

# People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 9th August, 2022

## HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor McMullan (Chairperson);  
Alderman McCoubrey;  
Councillors Bunting, Bower, Canavan,  
Cobain, Michael Collins, Corr, Donnelly, de Faoite,  
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, Murray, McAteer,  
McCusker, Newton, O'Hara and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, 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

No apologies were reported.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th and 21st June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th July.

### Declarations of Interest

Councillors Corr, Donnelly and Verner declared an interest in items 2 (b) Advice Service and item 4 (a) Community Provision Funding Update in that they either worked for or were associated with an organisation that was in receipt of funding from the DfC. All Members left the meeting whilst the matters were being discussed.

Councillor Bunting declared an interest in item 2 (e) Air Quality Progress Report in that she was employed by the DAERA Minister and left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

### Restricted

**The information contained in the reports associated with the following 5 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.

### **Year End Finance 2021/22**

The Committee was updated in respect of the financial position of the People and Communities Committee for Quarter 4, which confirmed an under spend of £3.235m (-3.8%) of the budget after absorbing covid related costs of £245k for that period.

The Committee was advised that a report outlining the year end position for the Council had been submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 17th June, this had provided an overview of the financial performance of the council in the context of the agreed finance strategy that had put in place to manage the financial impact of Covid-19.

Following a query from a Member, the Director of City Services confirmed that vacant posts had contributed to the underspend but assured the Members that officers were endeavouring to fill these positions to ensure continuity of service.

The Committee noted the year-end financial position.

### **Advice Services**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with a comprehensive update regarding the current support for advice services across Belfast, along with details of the issues associated with delivery.

He detailed that, given the various factors, it was recommended that an independent review of the provision of advice services across Belfast be undertaken. This would include consideration of best practice models in other regions and the development of options to ensure the delivery of high-quality advice services. The review would also consider DfC guidance, the challenges faced by the independent advice sectors and the different advice services which required support. He advised that the review and subsequent report would contain recommendations for service delivery for the next five years.

The Director then provided an update in relation the current funding arrangements for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) for the 2022/23 financial year, he recommended that the review report would include options on future support for BCTS.

Several Members welcomed the independent review and stressed the need for it to be undertaken at pace, they discussed the current cost of living financial pressures that people were facing and noted that these would increase the demand for these vital advice services.

The Committee:

- approved a review and the development of options for the future provision of Advice Services (including the BCTS) to ensure a

consistent service across all areas of Belfast to meet the needs of citizens in relation to advice provision; and

- noted the update in relation to the current funding arrangements for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) for the 2022/23 financial year.

### **Review of Belsonic 2022**

The Committee was reminded that, at its February 2022 meeting, it had agreed that those events that had previously sought multiple year approval would be subject to annual review, pending a satisfactory pilot year.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the initial request to host Belsonic 2022 had sought multiple year approval, however, the Committee at its meeting in April 2022 had only agreed the series of concerts but the multiple year request had been declined pending a review of the 2022 event.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services then provided the Members with a comprehensive update on the preliminary findings of the review of the recent Belsonic Event held in Ormeau Park.

The Members noted that for this year's event, in light of previous complaints from local residents and the communities negatively impacted by the event, the relevant Council departments that worked alongside the event promoters had increased the volume of pre-event meetings with the organisers and had also supported a number of meetings between the organisers and local Elected Members who were representing local residents and businesses.

It was felt that this intervention had enabled some areas of concern to be addressed in advance of the event, which included:

- Increased portable toilet provision at identified hot spot and drop off areas to deter concert attendees from urinating in public spaces and residents' alleyways;
- Increased Eventsec marshalling at identified hot spot and drop off points;
- A change of focus for the Council's Community safety operation moved from patrolling the event space to patrolling the streets and alleyways of the local neighbourhoods; and
- The implementation of a youth and community outreach approach delivered by a number of youth and community organisations based in the area. These outreach teams moved people on into the concert space at speed, deterred antisocial behaviour and importantly provided a welfare service to those at most risk and vulnerable from alcohol consumption.

The Director advised that, he was pleased to report, the number of complaints received from previous years had decreased and it was generally felt that this more

attentive, focused and collaborative approach by the event organisers and statutory partners had indeed had a positive impact on the overall delivery of the event.

Several Members concurred and welcomed the level of interaction that had taken place. Some discussion ensued regarding areas that could be further improved which included enhanced accessibility and the provision of changing places facilities for attendees with disabilities, the provision of a support system for vulnerable young people who had been refused entry to the event and adequate portable toilet provision at identified hotspots. The Members agreed that it would be useful to have a further meeting with the various stakeholders in advance of considering a multiple year request.

In addition, a Member sought clarity on the new Social Value Fund and how this would be administered and allocated. It was suggested that Elected Members from the constituency area be consulted as to the proposals and that the participatory budgeting approach be considered. The Director of City Services advised that that was a relatively new initiative, and it was proposed that it would support park improvements.

The Committee:

- noted the report and agreed to have a further meeting with the various stakeholders to discuss additional areas for improvement in advance of potentially being asked to consider a multiple year request from the promotor; and
- agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting to provide detail on the Social Value Fund and the proposals for how it would be utilised.

#### **Feasibility Report on Expansion of Brown Bin Scheme**

(Mr. B. Murray, Waste Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Resources and Fleet drew the Members' attention to the feasibility report that had been undertaken regarding the potential expansion of the brown bin scheme. She explained the rationale behind the request and referred to the fact that, currently, there was no regular kerbside garden waste scheme for households in the inner-city area and, as previously agreed by the Committee, this report examined the potential for extending the collection to include these areas.

The Members were advised that the consultants RPS Group (RPS) had used Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and various housing stock databases to first determine the residential property classification and, at this stage, apartments and non-domestic properties had been excluded. Low-rise properties had then been screened based on their external sizes within the inner-city area and had then been banded into the following categories:

- [Red] 0 - 75m<sup>2</sup> = Household with an external area that is unlikely to be suitable for a brown bin;
- [Amber] 75 - 175m<sup>2</sup> = Household with an external area that is potentially suitable for a brown bin; and

- [Green] 175 - 3,000m<sup>2</sup> = Household with an external area that is likely to be suitable for a brown bin.

The Director referred to the summary findings of the feasibility report which provided an estimate of garden space coverage based on aerial imagery across 50 sample households in each category. She advised that, if the proposals were agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, it was recommended that the households categorised as either amber or green within the report would form the basis upon which to expand the brown bin service to the inner-city area, which would involve approximately the following number of households:

**Table 3.1| Number of households in each external area size category (low rise households only)**

	Estimated external area size category (m2)	Average estimated % of garden space in external area	Number of <u>low rise</u> households
Red	0 — 75	30%	36,547
Amber	75 — 175	42%	6,680
Green	175 - 3,000	50%	1,831
<b>Total</b>			<b>45,058</b>

Several Members welcomed the report and the fact that it was so comprehensive.

Following a query from a Member that those households categorised as red might miss out on the scheme, the Director provided an assurance that those properties categorised in red could be considered operationally on a case-by-case basis to ensure consistency in provision of the service.

During discussion, Members agreed that they felt that it would be useful to view the map showing the distribution of the households and detailing the addresses of the properties in each specific category.

The Waste Manager addressed a number of specific queries regarding the ARC21 contract and the tonnages for green waste recycling.

Following a query from a Member, the Director advised that efforts were being made to reinstate the glass recycling service that had recently been suspended due to resource issues and undertook to keep the Members updated.

The Committee

- agreed that, subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the households categorised as amber or green within the report would be the basis upon which to provide the expanded brown bin service to the inner-city area and noted that those categorised as red would be considered operationally on a case-by-case basis to ensure consistency in provision of the service;
- noted that the feasibility report would be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for its consideration regarding the

potential impact that expansion of the service would have on the capital programme, revenue estimates and the rates setting process; and

- agreed that, GDPR permitting, a map detailing the addresses of the properties in each specific category be emailed to Members of the Committee.

### **Air Quality Progress Report**

(Mr. A. Curran, Environmental Protection Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of City Services advised that, as part of its ongoing statutory duties in respect of local air quality management, as established via Part III of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2022, the Council was required to provide annual Updating and Screening Assessments or Progress Reports to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) for technical appraisal and subsequent publication via the DAERA NI Air Website and she drew the Members' attention to a copy of the Belfast City Council 2022 Air Quality Progress Report. The Committee was further advised that, if adopted by the Committee, the document would then be assessed by DAERA's independent technical appraisers and would therefore remain in draft until it had been formally approved.

During discussion a Member referred to the WHO guidelines and welcomed that these had been included in the report and he reaffirmed the need for progress to be benchmarked against the updated WHO standards. He also sought an update in regard smoke control zones in the City, specifically regarding the enforcement measures taken and highlighted the need to better publicize and promote air quality to ratepayers.

The Environmental Protection Manager advised that it was the Council's intention to undertake more promotion campaigns to share information about air pollution and to promote better air quality in the City and he reported that the Council had recently participated in Clean Air Day 2022.

During discussion it was agreed that the Committee would write to the DAERA Minister to seek an update on the progress of the Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Committee also:

- endorsed the Belfast City Council 2022 Air Quality Progress Report and agreed that it be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' (DAERA) independent technical appraisers for appraisal by the 15th August 2022, subject to Council ratification on 1st September; and
- agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting to provide an update on enforcement action within smokeless zones in the City.

### **Matters referred back from the Council/Motions**

#### **Motion - Capital Investments in Parks, Public and Open Spaces**

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th June, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor O'Hara and seconded by Councillor Groogan, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

"This Council recognises the importance of parks, public and open spaces across the city. We understand that during the pandemic, more and more people in our city realised the inherent value of these spaces. We support and recognise the Council's ongoing work in developing our parks, public and open spaces but believe we need a step change in investment in these spaces.

This Council has also passed a number of motions related to improving our parks and open spaces, including access to bins, late night opening, lighting schemes and also other motions supported by this Council on rewilding, enhancing urban biodiversity, sport development, youth diversion, health and wellbeing and employment opportunities.

To build on these motions and other bodies of work, this Council will commit to a long-term investment in our parks, public and open spaces. This will replicate the capital investment programme undertaken in the transformation of leisure services and commits to sourcing funding and investment opportunities to achieve this."

The proposer of the motion, Councillor O'Hara, addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the motion.

A number of Members spoke in support of the motion and, as outlined in the motion, urged officers to build on the suggestions from previous motions when considering this one. The Chairperson emphasised the need to ensure that Council parks, public and open spaces were inclusive and accessible spaces for all.

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

### **Committee/Strategic Issues**

#### **Community Provision Funding Update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

##### **1.1 The purpose of this paper is to**

- Inform members that Council has received a Letter of Variance from Department for Communities as part of the Community Support Programme, financial years 2022-23 for the Social Supermarket Fund (SSF).
- Ask members to consider and approve the proposed allocation approach for the SSF and that the Chief Executive accept the Letter of Variance on behalf of Council.
- Ask members to consider the information in relation to the impact of increased utility costs for community groups and to approve the outlined approach to provide support.
- Inform members on the outcome of the recent open call for micro and medium grants.

## 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That Committee is asked to agree that the Chief Executive formally accepts the Letter of Variance on behalf of Council and consider and agree:

- Recommended approach to distribution of the Social Supermarket fund
- Recommended approach to support community groups meet increased utility costs

## 3.0 Main report

### Background

#### Social Supermarket Fund

- 3.1 Members will be aware that each Council area is allocated an award from the Department for Communities (DfC) to deliver a Community Support Programme (CSP) which should support the aims of the DfC Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020 – 2025.
- 3.2 In May, members approved that the Chief Executive accepted the Letter of Offer for 2022-24. DfC have subsequently issued a Letter of Variance on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 22 which provides an additional £228,342.42 for delivery of a social supermarket fund (SSF) for 22/23 only.
- 3.3 The aim of a social supermarket model is to offer a sustainable response to food insecurity by seeking to help address the root causes of poverty rather simply provide food. This is achieved through the provision of a referral network for wraparound support which can include, but is

not limited to, advice on debt, benefits, budgeting, healthy eating, housing, physical and mental health referral, education, training and volunteering opportunities to enhance employability skills. It is intended this will provide a long term solution, in a dignified manner, rather than short term crisis provision.

- 3.4 The objective of this fund is to support the co-design of a social supermarket model in the council area to completion and implementation. This can include, support for the co-design process, capacity building for future implementation and testing/piloting where appropriate. The Department will also consider requests to support projects that meet the high level social supermarket principles to enable actions to address food insecurity to be supported in 2022/23.
- 3.5 DfC have advised that final proposals resulting from the co-design work for the future social supermarket model within the council area should be submitted to the Department prior to moving to implementation.
- 3.6 DfC have further advised that the funding is not available to provide direct payments to vulnerable people nor for the provision of any other form of direct support where an assessment of need has not been carried out and referrals to complementary supports made.
- 3.7 Members may recall that in February 2022, DfC issued a letter of Variance providing a similar level of funding through the Social Supermarket fund in 21/22. Given the lateness of receipt of this Letter of Offer, DfC approved that this funding could be used for emergency food support and SP&R approved that this funding could be distributed to strategic and thematic partners who had the capacity to deliver work within the remit of the fund.
- 3.8 Officers have been engaging with Strategic and Thematic Partners to identify new and existing partners who want to be involved in this area of work. Feedback suggests that there are additional challenges in ensuring that individuals that would fall within the thematic groups access complementary support beyond food. Officers will work with partners to agree an allocation approach which will include full cost recovery for lead organisations, as this has been highlighted as a key learning from previous rounds. Given the relatively small level of funding officers propose that the funding should be allocated on the following basis;

Area allocation – to support partners working in defined geographies to provide support through wrap around services.	60% of overall allocation split across each geographic area, n,s,e,w. Each geography will agree participating partners ensuring coverage for all
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	areas. Area allocations will be based on population and deprivation figures.
Thematic allocation – to support communities working with identified communities to provide support through wrap around services.	40% of overall allocation to support organisations who work with key communities across the city. These will include refugees & asylum seekers, individuals impacted by domestic violence, LGBTQ&Q community, children& young people, older people, those entering/leaving justice system and their families.
Support for co-design of Belfast Social Supermarket approach	Council staff will resource this work and bring an agreed proposal back to committee for consideration. It should be noted that this work has links with the Climate team’s food resilience strategy and the newly appointed Commissioner on Poverty and Inclusion. Staff from C&NS will work with officers from these teams to develop proposals for a Belfast SSM model.

**Support for community organisations to meet increased utility costs**

- 3.10 At the June SP&R meeting, members asked that officers explore potential mechanisms to support community organisations struggling to pay overhead costs given the recent significant increases in utility costs. Officers have contacted a sample of community organisations and they have confirmed that increased fuel and utility costs have created additional pressure for them. Community organisations have sought to manage these additional costs through different methods; mainly by reprofiling existing funding, using organisational reserves or amending programme delivery to reduce costs. It is worth noting that very few community organisations have significant reserves and this can only be a short term measure.
- 3.11 Council’s Community Provision offer supports community organisations through the following grant aid programmes;

1. Revenue - Community Buildings - provides a contribution towards the cost of running a community facility that provides a broad based programme.
  2. Capacity – provides a contribution towards core costs (generally staff costs) for delivering a capacity building programme within defined communities.
  3. Advice – provides funding to 5 Advice Consortia across the city who deliver advice service in agreed geographies. This funding provides staff costs and some running costs.
  4. Project funding – community provision projects are supported through small grants which since 2020 has been through micro and medium grant awards. These grants do not cover core costs, they cover costs directly associated with project delivery.
- 3.12 In addition, Council also provides direct support to 7 independent community centres for their running costs. This includes utility costs and staff costs related to upkeep of buildings (caretakers, cleaners).
- 3.13 The Department for Communities, as part of an immediate response, allocated an available resource of £255,000 from existing budgets which allowed a one off payment of £1,500 to a wide number of eligible Voluntary and Community organisations, including some community centres, to help with rising energy costs.
- 3.14 As part of Minister Hargey’s strategic response to the cost of living crisis she has reconvened the Emergencies Leadership Group bringing together key players in the VCSE sector at both a local grass roots and regional level, to facilitate partnership working with leaders in central and local government. Currently departmental officials are exploring the evidence available to provide clear insights into the cost of living crisis to support the development of targeted and evidenced based interventions to address need, subject to NI Executive decisions on budget allocation. The ELG, whose membership includes representation from SOLACE will help inform and shape the Department’s emerging policy and operational response to the cost of living crisis.
- 3.15 In addition to this support from the department members may wish to consider issuing a Letter of Variance (as a contribution towards increased utility costs) to all groups currently in receipt of funding through the grant programmes 1-3 outlined above. Officers based suggested amounts on the fact that there is no in year budget to cover these costs.

3.16 Given that those organisations which operate community facilities are most impacted by utility cost increases it is recommended that awards should be made as follows;

Grant Programme/Funding	Potential payment	Rationale	Cost
Revenue Community Buildings	- £500 to each organisation	Grant is for running costs of community facility, highest level of utility costs for these groups	84 projects @ £500 = £42,000
Capacity	£250 to each organisation	This funding provides staff costs and some office running costs. Lower levels of utility costs.	33 Projects @ £250= £8,250
Advice	£250 to each organisation	This funding provides staff costs and some office running costs. Lower levels of utility costs.	20 Advice Offices @ £250 = £5,000 Note Advice Space has 7 Offices.
Independent centres	£250 to each organisation	These groups received a 2% inflationary increase on their base award in 22/23. Average award of £1,011.00 was provided.	7 centres @ £250 = £1750
Project funding	£0	These grants do not cover core costs and are for project costs only. Council made awards to 226 groups in 22/23. The cost of making a	

		payment to each group is prohibitive	
Total allocation			£57,000

- 3.17 Note – a small number of organisations receive both Advice funding and Revenue or Capacity funding. It is recommended that these organisations only receive one payment.
- 3.18 There is no capacity to cover these costs within existing budgets. Any additional payments will have to be made from additional resources.

#### Micro and Medium Grants update

- 3.19 An open call to support micro (up to £1,500) and medium (up to £5,000) grants has recently closed. The overall budget for these grants was £912,300. Following assessment and allocation the following awards were made.

Type of Grant	Number of Groups supported	Allocation
Micro	72	£92,502
Medium	154	£661,554
Total	226	£754,056

#### Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.20 Members should note that the additional award through the Social Supermarket fund is the only resource within existing budgets to deliver the activity outlined in this report. Any additional payments will have to be made from additional resources.

#### Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.21 This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any Equality/ Good Relations and Rural Needs considerations.”

Whilst Members unanimously welcomed the funding update, there was cross party concern raised regarding the current cost of living crisis and the effect that this would have, not just on individuals, but on the running costs of community groups, particularly over the impending winter period. There was agreement from the Members that the increase in utility and other costs needed to be kept under constant review as the provision of community support groups and the services they offered were likely to be even more essential during what was likely to be an extremely difficult period.

Following a query regarding the distribution of the SSF, The Director Neighbourhood Services confirmed the need to distribute the funds using existing Strategic Partners and he advised that an open call would result in monies not being on the ground before Christmas.

The Member stated that, whilst he understood the need to progress with the roll out, he would be keen to see a review of the Strategic and Thematic Partners. In addition, it was requested that a list of the current/proposed Strategic Partners be circulated to the Members of the Committee. In terms of potential new Partners, the Director suggested that the Members should advise any interested providers to contact the Council to express an interest.

A further Member requested that the Committee write to the Communities, Economy and Finance Ministers seeking them to engage with the British Government as a matter of urgency to release details around the Shared Prosperity Fund, how it would work and whether the available funding would be an adequate substitute for the European Social Fund.

The Committee:

- noted the outcome of the recent open call for micro and medium grants;
- noted the Letter of Variance received from the Department for Communities as part of the Community Support Programme and agreed that the Chief Executive would formally accept the Letter of Variance on behalf of the Council;
- agreed the proposed approach in respect of the distribution of the Social Supermarket Fund (SSF), with a list of proposed Strategic Partners to be circulated to the Members of the Committee and further agreement that any interested potential providers be advised to contact the Council to express an interest;
- agreed the proposed approach to support community groups in meeting increased utility costs and noted the need for this to be regularly reviewed, particularly over the winter period; and
- agreed a review of Strategic and Thematic Partners and that the Committee would write to the Communities, Economy and Finance Ministers seeking them to engage with the British Government as a matter of urgency to release details around the Shared Prosperity Fund, how it would work and whether the available funding would be an adequate substitute for the European Social Fund.

#### **Waste Sector Partnership Working – The Conservation Volunteers**

The Committee was reminded that it had previously endorsed the approach by Waste Management to provide a disposal outlet for waste collected by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) on Department for Communities (DfC) lands in the Poleglass area of Belfast.

The Director of Resources and Fleet advised that the DfC had retendered the service and TCV had been awarded the contract. She explained that the contract was aimed at carrying out a range of environmental improvement initiatives and to ensure fly-tipped waste was collected and disposed of appropriately.

The existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Council and TCV was due to expire on 31st August, 2022. The SLA permitted TCV to use Blackstaff Household Recycling Centre to deposit waste and recyclable materials collected from the Poleglass area. In line with the Council's current charging methods, given that fly-tipped material was categorised as non-household waste, a gate fee was applied for the service.

The Director advised that, to date, the SLA had worked well as it had contributed to a cleaner, greener City and, in addition, it supported a full-time team of five Community Project Officers within TCV. He stated that, given the new contract between the DfC and TCV, it was proposed that the Council would enter a new SLA to reflect the extended timescale and ensure continuity of service.

Following the suggestion of a Member that this agreement could potentially be used as a model to roll out similar initiatives, the Director advised that this was a one-off arrangement that had been inherited as part of the Local Government Reform process in 2015 and highlighted the complexities that would be involved in setting up similar agreements.

The Committee approved the continuation of the Service Level Agreement approach used to accept waste collected by The Conservation Volunteers during daily clean-up operations in Poleglass, covering the period 1st September 2022 to 31st August 2025, with the option to extend for a further two, one-year period to 31st August 2027.

### **Physical Programme and Asset Management**

#### **Update on City Cemetery including the Visitor Centre correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the City Cemetery Heritage Project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Belfast City Council. Members are asked to note a request for drone footage to record restorations. Members are also asked to note the recent correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council.**

##### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

1. Note the update on the City Cemetery Heritage Lottery Fund Visitor Centre
2. Give special permission to allow the operation of a drone within City Cemetery during the reinstatement of the two restored Victorian Fountains, in the absence of an agreed Council Drone Policy.
3. Note the correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the update on application of return imminent residency circumstances.

**3.0 Main report**

**Update on City Cemetery Project**

- 3.1 The Visitor Centre internal fit out has been completed. In tandem with the Visitor Centre build, restoration works on several of the sites most historically significant listed assets including the Central Steps, Mortuary Tower, Jewish Cemetery and Foxes Lodge have been completed. These structures have been restored to their former glory and have greatly enhanced the visual aesthetics of the site. The two Victorian Fountains are currently being restored off site and are expected to be reinstalled in August 2022. The final element of the project relates to genealogy offering visitors the opportunity to search and interact with the cemetery's burial records.
- 3.2 Following a decision by Strategic Policy & Resource committee in June regarding bilingual content proposals are being finalised on signage, interpretative panels, digital content, tours and stakeholder engagement and timelines are being explored. Given the scope and lead-in times for the different aspects it is likely that this will require a phased approach in terms of roll-out. These proposals will be presented to the Strategic Crematorium and Cemeteries Working Group Members in the first instance and a further report tabled at People and Communities Committee.
- 3.3 Community Engagement, which is central to this project has continued over the summer months including tours of City Cemetery for primary school children, older people and summer schemes. The new outdoor classroom facility which forms part of the new Visitor Centre has been utilised for these engagements. A programme of engagement activities is currently being worked on for the Autumn including European Heritage Open Day at City Cemetery on 11th September as well as speakers for an autumn and winter lecture series.

- 3.4 There will be a launch event for this project as it reaches completion.

Request for drone use

- 3.5 Members may recall considering a request for drone use in City Cemetery in February 2020 relating to aerial digital mapping as part of the City Cemetery Heritage Project. This piece of work has been successfully completed and now forms part of the interactive panels which will be experienced by users when the Visitor Centre opens to the public. This aerial photography and geo-tagging of graves and monuments means that graves are not only much easier for cemetery visitors to physically locate, but also that pictures of each and every grave/monument within the site can be accessed from anywhere in the world.
- 3.6 As the restoration works near completion Members are requested to consider granting special permission for drone use in City Cemetery during the reinstatement of the two Victorian Fountains.

Correspondence from Ards and North Down Council

- 3.7 Members will note the correspondence attached in Appendix 1 related to an unusual and sad case of imminent residency related to their Borough. The correspondence outlines the criteria suggested and used by their Council in making a decision on this specific request. Members are advised that there is existing delegated authority to the Director within the polices and approaches by CNS to apply discretion should a similar case arise in Belfast.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 Bilingual signage – costs being worked up.
- 3.9 The costs of the drone footage capture will be delivered within existing budgets for the overall project.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 None.”

The Committee:

- noted the update on the City Cemetery Heritage Lottery Fund Visitor Centre;
- granted special permission to permit the operation of a drone within the City Cemetery during the reinstatement of the two restored

Victorian Fountains, in the absence of an agreed Council Drone Policy; and

- noted the correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council and the update on application of return imminent residency circumstances and that delegated authority had previously been granted to the Director to apply discretion should a similar case arise in Belfast.

**The Committee dealt with the following two items together as an update report had been issued regarding the Shore Road Playing Fields after the Partner Agreements Update had been circulated**

**Partner Agreements Update/  
Shore Road Playing Fields Update**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the Council had previously agreed to enter into Partner Agreements at seven sites and he then provided an update on the progress in relation to the Agreements for April – June 2022.

He advised that regular checks on the necessary Insurance, Health and Safety and Governance had been undertaken at all sites. All partners had been compliant on these matters apart from Grove United Football Club - Shore Road Playing Fields, which had been unable to provide evidence of appropriate insurance in accordance with the terms of the agreements and, accordingly, as a material breach of the Agreement had taken place, he advised that the Council had cancelled the Agreement with immediate effect. The Members were advised that once the Club had obtained and provided evidence of appropriate insurance cover to the Council's satisfaction the agreement could be reinstated.

The Director continued that, as previously agreed, funding of up to £20,000 per annum was available for each partner for the delivery of a programme (supporting the Sports Development Plan). The Director reported that letters of offer had been sent to all partners based on approved sports development plans for the current financial year. Obviously, cancellation of the Grove United FC arrangement would mean that no payment for Sports Programme activities delivered after the date of cancellation would be processed.

The Committee was advised that, given the current Covid19 restrictions, the usual end of quarter monitoring meetings had not been held face to face with the partners, but parks management and sports development officers had kept in contact via phone calls for updates on site management and bookings, health and safety, finance, and their sports development plans. Regular meetings would now recommence with the Park Manager and a Sports Development Officer. Action plans had been reviewed and agreed with the partners during these discussions to ensure that the planned outcomes were achieved, and improvements identified where required.

He explained that, in line with the Council's objectives, the diversification of use and improved sports development impact were priorities at the partner agreement sites and he advised that, despite the Covid19 restrictions, the programme delivery had led to significant positive achievements across the seven sites. He drew the Members'

attention to a table which indicated the outputs at the sites as reported by the partners for Quarter 1 (April – June 2022).

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,  
Seconded by Councillor Flynn,

*“Without prejudice, I would like to propose that this report is brought back, pending further information to Committee Members in writing.*

*I have expressed my concerns about governance arrangements to officers, in relation to serious allegations made in the print media and criminal charges facing individuals who may still be on the board of East Belfast FC.*

*It is incumbent on Belfast City Council’s partner organisations to take action to protect their own reputations, but they must also assure public funders that their governance arrangements are robust.”*

At the request of a Member, it was agreed that a subsequent report would be submitted to Committee that was specifically dealing with the governance arrangements with East Belfast Football Club to ensure that it did not affect any of the other Partner Agreements.

The Committee:

- noted the update report on the Partner Agreements and that once appropriate insurance cover had been secured by the Grove United Football Club that the Partner Agreement would be reinstated; and
- agreed that a subsequent report be submitted to Committee in respect of the Council’s current governance arrangements with East Belfast FC to ensure robustness given that the agreements are publicly funded.

### **Operational Issues**

#### **Event Request and Funding Arrangement with Belfast International Arts Festival**

The Committee considered the following report:

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

- 1.1 This report details a proposal to deliver four outdoor events, delivered by the Belfast International Arts Festival, in partnership with Council. Each event will require closure of a substantial portion of CS Lewis Square.**
- 1.2 The dates proposed are 1st and 2nd October or 15th and 16th October 2022 with performance times daily at 1pm and 3pm. The organisers also propose to deliver facilitation of movement and acrobatic workshops to the public.**

- 1.3 The report also seeks approval for the Council to continue to provide financial support to the Belfast International Arts Festival, of £20,000, given the positive economic impact it has for the City, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.

2.0 **Recommendations**

The Committee is asked to:

- Approve this proposal from Belfast International Arts Festival to deliver four performances in CS Lewis Square in October 2022.
- To provide financial support for this event of £20,000 given the positive economic impact they have for the city, improved good relations and attractiveness of the Council assets.
- Agree for officers to consider how the financial investment strands for this event can be streamlined and aligned under the Cultural Strategy, via the Economic Development Unit and the Core Multi annual grant (CMAG).
- Agree that the appropriate legal agreements for the events, including bond arrangements are prepared to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor.
- Agree that event organisers are required to meet all statutory requirements and responsibilities including Public Liability Insurance cover, Health and Safety, Food Safety and licensing.
- Agree that the event organisers shall consult with public bodies and local communities as necessary.

- 2.2 Please note that the above recommendations are taken as pre-policy position, in advance of the Council agreeing a more structure framework and policy for 'Events', which is currently being taken forward in conjunction with the Councils Commercial team.

3.0 **Main report**

**Key Issues**

- 3.1 Over the past number of years, the Council has established a successful partnership with Belfast International Arts Festival. These types of event are well-received by audiences and significantly add to the attractiveness of the Council's parks and open spaces.
- 3.2 The partnership has delivered a diverse range of events which has had wide appeal for local communities as well as

attracting significant numbers of tourists and visitors to the city.

- 3.3 This year the Arts festival intend to use CS Lewis Square on either 01st and 02nd October or 15th and 16th October 2022.
- 3.4 Members will be aware that in previous years the Council has provided financial support to the event of £20,000. As a condition to the funding, Belfast International Arts Festival are required to build an audience from across the city. Past successful BIAF / BCC events have been held at Botanic Gardens, CS Lewis Square and Falls Park.
- 3.5 The proposed 2022 events include a mixture of theatrical performances and interactive workshops. Cristal Palace is an outdoor theatrical spectacular featuring a local community cast. Taroo - Said Mouhssine is a Moroccan circus and movement artist and Roll Model – Simple Cypher fuses hip hop and circus to create dynamic, uplifting performances. All performances and workshops will be free to the public.
- 3.6 The events will require the closure of all or a substantial proportion of the facility for the event set up and derig.
- 3.7 Consultation by Belfast International Arts Festival will be undertaken with other local stakeholders such as Connswater Community Greenway and Eastside Arts
- 3.8 The Belfast Agenda sets out our joint city vision and long-term ambitions and outcomes as well as outlining priorities for action every four years. The development of a 'Transformational Places' approach across the city offers real opportunity to highlight proximity to key transport links, Connswater cycle path and arterial routes.
- 3.9 The application will be supported by an event management plan and will be subject to the organisers liaising with Council officers and meeting all statutory, legal and health and safety requirements.

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

- 3.10 The people and Communities Committee on 3 December 2019, were informed that the financial support to this event was via several different funding streams such as core annual funding, community festivals fund and C&NS department. Each is managed by separate funding agreements and monitored independently. To maximise outcomes on investment it is recommended that officers consider how these arrangements can be streamlined for

future funding and aligned under the Cultural Strategy, via the Economic Development Unit.

3.11 £20,000 is contained within existing revenue estimates for 2022.

**Asset and Other Implications**

3.12 There are no asset or other implications with this report

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

3.13 There are no known implications.”

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

**Sport NI "Your School Club" Funding**

The Committee was reminded that the Your School Your Club was a Sport NI funding programme aimed at promoting community use of schools' sporting facilities, which was specifically aimed at developing strategic partnerships to revitalise existing facilities and/or develop new additional provision.

The Committee was provided with an update on the progress of the two applications submitted in 2019. It noted that the Rathmore Grammar School Project had been funded and completed in the 2019/20 financial year and the St. Mary's project would be funded in the current financial year 2022/23.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reported that, during June 2022, Sport NI had issued a call for new expressions of interest from schools for the Your School Your Club funding programme, the closing date for applications had been 11th July. A requirement of the application process had been that schools would obtain a letter of support from their local Council, accordingly, the Council had been approached directly by seven schools, each seeking a letter supporting their application.

The Director advised that, given the timeframe, Party Group Leaders had been contacted and had agreed that letters of support be submitted for the following schools:

- Belfast Boys Model School;
- Belfast Model School for Girls;
- Hazelwood Integrated College;
- Grosvenor Grammar School;
- Colaiste Feirste;
- Nettlefield Primary School; and
- St Oliver Plunkett Primary School.

The Committee noted the progress to date in terms of the two applications submitted in 2019 and agreed to support the seven new applications submitted to the Sport NI Your School Your Club Fund.

**Request for the use of Alexandra Park  
for the North Belfast Lantern Parade**

The Committee was provided with the details of a request which had been received for the free use of Alexandra Park to host the North Belfast Lantern Parade on Saturday 29th October 2022.

The Members noted that this would be the sixth year that the festival would take place in Alexandra Park. The event was a project of the Ashton Community Trust, which was managed by New Lodge Arts, a voluntary arts organisation across communities in North Belfast.

The Members were advised that this would be a family event with tickets costing £2.00 each and noted a brief itinerary of the proposed events.

- art workshops and street performances;
- a lantern parade, that would make its way from Cliftonpark Avenue to Alexandra Park;
- an evening event, including outdoor performances;
- stage entertainment;
- inflatables,
- a petting farm; and
- a firework display to close the event.

The Committee was advised that the event organisers had confirmed that they would undertake to do the following to ensure delivery of a safe and successful event:

- employ a security firm to safeguard participants and equipment;
- employ reputable contractors to ensure a safe and professional event;
- put a ticketing system in place;
- ensure that a one-way system for the park was in place;
- ensure that local residents were informed about the event 7 days prior to the event and that there would be no inconvenience or nuisance caused to the residents on the day of the event; and
- work with the relevant Council departments to ensure the effective management of the park and event.

The Members also noted that, to assist with the setup, the organisers had requested that the park be closed to members of the public for a period on Friday 28th October and that only members of the public with tickets could access the park on Saturday 29th from 2.00 p.m. until the event ended at 8.30 p.m.

The Committee granted authority to the applicant for the proposed event on the dates noted and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to:

- to negotiate a fee where appropriate which recognised the costs to Council and endeavoured to minimise any negative impact on the immediate area and take account of the potential wider benefit to the city economy, in conjunction with the Council's Commercial Manager; and
- to negotiate satisfactory terms and conditions of use via an appropriate legal agreement to be prepared by the City Solicitor, including managing final booking confirmation dates and flexibility around 'set up' and take down' periods, and booking amendments, subject to:
  - The organisers resolving any operational issues to the Council's satisfaction;
  - Compliance with Coronavirus restrictions in place at the time of the event;
  - the organisers 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 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.

#### **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

##### **Review of Non-Residential Fees for the re-opening of graves in Blaris Cemetery for Collin Residents – Councillor Michael Collins**

Councillor Michael Collins addressed the Committee and outlined his concerns regarding what he felt were disproportionate charges for residents that owned a burial plot in Blaris Cemetery and who now resided in an area that used to be within the boundary of the former Lisburn City Council but, following the Local Government Review in 2015, now fell within the Belfast City Council boundary. He requested that a letter be issued to Lisburn and Castlereagh (LCCC) seeking a review of non-residential fees for the re-opening of graves in Blaris Cemetery for Collin Residents.

A further Member asked the Committee to write to the Minister for Communities to establish if there was any plans to review the Burial Ground Regulations in relation to fees for burials and to ascertain if the Department had any plans to work with Councils to ensure that residents were not faced with disproportionate charges during a bereavement.

The Committee accordingly agreed to issue the letters as requested.

Chairperson