

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 10th January, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bunting, Bower, Canavan,
Cobain, M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, de Faoite,
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, Maghie, McAteer,
McMullan, Newton, O'Hara and Verner.

Also attended: Councillors Gormley and McKeown.

In attendance: Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were recorded on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey and Councillor McCusker.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th December, 2022 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 January.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were reported.

Deputation

Installation of Gates at Crescent Park

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that this matter had been deferred from the December meeting to enable the Committee to hear deputations from representatives of the Friends of Crescent Park, South Belfast and also from a delegation of those opposing the possible gating of the Park.

Accordingly, the Chairperson welcomed Mr. Hetherington, Ms. Bonhomme, Mr. Mulgrew, Ms. Hayles and Ms. Johnston to the meeting.

Mr. Hetherington and Ms. Bonhomme (representing Friends of Crescent Park) commenced and thanked the Members for the opportunity to address the Committee.

Mr. Hetherington (Chair of Friends of Crescent Park) advised that Crescent Park, which was owned by Belfast City Council, was an invaluable park to the people who resided on or near the Crescent and to many other users daily. He advised the Members that for many years the park had suffered as a hotspot from incidents of anti-social behaviour, highlighting that these problems were much worse at night-time, particularly with substance abuse and drinking and he provided a detailed overview of the ongoing issues.

He advised that approximately six years ago some improvements had been made to the park, including improved lighting, the pruning of shrubbery and a better maintenance programme. The representative continued, however, that, since the pandemic, things had again deteriorated and Friends of Crescent Park (FoCP) had been looking at what measures could be taken to try and improve the park to try and reduce the ongoing incidents of antisocial behaviour (ASB).

The Members were advised that, following a scoping exercise, FoCP had produced 'Improving the Crescent', which considered proposed actions to try and address anti-social behaviour and increase the attractiveness of the park to all members of the public. One of the actions recommended was the installation of gates at the four entrance points of the park, with the Council taking on the responsibility for the daily opening and closing of the gates. The representative continued that, whilst the installation of gates was a sizable structural project, following local consultation they had received majority support from residents and businesses supporting the proposed work.

Ms. Bonhomme, who had resided in the park? since 2018, then provided a detailed overview of the antisocial behaviour that she was subjected to daily which made her feel unsafe in her own home at night-time, this included details regarding groups of aggressive and loud individuals inhabiting the park, drug dealing, alcohol and drug misuse, knife crime, littering and urination in shrubbery.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for their input and then asked Mr. Mulgrew and Ms. Hayles to address the meeting.

Mr. Mulgrew thanked the Committee for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. He advised that he worked near to the park and very much enjoyed using it as did many others. He stated that, in recent years, much work had gone into making Crescent Park the area that it now was and noted that these were all very welcome measures. He continued that, whilst he appreciated that there were issues with ASB, he did not feel that simply 'locking' the park with the use of gates would resolve all the problems. Instead he would rather see the ASB problems addressed and he suggested that the Council should be taking a lead role, to bring together the various stakeholders with a view to working together to try and further enhance the park and encourage its use which might ultimately help to decrease ASB incidents. He also stated that he did not feel the railings around the park were sufficient to stop people trying the climb over them to gain access to the park.

The representative referred to the Council's feasibility study regarding the lighting of its parks across the city, which might enable longer opening hours for some parks, and he sought clarity as to the status of this study prior to a decision being taken regarding Crescent Park.

Mr. Mulgrew concluded his contribution by advising that this position was supported by the Forward South Partnership.

Ms. Hayles and Ms. Johnston (Representing Crescent Arts Centre) were then welcomed by the Chairperson.

Ms. Hayles advised that the Park was a muster point for Crescent Arts Centre in the event of an evacuation being necessary. She advised also that evenings were the busiest time for the Centre, the facility was open until 10.00 p.m. Monday – Saturday, with up to 300 people using it daily. She stated that, given that park currently formed a huge part of any evacuation procedures, she asked the Council to ensure that this was factored into any decision taken from a health and safety perspective as any alternative would involve crossing a busy road. She also concurred with Mr. Mulgrew in that Crescent Arts Centre would be keen to work with the various statutory agencies to try and keep the park open and accessible to all and welcomed its use for the book festival and she encouraged its further enhancement as a civic space.

Detailed discussion ensued between the Members and representatives, during which it was apparent that more work needed to be done with the various stakeholders prior to any decision being taken. A Member noted that it might be preferable to look at further enhancing and animating the park, with alternatives to gates such as CCTV also being explored.

The Members noted that the request needed to be considered in a citywide context.

Following consideration, the Committee agreed to defer the decision to enable wider consultation to be undertaken with the various stakeholders, including the PSNI, with a further report to be submitted to Committee in due course considering all options available.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives, and they left the meeting.

Restricted

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

**Late night hot food premises
opening hours on Ormeau Road**

The Committee was reminded that over the last number of months the Council had received complaints around noise, nuisance and disturbance emanating from the late-night opening of food premises on the Lower Ormeau Road.

At its December meeting, the Committee had agreed to receive a deputation from Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) for a small delegation of residents to attend its January meeting to highlight the impact on the local neighbourhood.

Accordingly, the Chairperson invited Ms. J. Armstrong and Ms. J. Breen to address the Committee.

Ms. Armstrong provided detail about the large crowds that were gathering outside the premises in the early hours of the morning due to its late closure of 4.00 a.m. She advised that this was having a detrimental impact on her mental health as she could not sleep due to the continuous noise, and she urged the Council to try and implement an earlier closure of the facility.

Ms. Breen concurred and she advised that she had two children aged 8 and 12 who were not able to sleep due to the noise, including loud music, from the premises which was particularly bad from 1.00 a.m. – 4.00 a.m. She also referred to the noise created by the delivery drivers. She stated that in the morning there was often broken glass because of anti-social behaviour and a smell of urine from people having urinated in the street. The representative advised that, like Ms. Armstrong, both her and her children's mental health was suffering due to a continuous lack of sleep, this was now affecting her work as she often did not get any sleep until after 4.30 a.m. She stated that on numerous occasions she had tried to speak to the owner of the food premises, but he had refused to engage with her.

The Members noted that this was a popular area for students who were congregating in and outside the premises and as a result had exacerbated the levels of disturbance and, on some occasions, this had resulted in serious anti-social behaviour.

The Committee was advised that officers had previously written to those businesses allegedly giving rise to the disturbance seeking their co-operation to reduce that disturbance. Some measures had been introduced to try to resolve the issue, such as staff positioned outside the premises, but complaints continued.

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services advised that Article 5 of the 1985 Order permitted a council to make a closing order with respect to any premises in its district to which this Article applied, if it was satisfied that it was desirable to make such an order to prevent residents in the neighbourhood of the premises being unreasonably disturbed either by persons resorting to the premises or by the use of the premises for the supply of meals or refreshments. It applied where meals or refreshments were supplied for consumption on or off the premises.

The legislation did not apply to licensed premises during the operating times of their licence.

The Committee was advised that the hours specified in a closing order should commence not earlier than midnight and finish not later than 5.00 a.m. This could be for different hours on different days of the week.

She asked the Members to note that, if the Council proposed to make a closing order, it must serve a notice on the business giving its reasons for seeking to make the order. The business operator then would then have 28 days to make representations to the Council. They might request the opportunity to make oral representations and if they did so the Council must give them an opportunity of appearing before and of being heard by the Committee.

The Committee noted that a closure order would take effect within 21 days of the decision and lasts for 3 years, although it may be varied or revoked at any time. The business operator might appeal a closure order to the County Court, if they chose to do so the order would have no effect until the appeal had been determined.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their contribution, and they left the meeting.

The Committee agreed that it was minded to make a closure order and agreed that the business operator be afforded the opportunity to make representations at a future meeting of the Committee, prior to a final determination.

It was noted that the residents affected by the disturbance would also be invited to make representations at the same meeting.

Resources and Fleet Waste Update

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

The Director of Resources and Fleet updated the Committee on Waste Collections Management and Performance. This included an overview and update in respect of the following key issues:

- Waste Performance and City Recycling Rates – 2021/22 and 2022/23 Year to Date at Q2;
- Waste Framework Update;
- Inner City Recycling Scheme Update;
- Carpet Recycling Scheme;
- Reuse of Laptops and Electrical Equipment Scheme;
- Pre-loved Toys Scheme;
- Diversion of (Bulky Household) wooden items from landfill;
- Feasibility studies for Brown Bin and Glass Collection expansion;
- Community Repaint Scheme,
- Update in terms of Infrastructure and Behavioural Change;
- Update in regard to information Technology including the Report-it App, Elogii App and QRT App;
- Operational Update;
- HVO fuel trial; and
- Inter Council / DAERA Collaboration.

A Member welcomed the HVO fuel trial, specifically the fact that the HVO would not include palm oil.

Following a query in regard to the Council's kerbside recycling collection schemes, the Director confirmed that a feasibility study on Option 5 was currently underway and advised that Party Group Briefings would be held in due course, prior to a report being submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Following questions regarding the promotion of the laptop recycling scheme and the need to progress the pedestrianisation of Palmerston Road Recycling facility, the Director advised that update reports would be submitted in due course in respect of both matters.

The Director also drew the Members' attention to the proposed Community Repaint Scheme at HWRCs. She explained that the Community Repaint Scheme was a UK wide paint reuse network, sponsored by Dulux, that aimed to collect leftover paint and redistribute it to benefit communities, charities and individuals in need at an affordable cost. She advised that the first stage in establishing the project was the drafting of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) and she drew the Members' attention to a copy of the SLA which had been attached as an appendix to the report.

The Members noted that subject to agreement of the SLA, discussion would take place regarding the practicalities of introducing a scheme, along with consideration of the potential financial assistance with a view to commencing the scheme at the start of April 2023.

Discussion also ensued regarding the operational decision that had been taken to cancel some bank holiday collections over the Christmas period due to difficulties experienced with lower than usual driver numbers to cover the holiday period. The Director assured the Members that a full and through analysis of the problems was currently being undertaken with a view to ensuring that similar problems were avoided in the future.

During discussion a Member raised the problematic parking of vehicles in streets which was also creating issues with missed bin collections.

The Committee noted that it had been agreed at the January meeting of Council to call a special meeting of the People and Communities Committee to discuss to discuss issues around waste collection and it subsequently agreed to invite representatives from both the PSNI and DfI to a special meeting to discuss the difficulties created through the problematic parking of vehicles.

The Members were advised that this issue was on the agenda as a separate item and would be discussed further in the meeting.

The Committee noted the comprehensive update report and:

- approved the SLA for the Community Re-Paint scheme; and
- noted that it had been agreed at the January meeting of Council to call a special meeting of the People and Communities Committee to discuss to discuss issues around waste collection. The Committee

subsequently agreed to invite representatives from both the PSNI and DfI to this meeting to discuss the difficulties created through the problematic parking of vehicles.

Review of Belsonic and Recent Stakeholder Engagement Session

(Ms. C. Taggart, Neighbourhood Manager for Community Services and Community Programming, attended in connection with this item.)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that a review report had been presented to the Committee in August 2022 and, although the Members had been largely content with the improvements, they had abstained from approving the 2023 event agreeing that it would be useful to have a further meeting with the various stakeholders in advance of considering a multiple year request.

The Committee was advised that the first of these sessions had been held last month and this had been specific to the Belsonic event. Following the positive feedback from all involved, the Council had committed to this ongoing engagement process and would continue to amend the methodology for delivery as required. This would also be replicated where necessary across the City with regards to other large promotor events at Council venues.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager addressed the Committee and advised that invitees to the engagement sessions would include:

- Community Provision;
- Building Control;
- Community Safety;
- Regulatory Services;
- PSNI;
- Elected Representatives from the local DEA's;
- Resident and Community Organisations operating in the local area; and
- Youth practitioner organisations operating in the local area.

She reported that the community sector organisations and local resident groups had welcomed this new approach and had noted that this seemed the best way to have their concerns heard and to contribute their ideas and solutions to the problems. Those in attendance at the Belsonic session had noted that it was refreshing to finally be invited to take part in the discussions and indicated their hope that the approach would be adopted for all future large-scale events at the site.

The Committee was advised that officers were planning an initial community stakeholder event for the Boucher Playing Fields 2023 event programme in the New Year, this would include engagement with local Elected Members to agree the timeframe and invitees.

The Committee noted that the Belsonic Promotor had sought permission for the 2023 concert and future concerts within a separate report. If permission was granted work with the promotor, the new stakeholder approach would commence early in the New Year to inform the series of concerts requested to commence in June 2023.

A Member referred to his previous request for enhanced accessibility and the provision of changing places facilities for attendees with disabilities and stated that he was disappointed that more had not been included in this regard.

The Neighbourhood Services Manager assured the Member that this area of work was being progressed and would be looked at in more detail within the context of the Event Management Framework review.

The Director also undertook to liaise with the other relevant Directors in this regard as the review of the Framework was a corporate review and he undertook to discuss it further with the Member directly.

The Members also discussed other areas that could be further discussed at the stakeholder meetings which included the gridlock on the Lower Ormeau Road, the need for adequate portable toilet provision at identified hotspots, clarity on the new Social Value Fund and how this would be administered and allocated and a messaging campaign around events to promote awareness of consent and sexual assault and to highlight the support systems available for vulnerable young people. It was also noted that minutes of the stakeholder meetings would be useful.

The Committee noted the update and the positive outcome from the recent work carried out by the Promotor, Council officers and partnering community and resident organisations

Request for the use of Parks for 2023 Events

The Committee considered requests seeking permission for the use of various parks and facilities during 2023, as follows:

- Belsonic – Ormeau Park – June 2023; and
- Planet Love Festival – Boucher Road – 15th and 16th September 2023.

The Committee granted authority to each of the applicants for the proposed events on the dates outlined and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services:

- 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 also granted multiple year approval for Belsonic to host concerts at Ormeau Park in June of each year for a 3-year period (2023 – 2025), with the provision that all events with a multiple year approval would be subject to annual review. The Director of Neighbourhood Services was granted authority, under the scheme of delegation, to remove the permission for subsequent years, if necessary, based on findings from annual reviews and upon officer recommendation.

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.

Fair Funding 2% Salary Uplift 2022/23

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that, as the Members would be aware, the Department for Communities (DfC) provided an annual grant to the Councils to help with the delivery of the Community Support Programme (CSP).

He also reminded the Members that, in March 2022, the Committee had agreed to accept additional funding for the Department for Communities (DfC) to allow for improvements in the terms and conditions for those working in the Community and Voluntary Sector to offer 'fair pay' and associated conditions. This funding had specifically related to those organisations that used Council Community Development grants towards staff related costs and was proportional to the Council's contribution.

The Director continued that DfC had now made an additional provision in the 2022/23 Community Support Programme Letter of Offer, a 2% uplift towards salary related costs. The additional allocation was £69,798.59.

The Director proceeded to outline the proposed approach for allocation of the uplift. The agreed 2% uplift would be applied to identified staffing budget lines and payment for this amount would be issued to organisations for the 2022/23 financial year. Belfast City Council would ask organisations to ensure that this funding was used in the spirit of the 'Fair Funding' uplift to offer "fair pay" and associated conditions for those employed in the Voluntary and Community Sector to enable those employed in the Sector to receive real living wage rates.

The Members noted that the allocations provided by DfC would cover the total budget for applying this uplift, therefore there would be no need for additional funding from Council to implement this change.

Following a query from a Member, the Director confirmed that currently this was only an 'in year uplift' and that no confirmation of funding at been received for future years.

The Committee approved the outlined approach for implementing the 2% 'Fair Funding' uplift which had been provided through the Community Support Plan.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Anti-Social Behaviour within BCC Parks

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with an overview in respect of the levels of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within Council Parks over a 3-year period.

He highlighted that, as previously advised, within Community Safety and OSS over the last 3 years there had been significant pressures upon staffing resources, with new staff (temporary and permanent) having been appointed, this had further been exacerbated by sickness absence and annual leave requirements, all of which had impacted upon the consistent recording of data. In addition, throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery phases, the limited OSS and community safety staff had been at the front line delivering essential services to the public. The redeployment of staff to cover essential services had therefore impacted upon services within parks which had also contributed to an inconsistent capturing of data on ASB.

The Director referred to the APP-CivicaDatabase which captured information collated by Council staff and complaints made in relation to ASB in the City.

He referred to the table below, which detailed the ASB figures recorded over the last 3 years across 52 Council parks and also a more detailed breakdown of these figures that had been attached as an appendix to the report:

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	3 Year Combined
169	769	291	1229

He reiterated to the Members that the figures might not provide an overall accurate picture of ASB within Parks and outlined that their usefulness in terms of determining patterns or hotspots was extremely limited for the following reasons:

- residents complaining about ASB in Parks state that they don't always report every incident;
- the Capturing information on ASB within Belfast City Council parks lies within the responsibility of Park Wardens, ASB Officers, and Safer Neighbourhood Officers. However, Safer Neighbourhood and ASB Officers are not located within parks but are rather deployed in the City centre and neighbourhoods;
- a team of Park Wardens is located in each quadrant of the City and each Park in the City is patrolled daily, with the more problematic parks receiving more targeted patrols than others;
- the Park Warden Service operates within the current Parks closing times (dawn to dusk). However, the Department and the PSNI do plan and carry out interventions outside these hours in response to large events in Parks, reports of ASB and underage drinking.

The Director continued that, along with the resource pressures, officers had also identified that there had been a variety of ways in which the teams had captured data (if at all) which presented challenges in obtaining reports that had accurate data and from which conclusions could be drawn. In addition, he advised that a short review of current recording mechanisms of ASB within Parks would be completed by January 2023 to ensure there was a standardised and robust approach to capturing ASB data across all parks going forward. This would include a review of how members of the public could report ASB in parks.

He also drew the Members' attention to the PSNI figures below relating to incidents of ASB across the City, comparing April – September 2022 to the same period last year. This noted an overall reduction in recorded incidences in all areas.

	April – Sept 2021	April – Sept 2022	Change	% Change
Lisburn Road	3571	2770	-901	-22%
Strandtown	1781	1422	-259	-20.2%
Tennent Street	2859	2265	-594	-20.8%
Woodbourne	1804	1494	-310	-17.2%
Belfast City	10015	7951	-2064	-20.6%

Several Members stated that they were aware that underreporting was an ongoing issue and, whilst they welcomed the update, they acknowledged and agreed with the need for a more robust and accurate way of recording the data for incidents of ASB data across the City.

A Member referred to the Customer Hub and the need to ensure that there was a standardised process for the collection of the reported data.

Discussion also ensued regarding the skill set and training of Council officers in both dealing with incidents and ensuring that they were accurately recorded.

Several of the Members referred to specific cost to the Council in repairing the damage created because of ASB and requested that a report detailing these costs be submitted to a future meeting.

A Member referred to successful community intervention measures that had been undertaken in other Council parks, specifically Dunville Park, and stated that rather than focusing on closing parks earlier or introducing further control mechanisms, for example, additional fencing or gates, they would be keen to explore positive intervention measures to encourage use and community ownership of Council parks.

Another Member asked for a report detailing the cost of completing the remaining required lighting in Falls Park.

A further Member suggested that, in terms of looking at how problems and incidents of ASB were recorded, additional signage/posters could be erected throughout the parks (not just at the entrances) providing a direct telephone number for the reporting of incidents/problems which might encourage members of the public to report problems.

Discussion ensued, following which the Committee noted the content of the report and agreed the following actions:

- officers to liaise with Digital Services, the Customer Hub, Business Support and relevant CNS staff to develop a system to better capture ASB within BCC parks;
- in the interim period, the Council would aim to train all staff that worked within Parks to record ASB through the Flare system to ensure a more standardised recording system was in place from January 2023, with reports brought to Committee on a regular basis. This review would also consider concerns around the under reporting of ASB and how this could be improved;
- noted that further work was required to review the roles of Park Wardens and Safer Neighbourhood Officers in regard to preventing and addressing ASB across the city;
- noted that, when a more robust system for consistently capturing ASB data was in place, then it might be possible to use this information to develop and target Council interventions in problematic sites;
- noted that Springfield Avenue Play Park was not on the list and agreed to have it added;
- agreed that a subsequent report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee that would give consideration to successful interventions that had been previously undertaken in other Council parks, in particular Dunville Park, and how similar initiatives might be applied to other Council parks with ASB problems;
- agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would detail the costs to the Council of undertaking repair works to parks that had been damaged because of ASB; and
- agreed that the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services would liaise with the Director of Physical Programmes to ascertain the cost of completing the remaining required lighting in Falls Park with an update report to be submitted to a future meeting of Committee.

Active Belfast Partnership and Funding Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Members will be aware, as part of a previous update report presented to Committee in April 2022, that approval was sought and given for the Active Belfast partnership to develop a participatory budgeting pilot in 2022/23. This report provides an overview of progress to date, outlines the planned timeframe for application, assessment and award and notes that further spend against delivery of the PB pilot will occur in the 23/24 financial year.**

1.2 A further report will be brought to Committee in March/April 2023 which will outline the broader work undertaken by Active Belfast in 2022/23, as well as outlining the partnership's proposed plan for 2023/24.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the content of the report – particularly the work undertaken to date in developing the PB Pilot approach and the planned timeframe for promotion, application, assessment and delivery; and
- To agree that part (26K) of the overall BCC contribution (90K) to Active Belfast in 23/24 is utilised towards covering the costs of project delivery (i.e. allocation of funding awards) in 23/24 – alongside 38K of the PHA allocation (146K) for 23/24.
- Active Belfast partnership intends to hold a planning session early in the New Year to identify and agree priorities for 23/24, alongside associated spend profiles, for the remaining budget (172K) – which is currently subject to Council discussions and decisions on discretionary spend, and thus a further report will be brought to committee in March/April 2023.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 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. Thus, the overall funding allocated for work in support of Active Belfast is £236,000 per annum. 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, is vital in relation to us being in a position to work collaboratively with key partners to take forward relevant actions and to test out novel approaches and ideas.

In-year Progress against PB Pilot action

3.2 Both Belfast City Council and the Belfast Community Planning Partnership (BCPP) are committed to enhancing civic engagement and participation. This commitment is articulated in both the Belfast Agenda and the BCC Corporate Plan as well as other key documents such as the

inclusive growth and consultation and engagement frameworks.

- 3.3 In December 2020, Council launched a new engagement platform, Your Say Belfast, which offered greater opportunity for ongoing and deliberative methods of engaging. However, it was also recognised that more participative and innovative methods are required to be developed across our services. Council's 2022-23 Improvement Plan includes a commitment to piloting Participatory Budgeting (PB) within Belfast. PB is a democratic process in which citizens decide how to spend part of an allocated public budget. It began in Brazil but is now used across the world as a mechanism to encourage people to get involved in local decision making and democracy. It helps increase levels of involvement and community empowerment by bringing people together at local events or online and giving them a direct say about what happens in their community.
- 3.4 At the People and Communities Committee People meeting held on 10th May 2022, members agreed to pilot PB in collaboration with the Active Belfast Partnership. Unfortunately, we significantly underestimated the amount of work that had to be put in, in advance of actually being in a position to implement the PB approach. Therefore, action in-year has focussed on learning more about PB – raising awareness, exploring best practice, skilling up staff, securing external support and designing relevant processes, systems and paperwork, etc.
- 3.5 Staff within the Belfast Health Development Unit leading on this initiative, assisted by colleagues in community planning, engaged Community Places to provide expert advice and design support both in-year through to November 2023. Community Places has the experience of designing and facilitating Participatory Budgeting (PB) processes locally and regionally.
- 3.6 General awareness briefing sessions, facilitated by Community Places, were held on 23 August 2022 and 7 September 2022 with the aim of increasing awareness of what PB is and how it can be used in Belfast. This was followed by the set-up of an Active Belfast Design Team made up of a small team of representatives who are overseeing the design and implementation of the Active Belfast Participatory Budgeting Pilot in 4 geographical areas of Belfast.
- 3.7 The Design Team has agreed a theme 'Move More and Eat Well – To Feel Better' and drafted a shared purpose, as follows:

- Empower and support communities to have a voice in decision making in their areas
- Reduce barriers to participation and increase access to funding
- Promote agreed Active Belfast messaging
- Promote eating healthy message
- Test something new, collaborate and learn together from the process
- Raise awareness of PB

The broader approach for the Active Belfast Participatory Budgeting Pilot is outlined as follows:

3.8 Project Application Criteria

- Safe, Legal & Feasible (timeframe and budget)
- In keeping with the theme - one or both parts (move more and/or eat well)
- Benefiting people within the Belfast City Council area
- Attendance at the Celebration Event (attendance at this will be used to monitor the outcomes/benefits to the local community).

3.9 Who can apply?

- Both constituted and non-constituted groups can apply
- Non-constituted groups will require a sponsor organisation
- Anyone under the age of 18 will need a sponsor adult to assist them through the process and to hold funding
- A maximum of two applications can be received from each group.

3.10 General principles

- Applicants will complete a short application form detailing their project idea. Applications will open on Monday 6 February 2023 for 6 weeks and will close on Monday 20 March 2023. Information sessions will be arranged, and it is suggested that there are 2-3 Information Sessions per area, plus online sessions.
- Design Team agreed that groups can self-select the area in which they want to submit their application – choosing the area where their project idea will be delivered and be of benefit. This will be particularly important for groups who are located on the edge of one area but serve the needs of people in an adjacent/wider area.

- Criteria Check w/c 20 March 2023 and selected groups will be given notice and invited to Decision-Making Events.
- Selected groups will be invited to Market Stall Decision-Making Events in each geographical area in April 2023 where the community will vote for the projects they want to progress.
- Successful groups will be issued a Letter of Offer along with Terms & Conditions which they must formally accept and return.
- Each award could be up to the value of £1,000.
- 90% of the award will be paid upfront with the remaining 10% being paid on completion of the Project outlined in the group's application and confirmation of attendance at the Celebration Event in Autumn 2023.
- Attendance/presentation at the Celebration Event is mandatory and will form part of project monitoring as monitoring returns will not be required.
- Utility costs, core salary costs, commercial events, purchase of alcohol, political activities, religious activities, memorials, high risk activities e.g., bouncy castles, fireworks will not be funded.
- A sample of groups will be selected for vouching, and this will be on a risk-based approach i.e., groups that have not received funding from BCC will be selected for vouching.
- Administration and support will be provided by the Design Team, BHDU and CNS Finance.

3.11 Timeline

Nov 22 – Feb 23	Soft launch and ongoing promotion
Feb 23 – Mar 23	Monday 06 February: applications open for 6 weeks Information Sessions will be arranged during first 2 weeks of February 2023 Applications close on Monday 20 March
Mid-End Mar 23	Criteria checks will commence w/c 20 March 2023 and successful groups will be given notice and invited to Decision-Making Events w/c 27 March (in advance of the Easter Break)
Mid-End Apr 23	Decision-making event dates will commence on 17 April 2023 or the beginning of the following week commencing 24th April 2023
May – Oct 23	Project delivery (6 months)
Oct/Nov 23	Showcase and Celebration Events
Ongoing	Learning and evaluation

- 3.12 Given that this is piloting a new approach to awarding funding for Council, The Design Team will continue to liaise closely with Belfast City Council colleagues in Finance,

Legal and Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) in relation to the project design and processes.

- 3.13 Up to date information on the initiative can be found at:
<https://yoursay.belfastcity.gov.uk/hub-page/participatory-budgeting>



Financial and Human Resource Implications

- 3.14 Subject to Council and PHA approval/agreement (and specifically discussions ongoing within Council around discretionary spend), a budget of £236,000 will remain available to support this work in 22/23.
- 3.15 Belfast City Council's £90K contribution towards the £236K total will be included within the revenue estimates for 2023/24 and therefore does not represent any growth. In relation to the ongoing review of discretionary spend, Officers would make the case that our ability to contribute £90K towards Active Belfast is vital to ensure that PHA continue to contribute £146K enabling evidence-based work and projects to be developed in support of Council, Health and most importantly Community Planning priorities which would otherwise not be able to be achieved/supported.
- 3.16 Officers are requesting member approval to earmark £64K (26K BCC/ 38K PHA split) of the 236K total towards delivery/ implementation of the PB pilot in 2023/24. This will enable £16K to be allocated per area – North, South, East and West and a minimum of 16 projects (up to 1K per project available) to be supported per area.
- 3.17 Active Belfast partnership will be holding a planning session early in the New Year to look at other priorities and resourcing requirements and a further report re. same will be brought through to committee.
- 3.18 Kim Kensett (PHA) and Grainne McMacken (BHSDT) will continue to lead on this work within the BHDU. Oversight will continue to be provided at organisational level by Kelly Gilliland within BCC and David Tumilty within PHA, as well as at a partnership/thematic level with the stakeholders involved in the Active Belfast Partnership.

Equality or Good Relations/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.19 Equality screening has been completed.
- 3.20 PB should have a positive impact across the various Section 75 groups as it strengthens and promotes inclusive civic voice and participation. Positive steps will be taken to ensure the PB process is promoted amongst all section 75 groups, but particularly those who are under-represented in traditional consultations (i.e. young people, older people, disabled people, new [ethnic and migrant] communities).”

The Committee adopted the recommendations as outlined at points 2.0 and 2.1 of the report.

Update from the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group

The Committee was advised that a meeting of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group had been held on 12th December 2022 and the Director of City Services highlighted some of the specific issues that had been considered:

- Update on Bereavement Service Operations; and
- Update on the new Crematorium Development.

The Committee:

- The Committee adopted the minutes from the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group meeting held on 12th December 2022;
- endorsed the recommendation of the Working Group to increase the time frame for the submission of cremation documentation from 12 noon the day before cremation to two working days; and
- endorsed the recommendation of the Working Group to write to the relevant Permanent Secretary encouraging a workable solution to be found allowing the electronic transfer of documentation relating to burials and cremations to continue on a permanent basis, given that the current Coronavirus Act Provisions that currently enabled the process were due to expire on 24th March 2023.

**Department for Communities Private
Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 -update on
Powers for Council commencing April 2023**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To update Members of the new provisions of the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 commencing on 1st April 2023 and to set fixed penalty levels for certain offences under said Act.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the new legislative powers for Council’s in relation to the private rented sector.**

And

- **Agree the proposed fixed penalty levels at £500.**

3.0 Main Report

Key issues

3.1 Members were previously appraised at their November 2021 Committee of the new provisions contained in The Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 which has received royal assent on the 27th April 2022. It amends the Private Tenancies Order (NI) 2006 with 11 substantive clauses and three schedules aimed at making the private rented sector a safer and more protected housing option. This report provides the details of the elements of the new Order that will come into effect on the 1st April 2023, however it should be noted that there are still a number of provisions which require further consultation and members will be provided with an update when we receive the Department for Communities (DfC) consultation papers.

3.2 The Act creates new offences for which the Council will have powers to issue fixed penalty notices. The fixed penalty payable in respect of an offence is an amount determined by the Council, being an amount not exceeding one-fifth of the maximum fine payable on summary conviction of that offence which is currently £2500. Therefore, the maximum level of fixed penalty fine that the Council can set for the new offences is £500. The Council has previously set the fine level at £500 for failure to register as a landlord under the same legislation. Therefore, it is proposed that the fines for the new offences are set at the same level of £500 as detailed below.

- 3.3 The Act will provide additional powers to Councils in relation to the regulation of the private rented sector as follows:

Tenancy Information Notice

Tenancy Information Regulations 2022 require a landlord to give a tenant a Tenancy Information Notice containing specified information within 28 days of the commencement of a tenancy. A Tenancy Information Notice is an important legal document which provides the landlord and tenant with information on their respective rights and responsibilities. It can help to minimise disputes, as information, such as, the rent payable, deposit details, duration of tenancy, responsibility for repairs and notice of termination are given in writing. The Notice also provides tenants with the landlord's (and, if appropriate, agent's) contact information.

If the landlord has previously given a tenant a Notice which substantially meets the specified requirements, this would be deemed compliant.

If the landlord commits an offence, the council will have the power to issue a fixed penalty notice, not exceeding £500. If the landlord is convicted by a court, the penalty will be a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale (currently £2,500).

The maximum fixed penalty notice fine level which can be issued by Council is £500.

It is proposed that the fixed penalty level offence is set by the Council at £500.

Receipts

- 3.4 It is now a requirement for a landlord to provide a written receipt for any payment made in cash in relation to a tenancy. A receipt is a method of documenting cash payments that a tenant pays to a landlord under a tenancy. A receipt is beneficial to both tenants and landlords offering tenants documented proof of cash payments and landlords a record of cash payments. For tenants who pay their rent in cash a rent receipt may be the only written evidence they have of their payments

Any written receipt must detail:

- the payment date;
- what the payment was for; and
- the amount paid, including:
 - if any amounts remain outstanding, and

- if the payment was made in full.

If the landlord or his/her representative/agent commits an offence by failing to provide the receipt for cash payments, the Council may issue a fixed penalty notice not exceeding £500. If the landlord is convicted by a court the penalty, the fine will not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale (currently £2,500).

The maximum fixed penalty notice fine level which can be issued by Council is £500.

It is proposed that the fixed penalty level offence is set by the Council at £500.

Changes to Tenancy Deposits

- 3.5 A landlord cannot ask for or retain a tenancy deposit that is more than one month's rent.

If a landlord has unlawfully requested or retained a tenancy deposit of more than one month's rent, they are guilty of an offence. A council can issue a fixed penalty notice or fine for this offence. The amount of the fixed penalty notice will be determined by councils and cannot exceed £500. If the landlord is convicted by a court the penalty will be a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale (currently £2,500). If a landlord is convicted of requiring or retaining a deposit in excess of one month's rent, the court may order the excess to be repaid to the person who paid it.

The maximum fixed penalty notice fine level which can be issued by Council is £500.

It is proposed that the fixed penalty level offence is set by the Council at £500.

Increase in time for requirements relating to tenancy deposits

- 3.6 The time limit for a deposit to be protected in an approved scheme has changed from 14 days to 28 days and landlords have additional time to provide the prescribed information to the tenant as this has changed from 28 days to 35 days.

If a landlord or agent fails to protect the deposit or notify a tenant of the deposit information, then they will be guilty of an offence.

The Council may issue a fixed penalty three times the value of the deposit taken.

If convicted of this offence, they may be liable for a fine not exceeding £20,000

Removal of the 6-month time barrier to prosecution of tenancy deposit offence

- 3.7 The Private Tenancies Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 makes the failure to protect a tenancy deposit a continuing offence and removes the 6-month time limit on prosecutions. This legislation provides that those offences continue to be committed throughout any period during which the failure to protect a deposit, or supply the required information to the tenant, continues. The result of this is that there will be no time barrier on prosecuting a person who fails to comply with the requirements.

Change in length of notice to quit:

- 3.8 From 5th May 2022, the Private Tenancies Act 2022 introduced the following notices to quit period for landlords and tenants:

Depending on the length of the tenancy, the landlord must give their tenant a minimum notice to quit period as indicated in the table below.

Length of tenancy	Notice to quit
Tenancy not been in existence for more than 12 months	No less than 4 weeks' written notice
Tenancy has been in existence for more than 12 months but not more than 10 years	No less than 8 weeks' written notice
Tenancy has been in existence for more than 10 years	No less than 12 weeks' written notice

Depending on the length of the tenancy the tenant must give their landlord a minimum notice to quit period.

Length of tenancy	Notice to quit
Tenancy not been in existence for more than 10 years	No less than 4 weeks' written notice
Tenancy has been in existence for more than 10 years	No less than 12 weeks' written notice

The Council will seek to publicise the new legislative provisions in advance of the start date on 1st April 2023 using our media outlets.

- 3.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

The Private Tenancies Act will provide Councils with new enforcement powers to deal with issues in the Private Rented sector which will place additional resources

demands on our existing resources. There is no financial support available from the Department for Communities (DfC) to assist Councils with these additional powers. The fixed penalty regime introduced for some of the new offences may provide some income but it will not cover the additional staffing and administrative resources required. Setting the fixed penalty fine to the maximum of £500 for each offence is a key consideration in the absence of any financial support to implement this important legislation.

**3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessments**

None associated with this report.”

A Member stated that, whilst the powers were welcome, he did not think that they went far enough. He continued that, as outlined in the report, the Act had created new offences for which the Council now had powers to issue fixed penalty notices and he queried whether the Council had received any additional funding for these added duties.

The Director of City Services advised that no additional funding had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) and that any additional costs and resources would have to be absorbed by the Council.

The Member reiterated the potential additional resources implications and costs for the Council at a time when the Council was already under significant financial pressure, he asked that this be highlighted to DfC and also that the additional costs be monitored and reported upon in due course.

During discussion a number of Members stated that they felt that both the fixed penalty fine (£500) and the summary conviction fine (£2500) were low and queried whether these could be raised.

The Director advised that the maximum fixed penalty notice fine level which could be issued by the Council was £500. In addition, if a landlord was to be convicted the penalty fine would not exceed level 4 on the standard scale which was currently £2500 and that increasing this was a matter for the Department for Communities (DfC).

The Committee:

- noted the new legislative powers for Council's in relation to the private rented sector and agreed the proposed £500 fixed penalty level; and
- agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary in the DfC to detail the additional resource implications on the Council and to seek additional funding for its regulation and also to ask for a review of the maximum fine payable on both the maximum fixed penalty notice (currently £500) and on summary conviction (currently £2500).

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Orangefield Pavilion Artwork

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 work with community partners and a group of young men in the Orangefield area, and to seek approval for a piece of artwork on the wall at Orangefield Pavilion.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the intent to install a piece of artwork on the wall at Orangefield Pavilion and agree the approach for codesigning the image.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 East Belfast Alternatives have been working with a group of young men, supported by Eastside Greenways and Belfast City Council parks outreach team. This group of young men lost a friend at the start of the year to ongoing battles with mental health and substance misuse. This prompted a number of tributes and graffiti being sprayed on the walls at the pavilion.

3.2 East Belfast Alternatives have been using the pavilion every Thursday evening to work with the group of young men. They have undertaken training sessions around mental health including a wellness initiative created by the Trauma Resource Institute as well as emergency first aid and defibrillator training with the Red Cross. The group are keen to continue working together to support mental health initiatives, develop increased use of the pavilion for the community and take a bit of positive ownership of the space around the pavilion.

3.3 The group have requested approval to create a piece of artwork on the wall and produce something that would be a more fitting tribute to their friend as well as celebrate his work as a local artist. We believe this will also reduce any further graffiti or damage to the building and give the group a sense of ownership of the space. To date, the group have worked with a local east Belfast artist and have produced an image which council officers have advised might be unsuitable.

- 3.4 Officers have discussed and shared the PHA guidance on memorials which outlines some circumstance where memorials can have a negative effect on people, and also the importance of considering other park users - all who interpret images differently.
- 3.5 Officers are keen to support the work with this group of young men and continue to build on the positive outcomes for both the young men involved and the council's work to create safe, welcoming spaces and increase community and resident capacity for development and participation.
- 3.6 This project aligns with priorities set out in the Belfast City Council's Cultural Strategy, *A City Imagining*. One of the key themes of the strategy is 'A City Belonging', which proposes that through active participation, citizens will gain a sense of cultural belonging. Citizens should be supported to creatively express their identity and ensure they themselves and their creativity is reflected, welcomed and celebrated in their city.
- 3.7 The Orangefield Pavilion is a perfect example of this active participation as a group of young men have organised and engaged in creative expression on an issue that is important to them and is a positive message to the wider community (musical talent in Belfast and how creativity can help our mental health). Our cultural strategy positions citizens to be active agents of change and co-creators of cultural activity. These young men have taken on this role by engaging with artists, community organisers and local stakeholders – reinvigorating their local area in a collaborative and creative way.
- 3.8 Belfast recently gained UNESCO City of Music status and the story of what music means in Belfast is an important one to celebrate, which citizens have previously and repeatedly highlighted through consultation. This planned project celebrates a local artist who was part of initiatives such as HotBox Entertainment, a music studio based in East Belfast on Ravenhill Road which empowers young people to create and record their own music.
- 3.9 The mural and the work that these young men and all community groups involved are doing is carrying on the legacy of a local musician and advocating for what creativity can mean for people's mental health, their sense of belonging in their community and their ability to actively participate in and shape their city.
- 3.10 To achieve the Cultural Strategy, we have an ambitious year-long celebration of creativity planned for 2024. As part of *Belfast 2024*, the creative sector, city stakeholders and citizens across Belfast will be co-designing and participating

in the creative programme of events, exhibitions, performances and more.

- 3.11 It is essential that, to achieve this level of participation, we are investing in and building relationships with communities where they are supported to realise their ideas and visions for creativity in their local areas, such as the mural for Orangefield Pavilion.

Approach for agreeing the image

- 3.12 Officers recommend a co design approach with the group of young men, supported by the local artist, and including input from council's Culture and Arts team, local elected members, and a specialist input from a local mental health charity or art therapy service.

We will use guidance previously agreed through committee on producing public animation/art around the centenary and ensure that we bring in expertise on the subject and ensure further engagement with other stakeholders.

Community/Partner consultation on the image

- 3.13 Officers recommend that the young men would undertake a consultation process with the new agreed image. This would include pop up engagement with park users, as well as partners such as Eastside Greenways, Eastside Arts, EBCDA, East Street Team, People of Orangefield Park, Bloomfield Football Club, Park Run, Bloomfield Wildlife, People of Orangefield Park, Bloomfield Community Association, Adopt a Spot groups, Orangefield Community Garden group, elected members. This engagement could be supported by Eastside Greenways team.
- 3.14 In addition to the image, the young men would like to include a QR code as part of the design which links the user to Spotify, and 7 of the artists songs. Also, a QR code beside the defibrillator which links the user to the East Belfast Health Hub App developed by EBCDA.
- 3.15 Officers from our communications team will check and approve the content before installation.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.16 No financial cost to council. This project would be funded by East Belfast Alternatives and their Communities in Transition funding.

Officers would advise that the permanency of the artwork be up to two years and then reviewed.

The group could be supported with the DPCSP graffiti packs to remove any unwanted tagging themselves which will further support the level of ownership felt by the group.

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

3.17 There are no associated impacts.”

The Committee approved the intent to install a piece of artwork on the wall at Orangefield Pavilion and agreed the approach for codesigning the image.

Pitch Partner Agreements Short Term Extensions

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that in 2017/18 the Council had agreed to enter into Partner Agreements with local clubs at 6 Council sites. Originally, the Agreements had been agreed for an initial period of 5 years with an option to extend, subject to satisfactory performance by the Agreement holders. He advised that the Department had subsequently extended all of the Agreements for a further 2 years beyond the initial 5-year period.

The Director highlighted that a number of the agreements were due to expire before the end of the 2022/2023 financial year, as listed below:

Facility	Club	Expiry Date
Shore Road Playing fields	Grove United FC	8 December 2022
Woodlands	Co. Antrim GAA	15 December 2022
Orangefield Park	Bloomfield FC	15 December 2022
Dixon Park	Sirocco FC	7 February 2023

He reported that, to ensure continuity of service, he had extended the Agreements under the Scheme of Delegation.

The Members were reminded that the Council was currently developing a new policy regarding the management of assets within the community, with a pilot being delivered across a number of sites. He continued that, as the Members were aware, one of the sites included in the initial pilot had been Ulidia Playing Fields. He advised that, at the October 2022 meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, it had endorsed the recommendation of the People and Communities Committee to transfer the existing Partner Agreement at Ulidia to a long-term lease.

He advised that it was anticipated, following review of the CAT pilot process, that a number of the sites listed above might also be made available for consideration under new management arrangements, however, until this had been agreed, and to ensure continuity of service provision, it was intended that the remaining existing Partner Agreements would continue until the new arrangements had been established.

The Committee noted:

- That, under the Scheme of Delegation, the Director had extended the current Partner agreements for the sites at Shore Road Playing Fields, Woodlands, Dixon Park and Orangefield Park until 31st March 2023; and
- that a further report would be submitted to Committee in due course to seek any further extension for all agreements following the confirmation of 2023/24 budgets and that this would be linked to the timeframe and outcome of the CAT pilot.

Community Management of Assets Update

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Committee that the Council had previously agreed to the appointment of consultants to pilot an approach to the Community Management of Assets at the six agreed sites. At the October meeting of the Committee a Member had asked for consideration to be given to removing the Willowbank Park site and replacing it with Lenadoon Park, subject to the groups confirming their willingness.

The Director confirmed that the local groups were content with this arrangement.

The Committee agreed that Willowbank Park be removed from the pilot and replaced by Lenadoon Park.

Operational Issues

Proposal for naming new streets and continuation of existing streets

The Committee approved the application for naming a new street and applications for the continuation of existing streets in the City as set out below:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Lady Ishbel Boulevard	Off Hospital Road, BT8	Alskea Ltd

Proposed Continuation of Existing Street	Location	Applicant
Ishbel Gardens	Off Lady Ishbel Avenue, BT8	Alskea Ltd
Ishbel Mews	Off Haddo Crescent, BT8	Alskea Ltd

Consultation response to Food Standards Agency on the proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice in relation to a new Food Standards delivery model

The Committee considered the undernoted report.

1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1** The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is seeking views and comments from stakeholders on the proposed changes to the Food Law Code of Practice (Northern Ireland) in relation to the introduction of the new Food Standards Delivery Model.
- 1.2** The proposals presented in the consultation are the introduction of a new method of determining the food standards risk posed by a food business, and a new frequency schedule for the delivery of food standards official controls. These changes will require significant changes to the Food Safety Unit's current information management system (CIVICA) for recording and reporting of food standards interventions and for the migration of existing premises to the new scheme.
- 1.3** The Council's Food Safety team have reviewed the FSA consultation questionnaire and have prepared a draft response for committee approval which indicates general support for the implementation of the new food standards delivery model. However the draft response comments on a number of technical points in relation to implementation, in particular the availability of financial assistance from the FSA for the necessary amendments to the IT systems used by the Food Safety Unit.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is requested to:
- Approve the draft consultation response.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** In Northern Ireland, district councils (DCs) are Competent Authorities responsible for verifying compliance with food law in the majority of food businesses. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is responsible for providing advice and guidance on the approach that DCs should take, and this is set out in the Food Law Code of Practice (the Code). DCs have a duty to have regard to the provisions in the Code in relation to the delivery of Official Controls.
- 3.2** Food standards interventions focus on food matters such as food labelling, provision of allergen information to consumers, food composition and food fraud. Working in collaboration with Councils and other key stakeholders, the FSA have developed a new delivery model for food standards official controls and interventions. This updated

model provides a more flexible approach for DCs to better target resources at food businesses presenting the greatest risk.

- 3.3 The main proposals involve fundamental changes to the current Food Standards Delivery Model, and associated content within the Code of Practice, namely the introduction of:
- a new Food Standards Intervention Rating Scheme that officers will use to evaluate the risk posed by a food business; and
 - a new Decision Matrix to determine the frequency at which food standards official controls should be delivered in line with the outcome of the risk assessment
 - changes to sections of the Code relating to the delivery of food standards interventions.
- 3.4 Food Safety Officers within Belfast City Council have expressed support for the new scheme within the draft response but have noted a number of concerns regarding the initial work required for migration from the current risk rating scheme, particularly with regard to the IT solutions and associated costs.
- 3.5 The proposed scheme was recently piloted by one council in NI however the proposed scoring element relating to control of allergens and provision of allergen information to consumers was not included in the pilot scheme. The Council involved in the pilot exercise has noted that this element would need to be further evaluated in order to determine the impact on the overall number of food standards inspections required each year in each Council area.
- 3.6 Allergen information provision continues to provide a challenge to food businesses and there is the potential for the revised scoring model to identify more premises into the priority category, thereby requiring revisits every month until compliance is secured. This may pose additional challenges for service planning within the Council's Food Safety service, due to the reactive nature of the new model. It will be difficult to estimate the numbers of planned interventions as a premises requiring a priority intervention may then require further multiple interventions within the same year.
- 3.7 Belfast City Council Food Safety Officers also anticipate that training will be required in excess of the FSA's estimations and have asked for specific training with regard to the application of scores to ensure consistency with other DC's, similar to that provided to the pilot council.

Finance and Resource Implications

- 3.8 Financial support is being sought from the FSA to assist with the changes necessary to the Food Safety Unit's IT systems (Civica) to allow for the recording of food standards interventions under the new risk rating scheme and this is reflected in the consultation response.

Asset and Other Implications

- 3.9 None.

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

- 3.10 None.”

The Committee approved the draft consultation response available [here](#)

**Request from GBBCA to extend their legal
Agreement with the Council for Grey Lag
Goose Control in Victoria Park**

The Committee considered a request from The George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) regarding bird strike management at Victoria Park, along with a request from them to present to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to defer the request from the George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) seeking to extend their current Greylag goose licence with BCC to enable GBBCA representatives to attend the February meeting of Committee to make a short presentation, which should include specific data from the last two years around Greylag goose activity in Victoria Park, details of recent egg control measures taken, along with an up-to-date copy of the Airport's Wildlife Action Plan.

Issues Raised in Advance by a Member

Missed Bin Collections – Councillor Flynn

The Director provided a comprehensive update in respect of the measures being taken to ensure that all waste collections were returned to normal routines by the week commencing 9th January, advising that maximum overtime was being worked to ensure the recovery of the missed bin collections.

She advised that the primary problem had been a shortage of drivers, particularly drivers with a Category C (HGC) type licence, as the Members were aware this had previously resulted in the suspension of glass collections during the summer/autumn period of 2022 and she provided a comprehensive update on the various measure being taken to try and ensure that there was adequate capacity going forward, including details in regard to recruitment, training and contingency measures.

Following a query, the Director apologised to the Members for the lack of communication with the Elected Members and for the delay in getting up-to-date information transmitted and advised that a further report in this regard, including proposed updated measures would be submitted in due course.

It was noted that the Chief Executive had agreed at the January meeting of Council to re-establish the Cleansing Task Force to consider the various issues to help mitigate against missed bin collections over future holiday periods and she advised that a meeting of this Group would take place in the near future.

The Members welcomed the re-establishment of this Group and suggested that an Update on Staffing Issues should be included as a standing item on the agenda.

A further Member suggested that a campaign could be organised encouraging the training and recruitment of woman to driver positions.

The Director concurred and advised the Members that the recruitment and retention of drivers was also being considered cross departmentally, as a shortage of drivers was having an impact Council wide. She assured the Members that management were looking at all options, including the retention and training of its current staff to ensure it remained competitive with the private sector.

The Members agreed that reconvening the Cleansing Task Force was essential to help mitigate against missed bin collections over future holiday periods and that a meeting of this Group needed to take place as soon as possible.

Strangford Park – Councillor McAteer

At the request of Councillor McAteer, the Committee agreed that a report would be submitted to the February Committee in regard to access paths to the Strangford Playing Fields from Glenveagh Special School and seeking approval for a deputation to attend the March meeting of the Committee.

Chairperson