

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 10th October, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bell, Black, Bower, R. Brooks, Bunting,
Canavan, Cobain, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Kelly, Magee, Maghie,
McAteer, McCusker, Ó Néill and Verner.

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. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building
Control; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th and 12th September, 2023 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 October.

The Committee was advised that under the heading, Update on Local Government Regional Resilience Function, from the minutes of 12th September, the Chief Executive had confirmed that this function would continue reporting through the People and Communities Committee and not the Climate and City Resilience Committee as its work related to Emergency Planning and work with other agencies which was within the remit of the People and Communities Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were reported.

Item Withdrawn from Agenda

The Committee noted that agenda item 3 (e) Update on Alleygates Consultation had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Presentation

Causeway Coast Dog Rescue Limited

The Chairperson welcomed to the meeting Ms. M. Dimsdale-Bobby and Ms. T. Cunningham representing the Causeway Coast Dog Rescue Limited.

The representatives commenced by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present on the work of the charity. Ms. Cunningham advised that the aim of the organisation was to ensure the advancement of animal welfare, focusing on dogs. Formed over 20 years ago, the organisation became a registered charity in 2015. She detailed that the organisation raised funds to provide rehoming services, where possible a suitable home was sourced to provide care to an animal that was either unwanted or had suffered through neglect.

The representative advised that the organisation worked with the local community to promote the understanding of people's responsibilities within legislation to reduce homelessness, whilst aiming to stop animal neglect and abuse. Additional information was provided to local and central government departments to help promote the advancement of animal welfare in Northern Ireland.

The representative provided detail of its work with other charities and agencies and highlighted the ongoing many and varied welfare issues that existed. She reiterated that the organisation's focus was that of animal welfare and increasing the quality of life for dogs which were neglected or abused.

All dogs surrendered to the charity were assessed, checked thoroughly by a vet, licenced and rehomed with an appropriate individual or family. The charity did not believe in destroying a healthy dog. In addition, the charity provided support to individuals who had concerns that they might have witnessed a case of abuse or neglect by signposting them to the correct authorities.

The presentation concluded with the representatives thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present and with them answering several queries from the Members.

The Committee noted the presentation.

Restricted

The information contained in the reports associated with the following nine items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following nine items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Assessment of Odour Nuisance

The Committee was provided with a comprehensive update in respect of an ongoing odour nuisance investigation. This included detail in respect of the Council's engagement with other agencies concerning odour complaints at the site which was situated adjacent to the Belfast City Council boundary but located within the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council area.

The Members were advised that complaints had been received regarding odour emanating from the site since 2020. As a result, the Council was involved in extensive ongoing engagement with the Site Manager/Owner, DAERA and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council Environmental Health.

The Director advised that the Council's Legal Services had confirmed that there was no legal basis for serving an abatement notice at this time, given that officers were of the view that a statutory nuisance did not presently exist. She reported that any consideration given to serving an abatement notice was likely to be unsustainable and subject to legal challenge.

A Member thanked the Director of City Services for the work done to date to try and control the problem.

The Committee noted the update provided.

Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group Update

The Director of City Services provided the Members with an update in respect of the following matters:

- Update on the new Crematorium Development;
- Naming of the new Crematorium Chapels;
- Update on Bereavement Services Operations; and
- Future Burial Land.

Councillor Flynn welcomed the work to date by both the officers and the Members of the Working Group and he proposed that the two Chapels be named Hawthorn and Rowan. This was seconded by Councillor Ó Néill and unanimously agreed by the Committee.

The Committee agreed and adopted the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group and furthermore:

- agreed to name the two chapels in the new City of Belfast Crematorium - Hawthorn and Rowan;

- approved the recommendation from the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group to increase the size of the Muslim burial ground at Roselawn; and
- approved the recommendation from the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group to add Troopers Lane to the shortlist of options for potential new burial Land.

GLL Annual Leisure Services Customer Survey Feedback and Outcomes

The Director of Neighbourhood Services drew the Members' attention to the results of the online survey, which had been undertaken between 31st May and 10th July by the in-House GLL Customer Relationship Management Team, as required under Clause 38.3. He reported that the survey had been sent to all contactable Active Members via both email and push notifications. He advised that in total 2,399 had been received, this was up by 131% from 2022.

The need for the leisure transformation programme to commence at the Whiterock and Shankill Leisure Centres was highlighted, with the Members advising that both needed urgent refurbishment.

The Members noted receipt of the 2023 CSS as evidence of compliance with Contract Clause 38.3.

GLL Annual Schedule of Charges Proposal for 2024/25

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Committee with an update on the proposed GLL pricing structure for the period 2024-25.

The Director reminded the Members that the proposed CPI/RPI price increases were a contractual entitlement and, as such, the Committee could articulate a view on the proposed price increases but did not have the authority to challenge the pricing review proposal.

A Member highlighted that she felt that the pricing structure for each centre should be reflective of the different standards across the centres, reiterating that some centres urgently required refurbishment whilst others had already undergone extensive programmes, however, the proposed price increase would be applied equally.

The Committee noted the proposed average 6% price increase in the scheduled of charges for 2024/25 and the rationale presented in support of the proposed price revisions.

Off Street Parking update

The Director of City Services reminded the Members that responsibility for Off Street Public Car Parking had transferred to Council from DRD Roads Service on the 1st April 2015. The operating arrangements for the car parks, including tariffs, had been set by the Department (DRD) within the OffStreet Parking Order (NI) 2000 and

subsequent amendments. These arrangements had been reviewed taking cognisance of the Belfast Car Parking Strategy and Action Plan.

She explained that the purpose of this report was for the Members to consider and agree the draft Belfast Off Street Parking Order, the proposals set out within the report and the recommendation to proceed to public consultation.

She asked the Members to consider the proposals and the progression to public consultation. The consultation would be conducted through YourSay, with notification of the consultation advertised in each car park and properties adjacent to those car parks being included notified by letter. She advised that the results of the public consultation would be reported back in due course, together with the final draft Off Street Parking Order for consideration and approval.

During discussion the Members raised a number of queries.

The Director of City Services undertook to liaise with officers from the Regeneration Team to discuss the addition of EV charging points, the implementation of an accreditation scheme and the benchmarking of Council car parks against other public and private car parks in terms of pricing. She also agreed to provide clarity regarding the schedule of rates, confirming that these had remained unchanged from the date of transfer from DRD Roads. She advised that the respective updates would be submitted to the relevant committee or Working Group in due course.

Following a query from a Member regarding the current status of the rolling out of the bike stands in Belfast, it was agreed that an officer would go back to the Member directly to provide an update.

A Member highlighted that she felt that the car parking tariffs in carparks needed to remain affordable otherwise people would revert to street parking which would exasperate the problems that already existing for residents in areas close to the city centre.

The Committee agreed the content of the draft Belfast Off Street Parking Order and the consultation process as outlined.

Capacity and Revenue Grant Aid

The Committee considered a report seeking an increase to the Capacity Building Grant Budget by £47,500 per annum for the financial years 2023-26 to provide a grant payment to TechDesk CIC (Community Interest Company).

The Members were advised that an application to the Capacity Building Grant by TechDesk CIC had been considered ineligible for the 2023-26 funding round and had not progressed to assessment. The eligibility status of the applicant had since been reviewed by Legal Services, and it had been recommended that the company should have progressed to assessment. The application had since been scored and it was now recommended for funding.

There was no current provision to allocate funding to TechDesk CIC from the existing Capacity Grant budget and therefore additional funds were being sought.

Following a query, the Director confirmed that a review of the guidance for this grant would be completed as part of the department's planned review of its large grant programmes in 2024-25.

The Committee recommended to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that additional monies be made available to the Capacity Grant budget to allow payment of an annual award of £47,500 to TechDesk CIC for the three financial years 2023/2026.

**Potential use of smaller tonnage
Vehicles for Waste Collection**

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Committee with a detailed update regarding the findings and recommendations of the consultancy report that had been commissioned to investigate the potential benefits of the introduction of smaller refuse collection vehicles to collect household waste from streets that had continued access problems.

She advised that officers were now in receipt of the final draft of the RPS report and drew the Members attention to the findings of the report, along with the preferred option, as detailed below:

- Select the 18 tonnes Dennis Elite as the most suitable vehicle;
- create two new additional collection crews to service the 248 named streets;
- to carry out a 'manual' desktop routing exercise to create routes based on post codes and current collection dates for each street by waste stream;
- add an additional two 18 tonnes Dennis Elite vehicles to the fleet;
- agreed that these vehicles be hired in the first instance for a period of twelve months in order to:
 - establish that the proposed solution was delivering tangible and expected results;
 - allow operations time to assess and review performance and adjust as necessary; and
 - to secure additional capital funding and allow time for the procurement of 2 additional vehicles (lead times of approximately 12 months from date of order) for the BCC Fleet.

The Committee was asked to note that, as Resources and Fleet currently did not have the financial approval to implement the findings and recommendations of the report, a growth proposal had been submitted for the 2024/25 financial year to be considered as part of the annual estimates processes. Should funding be agreed as part of the estimates and rate setting process, Resources and Fleet would look to operationalise the additional crews as soon as possible in the new financial year.

Following a query from a Member, the Committee was advised that a draft list of the named streets to be serviced would be circulated via e-mail to the Members who

were welcome to liaise with the Director if they had any queries. In addition, the Director agreed to submit further information in due course on the potential of additional single collection points.

The Committee noted the findings of the draft RPS report and welcomed the preferred option recommendation for the introduction of additional vehicles and crews and noted that a growth proposal had been submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for the proposal and required funding to be considered as part of the estimate and rate setting process.

Update on Social Supermarkets

The Director of Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with an update in respect of the operation of the Social Supermarket Fund, with the approach having been approved at the September 2023 meeting of Committee and subsequently ratified by the Council.

The Director reminded the Members that an element of this funding was directed towards the development of new projects and that officers had shared information on the process to access this funding via an email to all Members of the Committee on 25th September, in which the details of the requirements that new projects needed to be eligible to apply had been outlined.

The Director advised that organisations that had received an initial allocation had been asked to submit applications by the 28th September 2023. At that stage, the Greater Shankill Partnership had advised that they would not be in a position to coordinate this project and to apply for the allocation of £21,530 due to other work commitments. It had subsequently liaised with the Greater Shankill Community Council, who had delivered the Winter 2022 round of the Council Fuel Hardship scheme, and it was keen to be considered for delivery of this new tranche of money.

In terms of the proposed approach to the 2024/25 scheme. The Director reminded the Committee that it was likely that the Department for Communities (DfC) would make a further allocation to the Council through the Social Supermarket Fund in 2024/25, therefore, officers were currently exploring the options around the future delivery of the scheme, which would include an open call, although he stressed that Members should note that this option would be dependent on available resources for administration.

The Committee approved the reallocation of £21,530 to the Greater Shankill Community Council for delivery of activity in the Shankill area.

Animal Welfare Service – Update

The Director of City Services advised the Committee of a recent decision taken by DAERA to withdraw funding with immediate effect in respect of the Council's provision of Animal Welfare Services.

The Director reported that Councils in Northern Ireland currently enforced the requirements of the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 for non-farmed animals.

Since April 2012, a Northern Ireland wide Animal Welfare Service delivery model had been operating, with a five sub-regional model linking to the Regional Lead Council Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) and to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). Staff were employed by the sub-regional lead Councils to operate across all regions with provision for 10 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Animal Welfare Officers (AWO), 2 of whom were based in Belfast City Council. There was currently only 7 FTE due to a pause in recruitment until funding issues had been resolved. This was putting significant strain on the 7 officers who were covering the whole of Northern Ireland.

The Director advised that, over the past 10 years, DAERA had funded the Councils' Animal Welfare Service with an allocation of £1.25m in the year 2022-23. The funding was made available to Councils to fulfil the statutory enforcement obligations arising from the Welfare of Animals (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 and FODC as Lead Council for Animal Welfare managed this resource funding. On 23rd August 2023, The Permanent Secretary, DAERA wrote to advise "*that the Department was unable to provide funding to support Councils in the delivery of their statutory responsibilities for non-farmed animal Welfare*".

The Director advised that there was obviously a considerable amount of uncertainty in relation to the operation of the Animal Welfare Service, therefore, it was imperative that Belfast City Council continued to work in collaboration with the other Councils to ensure that to the best of its ability the statutory requirements were met and the Committee was asked to agree to support the existing Council arrangements to ensure that the Animal Welfare Service continued until 31st March 2024. It was noted that, if the Committee agreed, this funding would come from the specified reserve established by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June 2023 to deal with any potential Central Government Reductions.

The Committee was advised that the Animal Welfare Strategic Project Board, of which the Council was a member, was currently reviewing potential delivery models and associated costs for providing the Animal Welfare function from 1st April 2024 and it hoped to provide SOLACE with an update by December 2023. In addition, SOLACE was considering the local government position and taking legal advice via the Council.

It was estimated that it would cost the Council in the region of £153k annually to operate its own Animal Welfare Service. Officers were preparing a Growth Proposal for the rate setting process for consideration, however, this would be dependent on any formal action taken via SOLACE on the current DAERA position.

A Member noted the necessity for the Animal Welfare Service and expressed his concern at the withdrawal of this essential funding. He also highlighted that this was a worrying situation for staff who were faced with this uncertainty and welcomed the fact that the Council was continuing to support the arrangements whilst the current position adopted by DAERA was being further considered.

The Committee noted the update and agreed to support existing arrangements until 31st March 2024, to be funded from the specified reserve set up by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in June 2023 to deal with any potential Central Government Reductions.

Committee/Strategic Issues

People and Communities Committee Plan 2023/24

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report provides a draft People & Communities Committee Plan summarising the Committee’s key priorities for 2023-24.

The Committee is asked to consider further this report which was deferred from the People and Communities Committee meeting of 12 September 2023.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the draft People and Communities Committee Plan priorities for 2023-24.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1 The 2023-24 draft P&C Committee Plan has been developed in the context of the Council’s Corporate Plan and the Belfast Agenda and considering the Belfast Agenda Refresh. Consequently, the new Committee Plan contains the commitments within the Corporate Delivery Plan, which fall under the remit of this Committee, plus additional deliverables that have been agreed by the P&C Committee throughout 2022-23 and are relevant to the Standing Orders. The draft Plan sets out the main priorities and programmes of work that the Committee oversees to maximise the Council’s contribution the Belfast Agenda.

- 3.2 At the SP&R Committee on 18th August 2023 the Corporate Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24, setting out the in-year deliverables against the priorities, was agreed as part of the four-year corporate plan.

- 3.3 The structure of the delivery plan is themed under the following groupings:

- Our services
- Economic recovery
- Community recovery
- Environmental recovery
- Strategic Planning frameworks, and
- Organisational Foundations.

3.4 A series of priorities fall under each theme, each with a number of committed deliverables for 2023-24.

3.5 Members will recall that the People and Communities Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy. This includes:

- Developing and delivering programmes, events and activities to promote health, safety and well-being at a local level
- Administering and enforcing the Council's powers and duties under the Public Health Acts and all environmental health and building related legislation and regulations
- Securing and providing adequate provision for the recycling, treatment and disposal of commercial and domestic waste including bulky waste and the collection and disposal of abandoned motor vehicles.
- Exercising the Council's powers for improving local environmental quality in relation to housing legislation, managing controlled waste, emergency planning and community safety and anti-social behaviour, clean neighbourhoods and other environmental or regulatory issues not falling within the remit of any other Committee
- Managing, maintaining and maximising the benefit of the Council's parks, pitches, playgrounds and other public spaces as well as community centres and other indoor facilities
- Developing and implementing activities to ensure the delivery of corporate strategies and initiatives in respect of the promotion of health and physical activity, environmental protection, community safety and other such areas under the domain of this Committee
- Overseeing the delivery of the Council's frontline services and associated community assets including: Environmental Services; Cleansing; Waste Management; Parks and Cemeteries service, Neighbourhood and Development Services; Community Services, Community Safety and Emergency Planning

3.6 **Summary of Committee Plan Priorities**

The draft Committee Plan priorities have been summarised into a 'plan on page' (see Appendix 1) to identify key areas of focus for the Committee in 2023-24. The plan locates priorities within the framework of the relevant Belfast

Agenda themes (Our Services; Economic Recovery; Community Recovery; Environmental Recovery; Strategic Planning Frameworks; and Organisational Foundations) and the CNS Departmental key priority areas (Open Spaces & Streetscene; Community Provision; City Protection and Bereavement; and Resources & Fleet). The plan identifies the following key areas of focus:

- Neighbourhood working & regeneration
- Improve our open spaces
- Implementation of Biodiversity duty
- Improve our community provision
- Work in partnership to address health priorities
- Enhance the delivery of council's sport & leisure provision
- Supporting Children & Young People
- Good relations & Community Safety
- Enhance the management & utilisation of CNS assets
- Improve our City Protection services
- Improve urban air quality
- Port Health improvements
- Improve and extend recycling opportunities
- Improve our Resources & Fleet service

3.7 It is likely many of these areas of focus will take several years to deliver. The draft plan includes and outlines the key deliverables for 2023-24 that we are working towards achieving.

3.8 It is proposed that Committee receive a 6 monthly progress update regarding the priorities. This will be in addition to usual reports that will be brought to Committee regarding individual priorities & deliverables.

3.9 The departmental Business Plan on which the committee plan is based reflects that the department is continuing to focus on the delivery of business-as-usual services while progressing the transformation and improvement agenda.

3.10 **Financial and Resource Implications**

The Committee Plan and annual programme of work aligns with the budget agreed by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on 20 January 2023, for 2023-24 for the People and Communities Committee, of £98.901m.

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

There are no implications directly relating to this report however individual strategies, programmes and actions will be subject to the council's equality, good relations and rural needs requirements."

The Committee approved the draft People and Communities Committee Plan priorities for 2023-24.

Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide members with an update on the development of a Belfast City Council Sports Development and Physical Activity Strategy (The Strategy) and the current timeline for the completion of the Strategy .

1.2 To provide a copy of the draft strategy which will be used for the public consultation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- (i) The updated timeline for development of the Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy**
- (ii) The draft Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy summary document attached**
- (iii) The publication of the draft Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy for public consultation over a period of 12 weeks from November 2023 - January 2024.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 It was agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 5th January 2018 that a Belfast City Council Sports Development Strategy and associated work plan would be developed. This Strategy was to provide a framework for future decision making on providing funding to National Governing Bodies of Sport delivering programmes in Belfast in support of existing funding streams and work programmes which enhance sporting opportunities for Belfast’s sporting organisations and individuals.

3.2 The People and Communities Committee of 5th June 2018 agreed a proposed Terms of Reference and proposed timeline. Since that date the Departmental Change Programme has prompted consideration of wider opportunities to clarify and align the links between sports development and Council’s strategic funding and

programming decisions in the areas of asset development, health improvement and community development.

3.3 At the People and Communities meeting of 10 November 2020 it was agreed that the Terms of Reference be extended to include the following;

- In line with the Belfast Agenda the outcomes are extended to 2035
- Physical activity programming is considered as part of the pathway into organised sport
- Considered and aligned with our Leisure Transformation Programme.
- Identification of alternative sources of financing/partner opportunities.
- Facility/asset utilisation and management is maximised through collaborative partnership approaches
- Facility/asset planning and development is considered taking account of local, citywide and regional need.
- Sport's contribution to improvement of whole health is considered in the context of partnership working through the work of the Belfast Community Planning Partnership and associated Boards – particularly the Living Here Board
- Sport's contribution to community development is considered in the context of City & Neighbourhood's Departmental approach to area working and neighbourhood regeneration
- The strategy 'working title' to be 'Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy'

Due to Covid the development of this strategy was delayed.

3.4 In July 2022 following a quotation process Strategic Leisure were appointed to support council in the production of the Strategy.

3.5 Since the appointment of Strategic Leisure Council officers have been working directly with them. On the 27th September 2022 initial introduction meetings involving both Council Officers and a number of Key Delivery Partners took place. More than 50 individuals and groups have been listened to.

3.6 A total of 370 responses were also received via 'Your Say Belfast'.

3.7 Two workshops for elected members have also taken place.

3.8 Proposed Draft Timeline Subject to Committee approval

Background review of documentation policies and strategies	September 2022-Completed
Establish Board and structures for developing strategy	September 2022-October 2022 Completed
Initial face to face consultation with key stakeholders and schools	September 2022-October 2022 Completed
Review and Mapping	September 2022-October 2022 Completed
Focus groups established and face to face meetings to take place	October 2022 - December 2022 Completed
Wider public consultation to take place online using 'Your Say Belfast'	October 2022-December 2022 Completed
Analysis of key issues identified with a focus on internal consultation and external feedback	November 2022-January 2023 Completed
Interim Draft Report produced and presented to elected members for discussion	March 2023 Completed
Review Draft Strategy and produce draft report	September 2023 Completed
Draft Strategy to be released for public consultation	November 2023- January 2024
Analyse feedback from	February 2024- April 2024

consultation and amend/update strategy	
Final Strategy to be presented to elected members	April 2024- June 2024
Strategy Launched	June 2024- July 2024

3.8 Financial Implications

Cost associated with the development of the new strategy and engagement of external partners will be met within existing departmental resources. Members are advised that no capital funding is currently in place and limited revenue funding is available to support a strategy action plan. This will need to be costed and resourced as the strategy is developed and needs become clearly identified.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

The draft strategy will be equality screened in line with the Council’s agreed process.”

The Committee noted the updated timeline for development of the Belfast Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy and the draft Physical Activity and Sports Development Strategy summary document and agreed its publication for public consultation over a period of 12 weeks from November 2023 - January 2024.

Youth Council Update

The Members were reminded that, at a previous meeting of the Committee, further information had been sought in relation to the operation of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) and the recruitment exercise.

Following the appointment of the new Young People’s Coordinator, Mr. S. Mulholland, in November 2022, the Terms of Reference of BCYC had been studied further. The Members were reminded that the Young People’s Coordinator was the only dedicated officer to the BCYC.

The Director advised that discussions had taken place with the young people, officers and sessional contracted youth workers who helped with the work of the BCYC. He reported that these discussions had identified challenges in operating the Youth Council with its current membership numbers. It was therefore proposed to reduce the membership from the current quota of 40 to 30 members, as it was felt that this would

help to improve the functioning of the BCYC. If accepted, this change would be reflected in a Revised Terms of Reference. The membership would continue to be drawn proportionately from each DEA (3 members from each DEA, rather than 4) and the membership of the Forum would seek to have a balance in terms of the background of the members that was reflective of the Make-up of the city.

The Members were advised that The Young People’s Coordinator was currently working with the Council’s Marketing and Corporate Communications team to finalise the marketing and communications plan that would underpin the recruitment and selection process. He had also been engaging with a wide range of youth organisations in advance of the recruitment phase.

The Director provided an overview of the rationale for this change and drew the Members’ attention to the proposed timeline for the recruitment exercise, as detailed below:

Month	Actions																						
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial engagement and contact with a wide range of organisations to raise awareness of the BCYC and promote the recruitment and selection process. Primarily face to face meetings within neighbourhoods and with city-wide organisations. Direct engagement list includes the following organisations: <table border="0" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">– Youth Work Alliance</td> <td>– EA Youth Service</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Voluntary Sector Youth Providers</td> <td>– R City</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Street Beat</td> <td>– NIYF</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Community Restorative Justice</td> <td>– NICCY</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Shankill Alternatives</td> <td>– Extern</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Common Youth</td> <td>– Volunteer NOW</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Transgender NI</td> <td>– Cara Friend</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– ACT Initiative</td> <td>– Belfast Met</td> </tr> <tr> <td>– Rainbow project</td> <td>– VOYPIC</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>– Disability Action</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>– Fóram nan Óg</td> </tr> </table> • Prepare content for all media and promotional materials. • Design website and social media • Set-up online application • Meet with Council’s Youth Champions 	– Youth Work Alliance	– EA Youth Service	– Voluntary Sector Youth Providers	– R City	– Street Beat	– NIYF	– Community Restorative Justice	– NICCY	– Shankill Alternatives	– Extern	– Common Youth	– Volunteer NOW	– Transgender NI	– Cara Friend	– ACT Initiative	– Belfast Met	– Rainbow project	– VOYPIC		– Disability Action		– Fóram nan Óg
– Youth Work Alliance	– EA Youth Service																						
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– Street Beat	– NIYF																						
– Community Restorative Justice	– NICCY																						
– Shankill Alternatives	– Extern																						
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– Transgender NI	– Cara Friend																						
– ACT Initiative	– Belfast Met																						
– Rainbow project	– VOYPIC																						
	– Disability Action																						
	– Fóram nan Óg																						

November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity campaign and promotional events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launch the Recruitment process – 2nd November. ○ Dedicated Webpage designed and promoted. ○ Social Media ○ Press releases. ○ Eshots ○ Advertising • Deliver 6 Area-based Roadshows between 6th to 24th November. • Deliver 3 Online information sessions between 6th -24th November. • Ongoing face to face contacts with organisations. • Online application process to open 2nd November. Provision for hardcopy applications to be made available at the engagement meetings and Roadshows if requested. • Application process to close - 30th November
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of applications - 1st - 5th December. • Interview Process – 6th - 20th December. • Belfast City Youth Council members selected and notified by 29th December.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Report – Update on outcome of Recruitment • Welcome event organised with the new BCYC members, parents, Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillors, and Officers – 10th January 2024

A Member raised a number of queries regarding the recruitment and retention of the previous cohort of members and the officer agreed to discuss these further with her directly.

The Committee also discussed the possible inclusion of young people with learning difficulties and the officer agreed to liaise with the Young People’s Coordinator to consider this suggestion from a safeguarding perspective.

The Committee agreed:

- to amend the membership numbers of the Belfast City Youth Council (BCYC) from 40 to 30 and noted the proposed recruitment exercise and timeline for the recruitment of the new members; and

- that, in light of the timeline, the joint BCC and BCYC meeting scheduled for 18th December be postponed until the recruitment exercise had been completed.

Reference Group on Older People

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the recent meeting of the Reference Group on Older People had been a joint meeting with the Greater Belfast Seniors Forum (G6), held at the City Hall on 19th September.

At this meeting an update had been provided on the following areas of work:

- Smartpass 60+ Consultation;
- G6 - Action Plan;
- Age Friendly Belfast Plan; and
- Positive Ageing Month – more information available [here](#)

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes from the Reference Group on Older People held on 19th September 2023.

BCC Draft Consultation Response on the draft regulations for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR packaging scheme)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To report to Committee on the draft Belfast City Council response to the Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024].

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 To agree the final Belfast City Council response to the Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024] as attached in Appendix 1

Note that the consultation closed on 9th October 2023, and that officers have submitted a draft response to DEFRA, noting that a final decision by members is required and DEFRA will be advised of the final decision.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members may recall from the Committee meeting on 12th September 2023, that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) recently launched a public consultation on draft regulations for Producer Responsibility Obligations.

The link to the consultation is as follows:
<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/extended-producerresponsibility-team/consultation-on-the-draft-producer-responsibility/>

3.2 This consultation seeks views on how well the proposed 2024 Regulations reflect the Government Response to the proposals on the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for packaging across the UK (generated by 2019 consultation on reforming the UK Packaging Producer Responsibility System and the 2021 Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging).

3.3 The Government Response was published in March 2022 can be found here:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063588/epr-final-impact-assessment.pdf

3.4 Since the publication of the Government Response, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations have been working closely to develop the draft Regulations which implement these reforms. The main objective has been to ensure that these reforms deliver sustained change.

3.5 Having reflected on industry feedback, the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations decided to defer EPR for packaging payments from October 2024 to October 2025. It is envisaged that a 12-month deferral to packaging payments will give:

- Industry additional time to prepare for the new requirements, which may include reviewing and improving current packaging use.
- Industry and local authorities more opportunity to be involved in the design of the scheme.
- Local authorities and waste management companies more time to adjust current services and to introduce new efficient and effective services for EPR.

3.6 This consultation on the 2024 regulations will apply UK wide. They will revoke and replace the 2023 Regulations as well as Producer Responsibility Obligations Regulations 2007.

3.7 The draft Regulations include provisions to:

- Enable the appointment of a Scheme Administrator.
- Allow a Scheme Administrator to raise fees from obligated producers to cover local authority costs for the management of household and binned packaging waste, the costs of public information campaigns, and its operational costs.
- Set recycling targets on producers covering all types of packaging waste (i.e., primary, shipment, secondary, tertiary; household and non-household). • Require certain types of packaging to be labelled to indicate recyclability.
- Introduce a mandatory takeback and recycling requirement for fibre-based composite cups.
- Require all reprocessors and exporters of packaging waste to register with a regulator and to report data, and, for those that choose to, to become accredited and issue recycling evidence.
- Enable regulators to effectively monitor compliance and enforce the draft Regulations.

3.8 Belfast City Council's draft response is attached as Appendix 1. The consultation is technical in its nature and officers have taken on board views from other expert bodies, in particular the Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (UK) (LARAC) and arc21. Officers are largely in agreement with arc21's response to the Consultation document. Where we have additional commentary or queries, this is incorporated into each individual response. Some questions (e.g. 19 and 21) are mainly focused on Producers and in these instances, industry is in a better position to respond.

3.9 As a local authority collector of household waste, the main issues expressed in our responses are:

- clarity on the definition of 'efficient and effective services' and how local authorities will be assessed on this in relation to allocation of funding.
- How circumstances such as geography will be considered (in the above assessments) and what criteria will be applied. Belfast is a city with a demographic with few comparators in its geographic location.
- The timing of the process and in particular, its interface with other Producer Responsibility Obligations such as the Deposit Return Scheme.
- The continued focus on weight-based targets and application of the Waste Hierarchy, rather than

considering a new modelling approach, incorporating carbon measurements.

- The changing nature of packaging waste and how this could be affected by industry’s response to the Obligations, as well as the future impact this might have on local authorities.

3.10 Following the Consultation period, DEFRA will review the responses received and make changes to the draft Regulations as appropriate. The draft Regulations will be made publicly available when they are notified to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the European Union (EU) in respect of Northern Ireland to comply with international obligations. During the notification period, Government intends to publish a high-level summary of the responses.

3.11 Financial and Resource Implications

None – in relation to responding to the consultation.

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

None – in relation to responding to the consultation.”

The Committee agreed the final Belfast City Council response to the Consultation on the draft Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging and Packaging Waste) Regulations [2024] available [here](#) and noted that a draft response had been submitted to DEFRA by the 9th October 2023 deadline, subject to Council ratification on 1st November.

DfC Rent Controls

The Committee was referred to an update report on the DfC response which had been presented to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its September meeting regarding rent control measures.

The Members were reminded that this matter had been discussed at the People and Communities meeting in January 2023, where it had been agreed that the Council would write to the Permanent Secretary in the Department for Communities in relation to the Department for Communities Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022 – update on Powers for Council commencing April 2023. The Committee was asked to note that subsequently a report had been submitted to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Members of the People and Communities Committee were being asked to note the response and this reporting line.

The Committee noted the response from the Department for Communities and the update report presented to City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Invite to 2023 WHO European Healthy
Cities Network Annual Business Meeting 2023**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that Belfast Healthy Cities had contacted the Council on 4th October seeking to extend an invitation for the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson of the People and Communities Committee (or their nominee) to attend the 2023 WHO Healthy Cities Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference.

He reported that this year marked the 35th anniversary of the movement. The Conference was being held from 21st to 23rd November in the historic city of Utrecht, with the theme “Health and well-being for all: celebrating 35 years of the Healthy Cities Movement”.

Only one political representative from Belfast was asked to attend, three BHC staff and a BHC Board Member would also be in attendance. The cost of attendance per person was £900/£1,100, this included return flights to Utrecht, 4 nights’ accommodation and subsistence.

The Committee was advised that the cost would have to be taken from Council Budgets as it was not allowed for within the existing departmental budgets.

The Committee agreed that the Chairperson would represent the Council at the WHO European Healthy Cities Network Annual Business Meeting and Technical Conference scheduled to be held from 21st – 23rd November 2023 in Utrecht, Netherlands at an approximate cost of £900.00/£1,100.00, with the cost being sourced from Council budgets.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Páirc an Lonnáin

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide a report as requested by Councillor Black at Council on 4 September 2023 in relation to the operation of the Páirc an Lonnáin and the reinstatement of the temporary facility management agreement that had previously been in place.

1.2 To agree an approach to local management and programming of the facility.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That Council enters into a five-year Agreement with Falls Residents Association to enable local operation of the site, to include keyholding, litter picking and community programming which will maximise the opportunities from the

capital investment and minimise the negative impact which anti-social behaviour had on the area prior to the site development.

- 2.2 That an annual programming budget of £15,000 is allocated for all new parks.
- 2.3 Where Council approves management arrangements with a local organisation, this budget is made available to the Agreement holder, subject to officer approval of a planned programme and subsequent reporting.
- 2.4 If People & Communities Committee are in agreement with the suggested approach of providing £15k pa funding for all new parks, then this matter should be referred to Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for consideration as part of the estimates process.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 People and Communities Committee of 6 November 2018, within a report on asset acquisition, approved the establishment of a bespoke management arrangement at the Building Successful Communities regeneration project at Páirc an Lonnáin.
- 3.2 Officers worked with the local community organisation and developed a key holding agreement which supported access and activity at the site outside normal park opening hours. The group have been providing key holding for the site and continue to deliver a diverse range of programmes.
- 3.3 Whilst the Agreement holder is undertaking duties previously undertaken by Open Spaces and Street Scene operatives, the key holding Agreement does not include an annual amount which Council would provide to the Agreement holder. Following opening of the regenerated park, Council provided financial support of £15,000 for the initial year of operation for evidenced activity programming costs. Council provided further financial support of approximately £2,000 through Parks Outreach budgets for Halloween and Christmas activity in 2022. No further payments have been made to the group.
- 3.4 The work of this group at the site is saving Council revenue budget in terms of litter collection and maintenance, whilst their work in promoting positive animation at the site also safeguards against ASB behaviour and damage/repair costs which are high at nearby sites such as Dunville and Falls Parks. The group is currently receiving no funding from

council and a revised Agreement would remedy this situation and ensure local supervision and community operation of the site.

3.5 Officers have recognised the need for significant growth in budgets to support operational and maintenance activity at all new parks. It is also important that specific budgets are in place to animate new spaces to ensure achievement of planned outcomes from capital investment.

3.6 Existing budgets within the Parks Events and Outreach team are stretched to support planned programming and development activity at current sites. Animation of new assets requires intensive delivery of programmes to kick start local activity which in some locations will move towards long term self-sufficient programming. Currently there are seven new parks assets, recently operating or due to come into operation, which do not have specific animation budgets for early development of local community programming.

3.7 **Financial and Human Resource Implications**

This report will commit an amount of £15,000 per annum to support a revised Agreement at this site, this amount is not currently included in any revenue budgets. Consideration should be given to adopting this programming budget at all new parks.

3.8 **Asset and Other Implications**

This approach at Páirc an Lonnáin will ensure that the local community manage key holding of a Council asset and develop appropriate programming at the site for local community benefit. The availability of a programme budget at all new parks will help to ensure that positive animation is in place from the outset of the asset's life.

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

There are no known implications.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation at paragraph 2.0 of the report.

Operational Issues

Responsible Dog Ownership

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 **Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

1.1 To provide members of the People and Communities Committee with an update on the issues raised at the Council

Meeting on Monday 4 September 2023 regarding the Responsible Dog Ownership – Update Report (dated 8 August 2023). The Council agreed that the minute be taken back to the Committee for further consideration, and to allow further information on the issue to be provided.

1.2 Members are reminded that at the Committee of 11th September 2023 the following decision was agreed:

- agreed to defer consideration of the minute to the October meeting, to enable the Director to prepare a report on the available options regarding fines;
- agreed to submit a report to a future meeting considering the Council undertaking a feasibility study on providing street bins in areas where fouling had been a persistent problem, including consideration of the erection of lamppost bins in certain hotspots areas; and
- requested an update on FIDO machines.

1.3 In addition to the noted actions, this report provides more detail about signage and Dog Enclosures in Parks.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the updates on the issues raised at Council on 4 September 2023 in relation to fines and signage;
- Note the update on New FIDO machines and
- note that a further report will be brought back on the other items in relation to a feasibility study on street bins;
- Update on dog enclosures in Clement Wilson Park, Falls Park and Orangefield Park will be provided at the next round of Area Working Groups.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the Council meeting on 4 September 2023 officers were asked if it would be possible to have an incremental increase for the Fixed Penalty Notice fines for repeat offenders. Officers have consulted with Legal Services and there is no provision within the legislation to allow for incremental increases to fines.

3.2 There is provision within the legislation to pursue a case in court, rather than giving the alleged offender the opportunity to accept and pay a Fixed Penalty Notice fine. The maximum fine in court is £1000. Officers will always have regard to the option of prosecuting any repeat offender identified as part of the graduated approach to enforcement.

Signage

- 3.3 There is a substantial number of signs for dog fouling throughout the City and they are concentrated in areas that have been identified as hotspots. Most signs also contain information about the Fixed Penalty Notice fine for other offences including littering.
- 3.4 For Members' information, if a change to the fine for the dog fouling Fixed Penalty Notice is introduced, Legal Services has confirmed there is no legislative requirement to amend all the signs immediately. A rolling programme would be sufficient and would not impact on our ability to take formal action should an individual fail to pay the fine.
- 3.5 The City Services team are considering best way to review signage and consider a budget and program of work for this.
- 3.6 Whilst some existing signs could be replaced within the existing Enforcement and Dog Warden Service budget on a rolling program, we recognize that there is a need to explore options to future proof any new signs and consider the best messaging. They may not refer to the level of the fine or as in other district council areas, they could refer to the maximum court fine of £1000. Appendix 1 contains details of our current references to an £80 fine.

Provision of Street Bins

- 3.7 Officers are currently completing work on a new tender for the provision of street bins and this will be in place from the 1st January 2024. In the interim officers in City Neighbourhood Services are pulling together information from our Quality monitoring team along with information from the customer hub. A future report will be brought to committee that identifies dog fouling hot spot areas. This report will also explore the feasibility/suitability of street bins in these areas and will provide options with regard to the type of bins and information on the costs of providing and emptying any new bins. Members are also asked to note that a quotation is in place that will allow the department to replace some street bins across this city between now and the date when the new tender becomes active.

Dog Enclosures

- 3.8 At August committee members received an update on pilot Dog Enclosures in particular a previous decision by committee in 2019 to trial dog enclosures in Clement Wilson Park, Falls Park and Orangefield Park. Officers will update members on this further at the next round of Area Working groups.

FIDO Machines

- 3.9 CNS have ordered 4 new replacement FIDO machines and expects to take delivery of them in New Year. Each area manager will use information on dog fouling hot spots to inform the work programme for each vehicle.

Finance and Resource Implications

- 3.10 Costs to update / replace with newly designed signage will be factored into estimates process.

The cost of purchasing the new FIDO machines is included within current budget estimates.

There is currently no provision within existing estimates for the provision of dog enclosures in the three parks listed above.

The feasibility report on the provision of street bins will include the costs associated with the purchase, installation and emptying of the bins. This information will be presented to Committee at a later date.

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

- 3.11 None.”

The Director of City Services provided the Members with a comprehensive update on the contents of the report.

A Member welcomed the update in respect of the Fido machines and stated that she would be keen to see them operational in the south of the city.

A further Member suggested it would be useful if the Members could link in with the Dog Wardens when they were on patrol to try and highlight the work that was ongoing in specific areas.

Following a query, the Director of Neighbourhood Services provided an update on the tender for the street bins.

The Director of City Services reminded the Members that the Committee also needed to consider the minute of the meeting of 8th August which had been referred back to the Committee by the Council at its meeting on 4th September. They were reminded that the extract of this minute had been tabled at the People and Communities Committee at its meeting on 12th September and that it had been agreed that the minute from the 8th August Committee be deferred to enable officers to prepare a report on the various options available regarding fixed penalty fines.

The Committee was subsequently asked to reconsider the following decision, as taken at the 8th August meeting:

- *to adopt Option 2 in respect of fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and dog fouling offences - to increase the fine to a maximum of £200, with a reduction of £100 if paid within 10 days as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly;*
- *to not to apply any changes to littering offences at this time and noted that an update report would be submitted to committee in due course.*

The 4 options, as tabled at the 8th August Committee were again presented to the Members for further consideration:

- Option 1 – no change;
- Option 2 – increase to a maximum of £200 with a reduction if paid within 10 days. Suggested reduction to £100 as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly and avoid court action;
- Option 3 – increase but not to maximum with reduction if paid within 10 days. Could be anything from £90 - £190, with any level of reduction; and
- Option 4 – Consider applying any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences. The Council previously agreed to set the level of fixed penalty fine for littering at £80, reduced to £60 if paid within 10 days. There would be no additional signage costs as most signs include information about dog fouling and littering.

Following discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees to adopt Option 2 and Option 4 in respect of fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and dog fouling offences, to increase the fine to a maximum of £200, with a reduction of £100 if paid within 10 days as an incentive to pay the fixed penalty promptly and to also apply any changes made to the fixed penalty limits for dog fouling offences to littering offences.

On a vote, 7 Members voted for the proposal and 13 against and it was declared lost.

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees to adopt option 2.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks,

That the Committee agrees to adopt option 1.

On a vote, 13 Members voted for the amendment and 7 against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the amendment in the name of Councillor M. Donnelly was put to the Committee as the substantive motion and agreed.

The Committee:

- noted the update on the issues raised at Council on 4th September 2023 in relation to fines and signage and agreed to adopt Option 1 in respect of fixed penalty limits for dog fouling and dog fouling offences – to not increase the fines;
- noted the update on New FIDO machines;
- noted that a further report would be submitted in due course in relation to a feasibility study on street bins, the use of stencilling at schools (to include a list of schools) and the provision of a list of hot spot areas for dog fouling;
- noted that an update on dog enclosures in Clement Wilson Park, Falls Park and Orangefield Park would be provided at the next round of Area Working Groups Meetings; and
- noted that officers would liaise directly with a Member regarding a possible dog enclosure at Ormeau Park.

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Cavanmore Gardens, Wolfhill Gardens, Wolfhill Link, Millview Court, Westrock Crescent Gransha Way and The Manor.

Dual Language Street Sign Applications For Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **To consider if a street survey of occupiers will be carried out for Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue relating to the erection of dual language street signs where an objection**

has been received from an Elected Member representing the relevant District Electoral Area.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to consider the report and the objections raised in relation to applications for dual language street signs received for Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue and either:

a) Agree that a survey of occupiers be carried out on the streets identified;

Or

b) Agree that no survey will be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified by the objections and close these applications

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The power for the Council to consider applications to erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

3.2 The procedures developed under the revised Dual Language Street Sign Policy involves a notification of applications to Elected Members. The purpose of this notification is to allow members to identify those applications in their DEA or the city centre in respect of which it may be appropriate for the Council to exercise its residual discretion not to apply the Policy due to the local context.

3.3 In this regard objections have been received for the following applications: -

<u>Street</u>	<u>DEA</u>	<u>Member</u>
Dunblane Avenue	Oldpark	Cllr Jordan Doran
Cardigan Drive	Oldpark	Cllr Jordan Doran

3.4 Councillor Doran has provided the following statements in relation to these objections: -.

➤ **‘Dunblane Avenue is a mixed and diverse community, and I have strong concerns that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Dunblane Avenue would have a strongly negative impact on community relations within the area’.**

- ‘Cardigan Drive has a mixed and diverse community in and around it, and I have reservations that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Cardigan Drive would have a negative impact on community relations within and surrounding the area’.

- 3.5 Members are also reminded that each application is subject to an initial assessment by officers for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. This assessment is carried out when the application is being processed and where any adverse impacts are identified that information will be brought to Committee.’
- 3.6 The initial assessments were carried out by officers for Dunblane Avenue and Cardigan Drive and no potential adverse impacts were identified through this process.
- 3.7 These applications are being brought to Committee to determine if a survey of residents of these streets will take place, considering this information and the objections received from Councillor Doran.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 If it is decided to carry out the survey, the resulting tasks are included within the normal resources for the process.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.9 Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. No potential adverse impacts have been identified through this process.
- 3.10 Cllr Doran has raised potential for adverse impacts on good relations through an objection received during the Elected Member notification procedure.”

Following discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor R. M. Donnelly,

That the Committee agrees that a survey of occupiers be carried out on the streets at Cardigan Drive and Dunblane Avenue.

On a vote, 15 Members voted for the proposal and 5 against and it was declared carried.

**Dual Language Street Sign Application
for Wynchurch Avenue**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider the results of the resurvey of residents in Wynchurch Avenue relating to an application for the erection of dual language streets signs in Irish. Members are reminded that the decision to resurvey the occupiers of this street was approved at a Committee meeting on 13th June 2023 and subsequently ratified by full Council on 3rd July 2023.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- consider the contents of this report and determine if a second street nameplate in Irish is to be erected at Wynchurch Avenue.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The Council may erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English pursuant to Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.

3.2 Members are asked to consider the following application to erect a second street nameplate showing the name of the street expressed in a language other than English. The second language is Irish.

3.3

<u>English Name</u>	<u>Non-English Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Persons surveyed</u>
Wynchurch Avenue, BT6 OJP	Ascaill Wynchurch	Off Rosetta Road, BT6	113

3.4 The translation was authenticated by Queens University, the approved translator for Belfast City Council.

3.5 At the meeting of the Council’s People and Communities Committee on 13th June, the Elected Members considered the application from an occupier of Wynchurch Avenue to erect a street nameplate in Irish, in addition to the English

name. The original survey of occupiers for this application took place between 9th March 2023 and 10th April 2023 and obtained the following results:

3.6 Original Survey – 113 Occupiers Surveyed

- 20 occupiers (17.70%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 30 occupiers (26.55%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 4 occupiers (3.54%) had no preference either way.
- 59 occupiers (52.21%) did not respond to the survey.

3.7 Exercising the residual discretion afforded to it, the Committee decided that a resurvey of the occupiers of the street should be carried out and this decision was ratified by full Council on 3rd July 2023.

3.8 A resurvey of Wynchurch Avenue took place between 8th August 2023 and 4th September 2023 and the outcome is reported below.

3.9 In accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, surveys of all persons appearing on the electoral register plus owners or tenants in actual possession of commercial premises, on Wynchurch Avenue were carried out and the following responses were received.

3.10 Re-survey – 113 Occupiers Surveyed

- 17 occupiers (15.04%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 32 occupiers (28.32%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 2 occupiers (1.77%) had no preference either way.
- 62 occupiers (54.87%) did not respond to the survey.

3.11 One survey response which was not in favour of the erection of the dual language street sign was received after the survey closed on 4th September. This is not included in the figures above; however, it is a matter for members to determine whether they should take this representation into account and the weight to be attached to it.

Assessment against policy

3.12 The Council's policy on the erection of a second street nameplate requires that at least fifteen percent (15%) of the occupiers surveyed must be in favour of the proposal to erect a second street sign in a language other than English, to progress to Committee for consideration.

- 3.13 The re-survey for Wynchurch Avenue demonstrates compliance with the threshold contained within the Policy. However, the Committee is reminded that the Council retain a residual discretion under the Policy to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.14 The Policy states that it may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this Policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account:
- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street;
 - (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs;
 - (c) consideration of the local context of the application;
 - (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and
 - (e) all material considerations relating to the application.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.15 There is a cost of approximately £570 to cover the cost of the manufacturing and erection of approximately 4 dual language street signs. The cost for these street signs has been allowed for in the current budget.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.16 Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs.
- 3.17 The initial assessment and elected member notification carried out for the Wynchurch Avenue application did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the surveys being carried out.
- 3.18 One resident in favour of the dual language nameplates sent a letter raising concerns for the attention of the People and Communities Committee on 16th June 2023 following the Committee decision on 13th June to resurvey Wynchurch Avenue. They believed that a new canvass of residents would likely see more votes against bi-lingual signage, and it is profoundly undemocratic. They are of the opinion 'that the practice of 'recall' votes initiated by Committee is likely to have a chilling effect on future applications for bilingual signage'.

They allege that ‘the committee believes the anti-Gaelic talking point that a supplementary sign is a sectarian marker rather than, as the rest of the world believes, evidence of tolerance and pluralism.’

The council received comments on three returned survey forms.

- 3.19 One resident who responded in favour of the dual language sign has stated ‘please do not ignore our vote and make us do this a third time’.**
- 3.20 Another resident from Wynchurch Avenue who is not in favour of the dual language name plate has concerns about the cost of the sign and feel that it is a waste of money. They are happy for a second sign as long as it’s not public money and feel that those who really want it should pay for it.**
- 3.21 A resident who is not in support of the dual language name plate said that this was an inclusive mixed area where both communities have coexisted beside each other. While they support the rights on those who use the Irish language, they do not see the benefit of the change, and feel it will add nothing except to single out the street.**
- 3.22 Another resident provided a letter addressed to the Elected Members regarding this application. They raised concerns that the majority of voting residents do not want the signs erected, that people live in the street due to the fact that it is mixed, and that the erection of the signs would create an opportunity for a sense of unease in a street where people live in harmony.**
- 3.23 They also raised concerns that the street could become a target for those who oppose the signs, that erecting signage reflecting one or other community is divisive and unnecessary, and that the money could be used much more effectively.”**

Following discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the decision to erect a Dual Language Street Sign at Wynchurch Avenue until those applications already received to date had been processed.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Kelly,

That the Committee agrees not to erect a Dual Language Street Sign at Wynchurch Avenue.

On a vote, 5 Members voted for the amendment and 15 against and it was declared lost.

The Committee then voted on the original proposal, in the name of Councillor Murray, to defer consideration of the decision to erect a Dual Language Street Sign at Wynchurch Avenue until those applications already received to date had been processed.

On a vote, 15 Members voted for the amendment and 5 against and it was declared carried.

**Update on Christmas waste collections,
site visits and Waste Management information
sessions - Verbal**

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Members with a verbal update regarding the changes to bin and box collections over the Christmas and New Year holiday period. She reported that for collections carried out by Council – black, brown, blue bins, glass collection and wheelie box triple stack boxes, the revised collections would be as follows:

Normal collection date	Rescheduled collection date
Monday 25th December	Saturday 23rd December
Tuesday 26th December	Saturday 30th December
Friday 29th December	Friday 29th December
Monday 1st January	Saturday 6th January

She explained that the aim was to collect as many bins as possible on the rescheduled collection date, with bins having to be out by 7.00 a.m., should they not be emptied they should remain out for collection over each weekend.

For collections carried out by Bryson Recycling - two box kerbside sort scheme – revised collections would be as follows:

Normal collection date	Rescheduled collection date
Monday 25th December	Saturday 23rd December
Tuesday 26th December	Sunday 24th December
Monday 1st January	Saturday 30th December

The Director reported that all other collections over the holiday period would be unaffected and would be collected on the normal collection day. In addition, commercial customers would be advised separately of the changes to collections.

The Council's website, social media channels and Bin-Ovation app would be updated accordingly with more information, also available [here](#)

The Director also advised a site visit and Waste Management information sessions were currently being scheduled for the Members, the details of which would be e-mailed in due course.

Noted.

Chairperson