due to Covid regulations. Continuation was subject to meeting review criteria and agreeing a new action plan with relevant leads within BHDU for key performance indicators.
- A developmental budget would be held for AB Partnership supported projects and initiatives – the intention being to further develop some of the more promising grants from last two-year period. These would be supported by BHDU, who would have responsibility for identifying priority areas for the refreshed partnership to consider. Again, this would be subject to meeting set criteria and agreeing action plans, targets, etc.
- Support would be provided in-year for Jog Belfast of £23,133 via the existing available funds – specifically from within the BCC £90K contribution to Active Belfast.
- Support would be provided for BCC’s Micro and Medium Grants Scheme for 2021/2022.

Table 1 below outlines how the budget was profiled in 21/22 (including the £56K additional contribution from PHA).

3.3 Table 1: 2021/2022 Active Belfast Agreed Budget

<u>Expenditure 2021/22</u>	<b>BCC</b>	<b>PHA</b>	<b>Total</b>
BCC Micro-Medium grants	£ 39,970	£ 39,970	<b>£ 79,940</b>
Jog Belfast	£ 23,133	£ 32,867	<b>£ 56,000</b>
Active Belfast Partnership budget to support promising AB grants from 20/21 and developmental activities	£ 26,897	£ 73,163	<b>£ 100,060</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£ 90,000</b>	<b>£ 146,000</b>	<b>£ 236,000</b>

3.4 Rationale for Proposed Active Belfast 22/23 Budget Profile

Discussions have taken place at a senior level amongst the funding partners (BCC and PHA – as well as BHST) and having considered a range of options the following key actions have now been agreed.

**3.5 Micro and Medium Grants (£79,940)**

Following discussions with officers in both lead organisations we intend to contribute a total of £79,940 to the BCC micro/medium community grants scheme (of which both organisations will give an equal contribution of £39,970) to continue to pilot this funding model to inform future resourcing of physical activity and nutrition focussed work in Belfast.

**3.6 Participatory Budgeting Pilot (£64,000)**

Active Belfast Partnership, supported by BH DU, will lead on the development and delivery of a Pilot Participatory Budgeting initiative (one of the key actions proposed under the Physical Activity theme within the Belfast Agenda refresh) of approx. £16,000 per area North, South, West and East Belfast.

**3.7 Jog Belfast (£42,000)**

In relation to Jog Belfast we intend to provide £42,000 (PHA £32,867 and BCC £9,133) to support a new funding model for Jog Belfast and confirm contributions available from partners re. same. The Jog Belfast model, and how it is resourced going forward, will be a priority item for consideration by members of the Active Belfast Partnership. Allocation of funding will support 7 sites across the City of Belfast, within North, South, West and East to deliver 3 programmes across the year.

**3.8 Active Belfast Grants Rollover (£44,829)**

Allocation of continuation funding to two current Active Belfast Grant holders (from 2021/22) where targets have been met and outcomes are promising, and where the contract holder has indicated that they can build on the initiative (ability to do so was built into the process at the outset). This has been proposed for two reasons, to increase capacity and foster sustainability at the local/community level, as well as to allow time for development and consideration of a new funding model for future resourcing of physical activity and nutrition focussed work in Belfast. The two projects selected are showing potential to be adopted as regional initiatives as they align with both the new Sport and Physical Activity Strategy as well as PHA commissioning priorities for Physical Activity.

BH DU will direct anyone making enquiries around funding to other potential sources of support such as the BCC Micro/Medium Grants Scheme as well as other grant opportunities such as those provided by the National Lottery Community Fund – and where appropriate directing them

through the Council's Community Services team for advice and support around grants and capacity building. BHDU staff will also link in with those awarded BCC Micro/Medium grants focussing on promoting healthier lifestyle choices to provide advice, signposting and make connections around physical activity & healthy eating to support or enhance their delivery.

### 3.9 Active Belfast Partnership (£5,230.80)

With the dissolution of the Belfast Strategic Partnership and the introduction of Community Planning/the Belfast Agenda and the associated Boards, etc.– there remains a need to review and rejuvenate the Active Belfast Partnership in terms of role and function, membership and priorities going forward. The three partner organisations (BCC, BHSCT and PHA), had already committed to driving forward this process during 21/22 and this will continue in 22/23 (and beyond) with the partnership taking on an active role in relation to developing and delivering on the agreed actions focussing on Physical Activity and Nutrition within the refreshed community plan for Belfast – to be overseen by the Living Here Board.

The proposed budget allocation per organisation and overall is detailed in Table 2 below.

### 3.10 Table 2: Proposed budget for 2022/2023 to support the key areas outlined above

<u>Proposed Expenditure 2022/23</u>	<b>BCC</b>		<b>PHA</b>		<b>Total</b>
Micro-Medium grants	£	39,970.00	£	39,970.00	<b>£ 79,940.00</b>
<b><i>Partnership innovation projects</i></b>					
Pilot Participatory funding	£	26,000.00	£	38,000.00	<b>£ 64,000.00</b>
<b><i>Business continuity</i></b>					
Jog Belfast (£42000 - 7 sites x 3)	£	9,133.00	£	32,867.00	<b>£ 42,000.00</b>
Active Belfast Grants rollover	£	14,457.60	£	30,371.60	<b>£ 44,829.20</b>
Resources/Training	£	439.40	£	4,791.40	<b>£ 5,230.80</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>£ 90,000.00</b>		<b>£ 146,000.00</b>	<b>£236,000.00</b>

### 3.11 Financial and Human Resource Implications

Subject to Council and PHA approval/agreement, a budget of £236,000 (as outlined in the Table 2 in 3.10) will remain available to support this work in 22/23. Belfast City Council's £90K contribution towards the £236K total has been included within the revenue estimates for 2022/23 and therefore does not represent any growth.

3.12 Kim Kensett (PHA) and Grainne McMacken (BHSCT) will continue to lead on this work within the BHDU in 22/23. Oversight will continue to be provided by Kelly Gilliland within BCC and David Tumilty within PHA with all stakeholders in the Active Belfast Partnership taking on a more active role as the year progresses and the partnership regains its focus and momentum.

3.13 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

### All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

#### “1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

The purpose of the report is for members to consider a request to become a formal partner of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

#### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- Agree that Belfast City Council becomes a formal partner of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

2.2 Members are advised that in becoming a partner, Council agrees:

- To support the ethos of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and consider the Plan in policies, plans, and management decisions where possible.
- To carry out one pollinator-friendly action in the first year of signing up and plan to carry out at least three more within the following five years. The guideline document lists 30 possible actions, many of which are low cost or cost neutral.
- To update the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Team on the positive pollinator actions planned, implemented or maintained at the end of each year.

3.0 **Main report**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 Insect pollination is essential to food production. ‘One out of every 3 mouthfuls’ is pollinated by insects. Wild bees pollinate between 85-95% of the UK’s insect pollinated crops, while honeybees pollinate between 5-15%. This free service is estimated to be worth £1.8 billion each year.
- 3.2 More than half of our bee species have suffered declines over the past 50 years with over 250 UK pollinators in danger of extinction. Habitat loss is a major driver of pollinator declines and in Northern Ireland we have lost as much as 97% of our wildflower meadows in the last half century.
- 3.3 Members are reminded that in 2015 Belfast City Council endorsed and supported the first All-Ireland Pollinator Plan which aimed to take steps to reverse pollinator losses and help restore populations to healthy levels.
- 3.4 Building on the success of the first Plan, the new Plan 2021 - 2025 has 6 objectives:
- **Making farmland pollinator friendly** - By working together with the farming community, we want to achieve an increased awareness of pollinators and the resources they need in order to survive on farmland.
  - **Making public land pollinator friendly** - By working together with Councils, Transport Authorities, Local Communities and others, we want to better coexist with biodiversity and help return food and shelter for pollinators to our island.
  - **Making private land pollinator friendly** - From gardens, to businesses, faith communities and sports clubs, we want to work together to create networks of biodiversity-friendly habitat across our landscape.
  - **All-Ireland Honeybee Strategy** - By supporting beekeepers, we want to achieve healthy, sustainable populations, and for honeybees to be part of a cohesive pollinator message that balances managed and wild pollinator populations.
  - **Conserving rare pollinators** - By improving our knowledge on rare pollinators, and by raising awareness through dedicated initiatives, we want to achieve a Plan that protects as much wild pollinator diversity as possible.

- **Strategic coordination of the Plan** - By continually raising awareness; addressing gaps in our knowledge through research; and by tracking where pollinators occur and how populations are changing, we want to work from an evidence base that enables us to coordinate a dynamic plan that is targeted and effective.
- 3.5 **Belfast City Council has received a request to become a formal partner of the new All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025. In becoming a partner, Council agrees:**
1. **To support the ethos of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and consider the Plan in policies, plans, and management decisions where possible.**
  2. **To carry out one pollinator-friendly action in the first year of signing up and plan to carry out at least three more within the following five years. The guideline document lists 30 possible actions, many of which are low cost or cost neutral.**
  3. **To update the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Team on the positive pollinator actions planned, implemented or maintained at the end of each year.**
- 3.6 **The Council is already contributing to the objectives of the Plan through our existing land management such as our meadow management and projects such as the successful Bee-licious Pollinator project.**
- 3.7 **Members are reminded that at February Council, BCC agreed to support the Belfast's Buzzing Pollinator Project with BugLife, which aims to promote insect pollinators in parks and open spaces as well as inform, inspire and engage local communities in the recovery of nature within their local area.**
- 3.8 **Council has agreed £5,000 funding for project work to occur on BCC land and that Council will manage these project sites for the next ten years, maintaining their biodiversity value.**
- 3.9 **The Belfast's Buzzing project will form the focus of the Council's commitment to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan over the next 2 years and to be able to link these actions as a formal partner of the Plan would strengthen existing and future funding applications.**

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

- 3.10 **It is not anticipated that these actions will incur any additional costs and will be met through existing work programmes.**

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

**3.11 There are no known implications with this report.”**

During discussion a Member sought an update on the status of a previous Notice of Motion in regard to rewilding, he continued that he would be keen to see the Council adopting a more joined up approach in regard to progressing environmental issues.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that an update regarding the outstanding Notice of Motions was scheduled to be submitted to the June meeting of Committee.

Following a query regarding the Council’s use of glyphosate-based weed killers and the introduction of alternative weed control measures, the Director of Neighbourhood Services undertook to submit an update report to a future meeting.

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined at 2.0 of the report.

**Disability Bowls Coaching Programme**

The Committee considered a report that provided the detail of a request received from the Irish Bowls Federation (IBF) seeking permission to develop a Disability Bowls Hub in Belfast, along with details of a proposed pilot project for a Disability Bowls Hub in Belfast.

The Members were advised that in 2022 the IBF had undertaken a Club Engagement Survey (response rate of 73%). The key findings and emerging priorities from this survey had highlighted the following:

- the under representation of women and girls;
- a disability gap with a surprising lack of active playing members with a disability and provision;
- an ageing demographic;
- survival of clubs; and
- a lack of any recognised club support structure to help with sustainability and growth.

The IBF had since agreed to focus upon one emerging priority area, namely, the provision of more sporting opportunities for people with disabilities.

The Members were advised that the IBF had identified Musgrave and Grove Bowling Pavilions as potential sites to develop the Disability Hub, given the availability of indoor halls for all year-round use.

The Members' attention was then drawn to the proposed short-term priorities for the programme - June to September 2022, as follows:

- to investigate, develop and help implement a 'Disability Bowls Hub' pilot programme;
- the provision of all equipment;
- engagement with local community groups;
- the provision of bowls coaching with experienced bowls coaches;
- to encourage and promote wellness and well-being; and
- to build a positive and inclusive sports culture.

The Longer term aims and objectives were then highlighted, as follows:

- to continue a working partnership with Belfast City Council to help promote and foster the development of talented athletes;
- the provision of suitable facilities, for example, a bowling green and pavilion that was fully accessible to all disabilities with suitable equipment (adapted wheelchairs) for use on the bowling green; and
- to develop athletes to represent Northern Ireland at prestigious International para and visually impaired events and establish the necessary infrastructure to facilitate their preparation, training and development.

The Committee was advised that Northern Ireland was the only home country, which currently did not have para or visually impaired bowls representatives at the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

The Committee noted the key findings from the recently commissioned research and the level of existing support mechanisms within the sport of bowls and welcomed this proposed pilot project. Several Members stated that they would be keen to ensure that this valuable work was extended and built upon following the initial pilot.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- agreed to support a pilot project up to a maximum of £6,000 with the view of developing a "Disability Bowls Hub" to provide more sporting opportunities for people with disabilities and agreed that this pilot would be extended to include those with unseen disabilities; and
- noted the need to extend the work beyond the actual pilot and agreed that, following the pilot, officers would review its success and submit a report to Committee that would explore how the work could be continued and enhanced within the context of the Sports Development Strategy.

### Operational Issues

#### Request to hold events in Parks – June/July 2022

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that several requests had been received from event organisers seeking to host events in a number of Belfast park locations during June and July 2022.

She detailed that the following applications had been received:

- Finaghy Residents Association seeking to host the Finaghy Cultural Festival to take place between 9th – 13th June at Wedderburn Park;
- County Grand Orange Lodge of Belfast to host their annual Twelfth of July celebrations at Barnett Demesne and a service of remembrance at the Cenotaph in the grounds of the City Hall; and
- the County Grand Orange Lodge regarding the use of the Barnett's Demesne for its Belfast demonstrations on 12th July.

The Committee acceded to the requests, subject to an appropriate legal agreement being prepared by Legal Services and granted delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to:

- 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:
  - the organisers resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
  - compliance with Coronavirus restrictions in place at the time of the event; and
  - the events meeting all statutory requirements including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, and licensing responsibilities, including terms and conditions of the Parks Entertainment License; and
  - the organisers consulting with adjoining public bodies and local communities as necessary.

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.

**Roll out of 'Take 5' Benches in  
Belfast City Council Parks**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

1.1 To update Committee on work proposed to locate approx. 16 ‘Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing’ benches across Council’s parks (up to 4 per locality i.e. North, South, East and West) in 2022/23.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 The committee is asked to:

- Note the content of the report; and
- Agree to the Department’s request to work in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA) to use park benches to promote the ‘Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing’ approach as well as information contained on the PHA’s Minding Your Head website, accessible via a QR code visible on each bench. Up to sixteen benches will be identified within parks across the city, four benches within each locality. Belfast Health Development Unit staff will work with BCC Open Space and Street Scene Managers to identify and agree locations.

**3.0 Main report**

**Background to Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing**

3.1 The Public Health Agency have adopted the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing messages as a key component in their work supporting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing. Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing is a set of evidence-based public health messages aimed at improving the wellbeing of the whole population. It is based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) as the result of research undertaken as part of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing (2008).

3.2 The 5 steps are; ‘Connect, Be active, Take notice, Keep learning and Give’ – please refer to the leaflet in Appendix 1 for more information or visit: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/take-5-steps-wellbeing-english-and-11-translations> to access downloadable PDFs. These simple and effective messages are based on solid evidence and draw on a wealth of psychological and economic literature from inter-disciplinary

work. Evidence indicates individuals who practice all '5 steps' have the highest level of wellbeing regardless of circumstances.

- 3.3 Council already supports the 'Take 5' approach both internally through the promotion of the 'Take 5' messages across all BCC facilities as well as externally via social media, open call grant funding, and its work with partners under community planning. BCC staff located within the Belfast Health Development Unit are also supporting this work by providing resources and training opportunities linked directly to the 'Take 5' approach. BHDU have also produced a useful toolkit which can be viewed online: <https://www.makinglifebettertogether.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Take-5-Toolkit.pdf>

**Background to proposed Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing Benches initiative**

- 3.4 Pre-covid and following a request from the local community and subsequent meetings and discussions facilitated by staff from within the Belfast Health Development Unit, a 'Wellbeing' bench was placed in Falls Park in West Belfast in December 2019 in partnership with St Paul's ABC and Suicide Awareness Support Group.
- 3.5 In the interim period, other councils have installed similar 'Chatty Benches' in some of their parks also focussing on the Take 5 messaging (i.e. take notice and connect) such as Ards and North Down, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon and Mid East Antrim Councils.
- 3.6 Earlier this year, staff from within the Belfast/South Eastern team of the Public Health Agency approached Council via the Belfast Health Development Unit for support in promoting the Take 5 messaging specifically via the installation of more Take 5 benches within Council's parks.
- 3.7 Both elected members and council officers continue to be regularly approached by members of the public and/or community/sporting groups in relation to memorial benches. And whilst council does enable individuals to purchase memorial seats – see <https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/births-deaths-and-ceremonies/crematorium/memorial-options#320-1> this can however be quite costly, and several of our parks now have reduced capacity in terms of being able to locate the seats in people's preferred locations. Council is planning to develop a memorialisation policy in due course which will look at this more broadly in terms of the related issues and proposed solutions applicable across our cemeteries, parks and open spaces.

3.8 However, in the meantime, officers are keen to work in partnership with statutory and community partners to promote our parks and open spaces as places where our residents can go to improve, not only their physical, but also their mental and emotional wellbeing. Thus, Belfast Health Development Unit staff have spoken with Open Space and Street Scene colleagues, alongside Property Maintenance colleagues and with funding available from PHA, we would be able to repurpose up to 16 existing benches to become colourful 'Take 5 benches', incorporating the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing messaging, along with a QR code linking to the PHA's Minding Your Head website and placed in prominent positions within 16 of our parks across the City (4 per area).

3.9 Should the initiative be well-received, and further funding become available, we can consider a further phase/roll out in 23/24.

3.10 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications to the recommendations outlined above as the required financial resource (£5,000) has been allocated to BHDU via the Public Health Agency.

3.11 **Human Resources**

Staff within Belfast Health Development Unit currently support Take 5 work and this will be the case going forward with this proposal.

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

There are no equality or good relations implications to the recommendations outlined above."

Several of the Members welcomed this initiative. During discussion an update of the status of the various requests for picnic benches across the City was sought and the Director of Neighbourhood Services undertook to submit an update report to a future meeting.

The Committee:

- agreed the Department's request to work in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA) to use park benches to promote the 'Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing' approach as well as information contained on the PHA's Minding Your Head website which would be accessible via a QR code that would be visible on each bench; and
- noted that up to sixteen benches would be identified within parks across the city, four benches within each locality and that the location of these would be progressed via the Area Working Groups.

**Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

**Request to Present - Presentation in relation  
to inclusive parks (Councillor McMullan)**

With the permission of the Deputy Chairperson, Councillor McMullan addressed the Committee and detailed a request for representatives from PlayBoard NI and the Mae Murray Foundation to be invited to the June meeting of the People and Communities Committee. He advised that this was in relation to a Notice of Motion that was due to be presented to the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting scheduled for 24th May in relation to Inclusive Parks.

The Committee acceded to the request, subject to the approval of the Standards and Business Committee and Council ratification.

Chairperson