

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 18th August, 2023

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Black (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Beattie, Bunting, Cobain, de Faoite,
M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey,
Long, Maghie, Maskey, R. McLaughlin, Nelson,
Nic Bhranair and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. L. Caldwell, Director of External Affairs, Marketing and
Communications;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Councillors I. McLaughlin and Whyte.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th and 26th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 3rd July, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Long declared an interest in respect of agenda item 5h - Consultation on the Department of Health's Equality Impact Assessment of the 2023-24 Budget Outcome, on the basis that he was employed by the Department of Health.

Councillor Nelson declared an interest in relation to agenda item 5h - Consultation on the Department of Health's Equality Impact Assessment of the 2023-24 Budget Outcome, on the basis that he was employed by an organisation which received funding from the Department of Health.

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in relation to agenda item 5h - Consultation on the Department of Health's Equality Impact Assessment of the 2023-24 Budget Outcome, in that he was employed in the health service.

(As the aforementioned item did not become the subject of discussion, the Members were not required to leave the meeting.)

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in respect of agenda item 6a – Update on the Physical Programme, in so far as it related to the refurbishment of the Belfast Orange Hall under the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund, on the basis that he was a member of Duke of Schomberg LOL 486, which held meetings in the building and left the meeting whilst that item was under consideration.

Councillor Garrett declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2i – Update on External Funding, in so far as it related to the Colin Community Hub, on the basis that he was on the Board of the Hub and left the meeting whilst that item was being discussed.

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in respect of agenda item 6a – Update on Physical Programme, in that her employer had applied for funding under the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund for the Mountainview Hotel project and left the meeting whilst that item was under consideration.

Councillor Nic Bhranair also declared an interest in relation to agenda item 7b – Update on Contracts, relating to the public advertisement of a tender for the development of a Neighbourhood Tourism Investment Programme, in that her employer would be applying to the Programme and left the meeting whilst that item was being discussed.

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2i - Update on External Funding, in so far as it related to the Ballynafeigh Shared Space Project, which included the expansion of Rosario Youth Centre, on the basis that his son played for Rosario Football Club and that he had previously been involved in a fund-raising committee and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following ten 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 ten items as, due to the nature of the items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Financial Reporting – Quarter 1 2023/24

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 1 2023/24.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 1, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £1.4m, representing 3.3% of the net expenditure budget, which could be attributed to employee vacancies. The Quarter 1 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £1.2m, representing 0.7% of the net expenditure budget. He pointed out that this forecast had fallen short of the targeted £3m of in-year savings required as part of the Finance Strategy to deliver a balanced budget and drew the Committee's attention to several issues which would continue to be monitored and reported on within the quarterly updates to the Committee.

The Director went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves balance, rates finalisation and capital projects.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the aforementioned underspends be carried over into Quarter 2 2023/24. The Committee agreed also that a report be submitted to its next meeting identifying criteria which could be put in place in future to allocate funding from underspends to groups/organisations.

Revenue Estimates 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Director of Finance drew the Committee's attention to a report providing an update on the corporate approach to the 2024/25 revenue estimates and medium-term financial planning and outlining the work to be undertaken to identify and deliver opportunities for cost savings, income generation and service delivery review across Departments.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to receive on a monthly basis an update report on the rates to enable the striking of the District Rate by 15th February, 2024.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee considered a report providing information on the Organisational Reviews and Change Programme, the reviews of the Democratic Services Unit and Equality and Diversity Units and the forthcoming Association of Public Service Excellence annual conference and awards dinner.

The Committee:

- i. noted the progress which had been made on the Organisational Reviews and Change Programme and the timescales moving forward;
- ii. agreed that a special meeting be held in the lead up to the monthly meeting of the Council on 4th September to consider reports on the recommendations arising from the reviews of the Democratic Services and the Equality and Diversity Units and granted approval to the Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services to defer the reports until the monthly meeting of the Committee on 22nd September, should the need arise; and
- iii. granted approval for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to attend the Association of Public Service Excellence's annual conference and awards dinner being held in Belfast on 13th and 14th September, at no cost to the Council.

Update on Employees on Temporary Contracts and Agency Workers

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts and agency assignees engaged by the Council and outlining the steps being taken to reduce the Council's reliance on those two categories.

She reported that, as at 30th June, 220 staff had been filling posts on a temporary basis, 139 of whom had substantive Council posts to return to when no longer required. The other 81 were fixed term contract employees who did not have a substantive post to return to. Between 1st April and 30th June, 23 staff had joined the Council on a temporary contract, with 9 having a substantive post and 14 being on fixed term contracts.

She reported further that, as at 30th June, 259 agency assignees had been engaged by the Council, which was 20 fewer than at 30th March. She outlined the cost of employing agency assignees for the three-month period ending on 30th June and pointed out that this did not represent a financial burden, as it was met through vacant posts.

The Director then stated that the Corporate Contract Manager, who had been appointed in February, was establishing regular compliance and challenge meetings

across Departments, with a view to driving down long-term agency usage and that data was being reviewed to assess the potential for creating some permanent flexible roles.

She went on to remind the Committee that it had, at its meeting on 21st October, 2022, granted approval to engage an external consultant to undertake a feasibility study on the potential for establishing an in-house agency. She confirmed that the procurement exercise had been undertaken in April and reviewed the specification which prospective organisations had been asked to fulfil. Only one response had been received and that organisation had not been deemed satisfactory, on the basis that it had failed to meet the requirements of the specification. The contract had not, therefore, been awarded.

She concluded by pointing out that, in view of the apparent lack of capacity within the market to undertake this work at present, officers would continue to focus on addressing agency usage and utilising other Government frameworks to reduce the margin of off-contract spend to as low a level as possible and that the Committee would continue to be provided with regular updates on progress.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and granted approval for officers to review the specification for the engagement of the aforementioned external consultant, in order to attract a higher number of eligible applicants, with a report in that regard to be submitted to its next monthly meeting.

Asset Management

Forth Meadow Community Greenway

The Committee granted approval to enter into a right of way agreement in connection with the use of 0.174 acres of land owned by Invest NI located at Forthriver Business Park, as part of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway.

Site 10, 102 Royal Avenue

The Committee granted approval to enter into a Tenancy at Will agreement with Extern Northern Ireland for the short-term use of the ground floor unit of 102 Royal Avenue, with the Council to receive an income of £1,000 per month for the duration of the agreement.

Ormeau Avenue Car Park

The Committee granted approval to enter into negotiations with the freeholder of lands at the Ormeau Avenue Car Park to remove restrictive title covenants which could impede future development.

John Murray Lockhouse

The Committee granted approval to enter into a deed of variation with the Lower Ormeau Resident's Action Group (LORAG) to amend the current lease of 8th January, 2019 to facilitate the inclusion of an additional portion of land and to seek Ministerial approval to dispose of the lands at less than best value to reflect the community benefit being realised.

Bullring Environmental Improvement Scheme

The Committee approved the acceptance of licences from the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in connection with the environmental improvement scheme at the Bullring, Lower Shankill, with the licences to be subject to a nominal rent (£1 if demanded).

North Foreshore

The Committee approved the grant of an easement and right of way to Northern Ireland Electricity Networks Limited to facilitate the installation of a new electricity substation within the existing Film Studio site.

Unit 3, St. George's Market

The Committee approved the grant of a lease to a new tenant, with the Council to receive an annual income of £10,000, along with a fixed service charge of 10% and a buildings insurance contribution.

Update on The MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre)

The Director of Development informed the Committee that the MAC, which had opened in 2012 in the Cathedral Quarter, attracted 320,000 visitors annually and provided local and international art, theatre, dance and music, along with hospitality facilities.

The MAC currently received annual funding of £150,000 from the Council's Core Multi-Annual Grant programme, which was paid in two equal instalments of £75,000. This was the final year of a four-year funding commitment to the organisation at this level. The most significant investor in The MAC was the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, which allocated just under £1million annually.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 26th June, it had been briefed on an ongoing cash flow issue for the MAC, which had included the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's decision to defer its request for funding from the 2023/24 Annual Funding Programme to allow for further consideration of its application. The Committee had agreed at that meeting to allocate the equivalent of six months' funding, that is £75,000, to the MAC.

The Director went on to report that the Chief Executive Officer of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland had since confirmed that she would be requesting her Board to reinstate the MAC into its Annual Funding Programme, following the resolution of issues relating primarily to the organisation's transformation plan.

He pointed out that the Board of the MAC had made progress in redefining its business model and in developing new partnerships, in line with its funders' grant conditions. Should the Board of the Arts Council accede to the Chief Executive Officer's request, the MAC would secure additional funding this year, which would assist in stabilising this important cultural facility in the City.

He went on to state that Council officers had, in recent weeks, been liaising closely with the Arts Council and the Board of the MAC, during which the latter had requested the Council to provide funding of £50,000 to aid its ongoing transition and deal with cash flow constraints. However, officers were recommending that the Council release the second tranche of the MAC's Core Multi-Annual Grant funding of £75,000 in full, to enable the organisation to progress its transition and provide additional cash flow until such time as the Arts Council's decision was taken.

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to release the second tranche of the MAC's Core Multi-Annual Grant funding of £75,000 and agreed that Members be provided with an update on the outcome of any discussions between the Council and Castlebrooke Investments on the redevelopment of the Cathedral Quarter.

Update on Belfast 2024

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report on the developments for Belfast 2024, the Council's ambitious year of creative celebration.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. approved an open call uplift from £1.85 million to £2.7 million to allow for 17 commissions to be contracted for development (an uplift from 13) from September 2023, delivery throughout 2024;
- ii. approved an additional 3 x Creative Bursaries (£30k in total) to work with the Belfast 2024 team as artists-in-residence for Belfast 2024 projects to enhance participation through our engagement programmes;
- iii. approved the proposal for the research and development of Power Plants, to the value of £20k, as outlined within the report;
- iv. approved the local delivery partner for the all-Ireland Belfast 2024 Signature Project, to the value of £250k, as outlined within the report;
- v. approved an uplift to the St. Patrick's Day Programme through the Belfast 2024 budget bringing the City to life by showcasing a bespoke programme led by some of our best emerging talent, to promote UNESCO City of Music status and launch Belfast 2024 to the city - £50k;
- vi. granted approval for Music Heritage Programme to be delivered via Capacity Building budgets (approved by CGR in April 23) and Extended Cultural Programme (approved by CGR in June 2022) as a partnership between the Culture team and Belfast 2024 to amplify UNESCO City of Music status - £100k in total, to cover up to 5 capacity building grants.

- vii. agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on animation and other activities which could be delivered in the City centre in the lead up to the launch in March of Belfast 2024; and
- viii. agreed, in order to increase the effectiveness of public consultations moving forward, that events also be held in the evening.

**Sponsorship and Advertising –
Income Generation Pilot**

The Director of Development reminded the Committee that it had, at this and recent meetings, been advised that the Council was facing significant financial and inflationary pressures, which presented challenges in terms of setting the District Rate for 2023/24.

He pointed out that work was underway to identify and deliver opportunities for cost savings and income generation and that extensive benchmarking research had revealed that other local authorities had raised income by offering organisations various advertising and sponsorship opportunities on, for example, car parks, parks, bins, buildings, vehicles and websites.

Council officers had subsequently been developing an advertising and sponsorship pilot scheme, which had focused initially on areas surrounding pitches, bin lorries, car parks and street bins, all of which fell within the remit of the City and Neighbourhood Services Department. A small task and finish group was being established to consider the operational implications of the scheme and a draft media pack had been developed, which included, amongst other things, the Terms and Conditions and key principles which the Council would expect from any organisation wishing to avail of the advertising/sponsorship opportunity.

The Director went on to report that, following discussions with other officers, it was now being proposed that the following additional assets, which fell within the remit of the Place and Economy Department, be included in the pilot scheme:

- Belfast Bikes;
- Belfast Castle;
- Belfast Zoo;
- Belfast Waterfront Hall and ICC Belfast;
- Malone House;

- Ulster Hall; and
- Selected signature events/festivals.

He added that further benchmarking research had indicated that, when other local authorities had secured sponsorship, they had appointed a sponsorship specialist to provide qualified guidance on the assets and sites included in the pilot scheme and to advise on the potential suitability of each for external advertising and/or sponsorship opportunities.

Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee grant approval to proceed with the pilot scheme, with both the initial and additional assets outlined above to be included and to procure, via a competitive tender process, a sponsorship specialist to provide qualified guidance on the process.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and authorised officers to examine the potential for including roundabouts within this or future schemes and develop an ethical framework to be presented within the next update report for consideration.

Update on External Funding

Investment Area 1.4 – Reimagining Communities

(Submission date – 7th September)

The Committee:

- i. noted the work which was underway on the Reconnected Belfast (Waterworks and Alexandra Park) capital proposal and agreed that this would be the Council's application to the Special EU Programmes Body under PeacePlus Investment Area 1.4;
- ii. noted the requests which had been received for the Council to act as delivery partner, as outlined in paragraph 3.6 of the report and agreed, in principle, to approve the requests, subject to this being reviewed again once the successful bid(s) have been announced by the Special EU Programmes Body;
- iii. delegated authority to officers to review any further requests which may be received in respect of Investment Area 1.4 and for the Council to act a delivery agent, given the submission funding date of 7th September;
- iv. agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Special EU Programmes Body highlighting the challenging timeline for development of bids under this theme; and

- v. agreed that officers work up a proposal for a Migrant Hub(s) in the City, in the event that the funding call would reopen under Investment Area 1.4 and/or for other suitable funding streams.

Investment Area 1.1 – Local Action Plan Capital Projects

The Committee agreed that Council officers continue to develop the proposals for LBTQIA+ Hub, Sanctuary Theatre, Distillery St, Annadale Open Space and Access to the Hills under PEACEPLUS Investment Area 1.1, including carrying out project-specific co-design exercises, with a further update to be brought to the Committee ahead of the submission date of the Local Action Plan by 14th December, 2023.

Investment Area 5.5 – Geothermal Energy

The Committee approved the request from the Department for Economy for the Council to become an Associate Partner in its bid under Investment Area 5.5 – Geothermal Energy.

Funding Pipeline

The Committee:

- i. noted the work which was underway to develop a potential pipeline of candidate projects which would be progressed to a stage of maturity to enable them to be submitted to emerging funding or investment opportunities and that an update on the emerging Regeneration Framework would be brought back to the Committee for consideration;
- ii. agreed that a series of Party Group briefings be held to enable Members to help inform and prioritise the emerging list of potential candidate projects for funding considerations; and
- iii. noted that a detailed report on the work being undertaken in relation to the future operational model and long-term use of the entire 2 Royal Avenue building (including the LBTQIA+ Hub, subject to Members agreement) would be presented to the Committee in October.

Heritage Development

The Committee agreed to accede to a request from the Belfast Building Trust for the Council to provide a letter of support for an application which it was making to the Heritage Development Trust, which would help to build capacity within the Trust to support the re-use and regeneration of heritage buildings across the City.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Data Protection

(The Committee agreed that this item be moved up the agenda and considered under Restricted Items.)

(Councillor de Faoite declared an interest in this item immediately upon it being raised, on the basis that the named individual referred to had made a complaint against him to the Standards Commissioner, which was currently under review, having been decided, and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.)

Councillor Beattie drew the Committee's attention to an article which had, on 14th August, been published in a local daily newspaper, relating to information on injunctions in 2017. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee grant approval to the Chief Executive to undertake an internal investigation on the matter and submit a report on the outcome to a future meeting.

The Committee adopted the recommendation and authorised the Campaigns and Press Office to issue the following press release on behalf of the Council:

“At the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 18th August, 2023, Members agreed to undertake an internal investigation in relation to commentary in the media around injunctions in 2017. A report setting out the parameters of the investigation will be brought back to the Committee in due course.”

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion – CPR Training and Circuit

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 27th June, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Black and seconded by Alderman McCoubrey, to this Committee for consideration:

“This Council notes that cardiac arrest is the ultimate medical emergency, occurring when someone's heart stops pumping blood around the body and they stop breathing normally.

Early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and a defibrillator shock are vital to a person's chances of surviving a cardiac arrest.

In the North of Ireland, there are around 1,400 cardiac arrests each year which take place outside of hospital. Less than one in ten survive to be discharged from hospital.

The Council recognises that survival rates are higher in places where more people are trained to perform CPR and are willing to intervene.

The Council commends the work of the British Heart Foundation in providing schools and communities with the resources to learn CPR. Its campaigning work has resulted in CPR training now being a compulsory element of our school curriculum for Key Stage 3 pupils.

The Belfast Agenda envisions a Belfast where everyone fulfils their potential. Empowering young people with the skills to become lifesavers encourages confidence and adds to children's belief that they can make a difference to society.

Early defibrillation is another crucial part of the chain of survival when a cardiac arrest happens. Many defibrillators never get used because emergency services don't know where they are or how to access them – this can cost lives. This is why registering all defibrillators on The Circuit is so vital as it could mean the difference between life and death.

We propose that the Council moves to ensure that all defibrillators located on Council property are registered on The Circuit, are accessible to the public 24/7 and are emergency ready.

We also move to ensure that any future funding for defibrillators provided by the Council includes strict criteria that the funded defibrillator must be registered on The Circuit.

Additionally, it is proposed that the Council takes its lead from our young people and supports the provision of mandatory CPR training for all councillors and council staff. We also commit to raise awareness through all our available channels and platforms and encourage all citizens to avail of CPR training.”

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting outlining how it could be facilitated.

Governance

Appointment of Panel Members for the Recruitment of Independent Members to the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the Four District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

(Mr. J. Girvan, Neighbourhood Services Manager, attended in connection with this item.)

The Neighbourhood Services Manager informed the Committee that the process for nominating and appointing Independent Members to the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships consisted of three stages, the first of which an eligibility sift by the Northern Ireland Policing Board. In the second stage, the Council, with support from its Human Resources Department and an external Human Resources service provider appointed by the Policing Board, assumed responsibility for shortlisting and interviewing applicants

against the published criteria. The third stage in the process required the Policing Board to make appointments from the pool of candidates which the Council deemed to be eligible.

He explained that the current process had now advanced to stage two, with the Council being asked to nominate a panel, consisting of at least two and up to four Elected Members currently sitting on the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership/District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, including a Chairperson, to shortlist and interview applicants. To ensure consistency and to address the possibility of an overlap in membership, it was recommended that the same panel be involved in the selection process for both the Belfast Policing and Community Safety Partnership and the District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships. The panel should, it was pointed out, be representative in terms of gender and community background.

The Committee agreed to appoint four Members to the aforementioned selection panel, with nominations to be sought from the four largest Political Parties on the Council, namely, Sinn Féin, the DUP, the Alliance Party and the SDLP.

Update on Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor partnership and seeking three nominees to act as the Council's representatives on the Political Advisory Group.

He reminded the Committee that the partnership, which was comprised of eight councils along the eastern corridor, had been established in order to improve competitiveness and support economic growth across the region. In 2022, the Partnership had completed a Development, Strategy and Action Plan, which had set out a number of strategic objectives, with a core focus on enabling growth, based on improving skills, infrastructure and research and development. The action plan had included a number of priority actions to deliver those objectives and guide a programme of work around, for example, communications, engagement, funding, governance and research.

The Director went on to explain that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council currently held the role of chairperson and secretariat for the partnership. As part of the governance structure, three Members from each of the participating councils were required to serve on the Political Advisory Group, which fulfilled an advisory and consultative role. He pointed out that the Group had last met in January and that, following the Local Government Elections in May, councils had been requested to update their membership. Those nominated would be appointed for a two-year period, with a view to participating in quarterly meetings.

The Committee noted the update on the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor and agreed that nominations to the Political Advisory Group be sought from the three largest Political Parties on the Council, namely, Sinn Féin, the DUP and the Alliance Party.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Recruitment of Chief Officers

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report seeking approval to recruit on a permanent basis the posts of Strategic Director of City Operations and Strategic Director of Place and Economy, constitute the selection panels and amend the current process for the advertisement job opportunities specifically for these two posts.

She reviewed the timeline for the recruitment of each post and explained that an analysis of information on how applicants had learned about Council job opportunities in 2022/23 had revealed that a hard copy print of job adverts in the three local newspapers was no longer an effective recruitment source or return on investment. It was, therefore, proposed that the aforementioned posts be advertised more widely on sources which had proven to be effective, such as the Council's website, online job boards and social media. A hard copy print of all other Council adverts would continue to appear in the three local newspapers, but this would be kept under review.

The Committee:

- i. granted approval for the posts of Strategic Director of City Operations and Strategic Director of Place and Economy to be recruited on a permanent basis;
- ii. agreed that the selection panel for the post of Strategic Director of City Operations should comprise the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (or their nominees), an SDLP Member on the Committee, the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and a Director;
- iii. agreed that the selection panel for the post of Strategic Director of Place and Economy should comprise the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (or their nominees), Councillor Hanvey, the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and a Director; and
- iv. agreed to amend the current process for the advertisement of the two posts, as set out above.

**Corporate Plan – 2022-23 Year End
Report and 2023-24 Draft Delivery Plan**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 28th March, 2022, it had approved the Corporate Delivery Plan for 2022/23.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy explained that the Delivery Plan set out the key commitments and priorities for action for that period and the associated

performance measures for success and had focused on improving the Council's services, as well as advancing programmes of work in support of inclusive economic and community recovery. It had also prioritised the development of key strategic planning frameworks, including the refresh of the Belfast Agenda.

He submitted for the Committee's approval the 2022/23 year-end report and pointed out that significant progress had been made in delivering the priorities set out in the Corporate Delivery Plan and within the context of continuing to operate against the backdrop of the pandemic and widening economic and social challenges facing the City.

He submitted for the Committee's approval also the Corporate Delivery Plan for 2023/24, which set out the focus for the final year of the Council's delivery of its overarching Corporate Plan 2020-24. It set out also the priorities for the year under the strategic themes of Our Services, Inclusive Economic Recovery, Environmental Recovery, Strategic Planning Frameworks and Organisational Foundations.

The Committee approved the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022/23 year-end report [here](#) and the Corporate Delivery Plan 2023/24 [here](#).

Corporate Plan 2024-28

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reminded the Members that the Corporate Plan was a key governance document which was cited in the Council's constitution as the means by which the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee set the strategic direction of the Council. The Plan identified the strategic aims which the Council sought to achieve for the City, together with priority actions and key performance information.

He explained that the four-year corporate planning cycle was aligned with the Council term, with the aim of having a new Corporate Plan developed and agreed by the April following the Local Government Elections. This provided newly elected Members with the opportunity to work with Council officers over a nine-month period to co-design the Corporate Plan and associated priorities for the next four years. This approach provided a year of overlap of the Corporate Plan into the next Council term in order to provide stability and focus whilst the new Plan was being developed.

He reported that a new Corporate Plan was required for April 2024 and that it would be supported by the Annual Corporate Delivery Plan, Annual Committee Plans, Annual Departmental Plans, the Annual Rate Setting Process and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. In order to agree the draft plans in time for April, 2024, the following timeline was being recommended:

- Party Group Leaders, Committee Chairs and Chief Officers Workshop – late September
- Committee Planning Workshops – early October

- Draft Corporate Plan/Committee Plans/Departmental Plans –
(CMT 8th November)
- All Member Workshop – November
- Strategic Policy and Resources Committee – 24th November and
15th December
- Draft Corporate Plan and Committee Plans to Committee –
January/February
- Eight Week Public Consultation Period – February/March
- Final Four Year Corporate and Committee Plans agreed – April –
May

The Committee approved the proposed approach and timeline for the development of the 2024 – 28 Corporate Plan and accompanying Committee and Departmental Plans for 2024-25.

Council Improvement Plan 2023-24

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Committee that the Council had a statutory duty to agree improvement objectives and produce an improvement plan on an annual basis. The Improvement Plan did not include everything which the Council planned to do in that year but focused instead on a smaller set of key improvement priorities.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 17th February, it had approved for public consultation a number of draft corporate improvement objectives for 2023-24, under the headings of Our Services and Facilities, Our Communities, Our Economy, Our Environment and Our City. The consultation had run for approximately eight weeks and had been hosted on the Council's Your Say Belfast engagement platform and promoted through its social media channels. A total of 35 responses had been received, with the majority of those responding to the consultation supporting the proposed improvement objectives. He provided a brief overview of the comments which had been received and confirmed that those had been forwarded to the relevant services for information and, where applicable, had been fed into the ongoing review of the Belfast Agenda.

He confirmed that the Council had, in line with its legislative requirements, drafted a detailed Improvement Plan for 2023-24 [here](#) and recommended that the Committee approve the document.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

People Strategy

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of main Issues

1.1 To present to the Committee the People Strategy, along with plans for its launch and the launch of the Achieving through People Framework.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The People Strategy has been developed in consultation with senior leaders, frontline employees and managers and via the council's Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committee. Its purpose is to set out our approach to leading, managing, developing, supporting, and engaging with each other to deliver our corporate priorities and our Belfast Agenda goals.

It will be launched alongside the Achieving Through People Framework which sets out our organisational values and behaviours and how we want to work together to get things done.

People Strategy Goals

3.2 The goals of the People Strategy are as follows:

- The Council will attract, recruit, and retain a talented workforce that is motivated to achieve our ambitious plans for the City;**
- The council will engage you and provide opportunities for you to develop and progress within the organisation; and**
- The Council will be recognised as an employer that celebrates success, the diversity of our workforce and the wellbeing of you.**

3.3 The Strategy also sets out the benefits of working for the council, our values and behaviours as detailed in the Achieving Through People Framework (ATP) as well as

planned activity to be delivered over the duration of the Strategy. The proposed timeframes and action ownership is detailed in the People Strategy three-year Action Plan, a copy of which is attached.

- 3.4 Consideration of how the ATP framework can be embedded into existing performance management and personal development planning processes will be prioritised in year 1, for example embedding the Tier 3 Senior Management Appraisal process / cascading it to other tiers in the organisation, and the review of the PDP process, currently applicable to all levels of staff.

Governance, Measurement and Reporting.

- 3.5 CMT will oversee delivery of the People Strategy. Progress on delivery of the actions contained in the strategy will be reported to CMT on a six-monthly basis. The following people performance indicators are proposed to measure the impact of the People Strategy:

- % staff agree that they have opportunities to discuss their personal development
- % staff agree that there are opportunities for career growth
- % staff agree that they receive feedback and that their contribution is valued and recognised
- % staff feel supported by their manager and senior leaders
- % managers agree that have the skills and tools to support and develop their staff.

- 3.6 It is proposed that the performance indicators are measured end of year 1, 2 and 3 of the action plan, through short, targeted employee surveys.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

- 3.7 Members will be aware that work is ongoing to refresh the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and associated action plan. Following conclusion of consultation with the Trade Unions, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be presented to CMT in the coming weeks. It is expected that some of the performance indicators used to measure the impact of the H&WB Strategy will mirror those proposed above for the People Strategy.

Launch, Implementation and Roll Out

- 3.8 The strategy will be launched by the Chief Executive and Directors in early October and a full communication plan to cascade the strategy to all staff is being developed. It will be important for all staff to be made aware of the People Strategy and the Achieving Through People Framework, its content, planned activity and how it will impact/benefit individuals in their current roles and help them consider and plan for their career development.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 Costs associated with delivery of the People Strategy will be met from both the existing Corporate OD budget and departmental learning and development budgets.

Human Resources

- 3.10 A full communication and awareness raising exercise for staff and managers will be implemented and Directors will need to ensure that their own senior and middle management structures are fully briefed regarding their responsibility to communicate and roll out the strategy to their teams.

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

- 3.11 An equality and good relations screening and a rural needs screening have been completed for the People Strategy. The screenings have indicated that there are no adverse impacts on equality and good relations or rural needs.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Common Purpose – Sponsorship
of NI2035 Legacy Programme**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Committee that Common Purpose was a not-for-profit organisation which specialised in the delivery of leadership development programmes.

He explained that the organisation had, in October, 2021, developed and delivered the NorthernIreland2035 (NI2035) programme, which had brought together forty young people from different communities, backgrounds, beliefs and experiences. The Council and several other organisations had provided funding for the programme and the Lord Mayor at that time and a number of Council officers had been directly

involved. An impact report on the programme had highlighted the positive impact for participants in terms of enhancing Civic, Human and Social Capital.

Following the success of that programme, Common Purpose had approached the Council and other potential city partners for sponsorship of £10,000 each to deliver a further NI2035 initiative in the autumn. That would enable the organisation to offer the programme free of charge to up to 100 young people. The Director reviewed the key elements of the programme and confirmed that the Council, as a sponsor, would be positioned at the forefront of the future leadership agenda and in so doing demonstrate its clear commitment to supporting young people across the City.

The Committee agreed to provide sponsorship of £10,000 towards the NI2035 programme, which would be sourced from in-year Departmental budgets.

Sustain Exchange Climate Leadership Event

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of a proposal by the non-profit Management and Leadership Network (MLN) to host a prominent climate leadership event ‘Sustain Exchange’, with up to 300 decision-makers.**
- 1.2 To request approval for a funding agreement to be put in place between the Council and the event organiser to the value of £6,950 +vat.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to support the Sustain Exchange climate leadership conference by granting approval for a funding agreement to be put in place between the Council and the event organiser to the value of £6,950 +vat.**

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 The Sustain Exchange event is organised by the non-profit Management and Leadership Network (MLN) and has run annually for several years, acting as a mechanism for learning and collaboration across business organisations in Belfast in relation to climate and sustainability issues.**

- 3.2 The aim of the event is to support organisations of all shapes, sizes and sectors to radically reduce their environmental impact both directly and indirectly through their supply chains. The Sustain Exchange event recognises that the sectors (private, public and third) need to come together to provide the inspiration, insights and impetus for their leaders to act meaningfully.
- 3.3 It is a transformative time for organisations as they address climate risks and identify new opportunities in the green economy. The transition is not straightforward. Organisations need help in developing planet positive practices, for example securing cleaner power, heat and transport solutions. They need help in navigating new markets to find more environmentally sustainable solutions in their supply chain. There has never been a more important time to find specialist help to navigate the transition, and to educate, inform and engage by sharing the existing knowledge and exemplar experience of those at the forefront of the transition.

Purpose and Format of Event

- 3.4 The Sustain Exchange Summit will deliver on the objectives above and will connect local decision-makers with international thought leaders as well as those at the forefront of the transition locally. The event is expected to attract some 300 local leaders (primarily business leaders but also those from the public, NDPB, social enterprise and third sectors) and will either be delivered as an in-person-only event or a hybrid event which would see 120 leaders gather in-person with some additional 200 leaders attending the event via a live stream. Both delivery models will ensure the messages, around the need and importance of positive climate action, have reach and that sponsoring partners get a level of profile, amongst the NI leadership community, to justify their investment.

Content

- 3.5 Previous speakers at this event have included the eminent writer, broadcaster and commentator Sir Jonathan Porritt CBE and Norman Crowley (global entrepreneur and founder of CoolPlanet). The 2023 Sustain Exchange Summit will again be delivered to a world-class standard and will feature a globally renowned speaker as well as a carefully selected line-up of local leaders who will be challenged to share their story (exemplar), insights (expert) or support offering (stakeholder). As exemplars these leaders will share their story and associated lessons in an engaging, informative,

and entertaining manner. The speakers will encourage and empower attending organisations to consider their own climate impact and take the first (or next) steps in their quest to become 'planet positive'. Previous local speakers at this event have demonstrated how leaders from Belfast have become planet game-changers on a global scale in their respective fields. These include the likes of Dr Andrew Woods from Catagen (Sustain Exchange 2022) and Eddie McGoldrick from The Electric Storage Company (Sustain Exchange 2021). The 2023 event will once again showcase how leaders from Belfast are leading the charge when it comes to the quest to avoid what is now a 'code red for humanity'. In doing this MLN plans to inspire the next cohort of planet positive pioneers to emerge from our city.

- 3.6 The event will also provide the opportunity to make the broader leadership community in NI aware of the proactive work of the Council when it comes to the climate emergency.

Management and Leadership Network Experience

- 3.7 The Management and Leadership Network (MLN) is a non-profit which exists to connect decision-makers in NI with the insights of thought-leaders and world-class performers. The rationale is that by enhancing our leadership competence MLN will empower local organisations, strengthen the economy, enrich our society and ultimately improve lives.
- 3.8 MLN has worked with some of the most respected leaders on the planet and is very experienced in creating and delivering truly world-class events that engage, enrich and elevate attendees. As host, MLN will facilitate the event and invite all speakers to provide their slides in advance so that the idea-sharing session is delivered in a concise, visually impactful and professional manner. Belfast City Council would once again be invited to participate and profile its extensive climate work such as the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Report, Belfast Resilience Strategy, Belfast Climate Commission, Belfast One Million Trees etc.

Date, Venue and Contingence

- 3.9 The Sustain Exchange Summit will take place in October 2023. The total cost of the conference will be in excess of £60k. The Council has been a key partner in the Sustain Exchange Summit since its inception in 2021 and its support has been crucial in the creation and subsequent growth of the initiative and its impact. In order to reduce the financial

cost to the Council and increase cross-sectoral collaboration, MLN will seek financial support from additional sources to include the private sector (most likely two planet-friendly organisations in Mills Selig Solicitors and Danske Bank) as well as local government through Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council (with the Theatre at the Mill being the likely venue for a hybrid event). As well as demonstrating real collaboration, these partnerships have allowed MLN to reduce the Council's financial contribution from £10,000+vat to £6,950+vat. It is important to note that this financial contribution will be crucial in making this event a reality.

Partner Contribution and Profile Benefits

- 3.10 The Council will be profiled as an 'Event Partner' alongside several other lead event partners. The Council brand would be prominent on all event marketing collateral as well as 'at-event'. A Council representative will be invited to participate in the event press launch and MLN will arrange for the Council to deliver a presentation. The Council is requested to promote the conference through its social media and other relevant communication channels.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 The Council is being asked to contribute £6,950+vat to support this initiative. This amount has been allocated from within the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget.

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

There are no direct equality and good relations implications."

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

Consultation on the Department of Health's Equality Impact Assessment of the 2023-24 Budget Outcome – Council Response

The Committee approved the Council's response to the Department of Health's Equality Impact Assessment of the 2023-24 Budget Outcome [here](#).

**Solar PV Potential – Phase Two of
Department of Economy Collaboration**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy informed the Committee that the Council's Climate Team had recently undertaken, within the Shared Island Fund, an assessment of the solar PV potential of Council buildings.

The Department for the Economy had, alongside this, carried out an assessment of the solar PV potential of 56 domestic and non-domestic buildings across the City, including eleven owned by the Council. That project had been funded under the Department's PLACE 10X open call process in December, 2022 for research proposals.

He reported that phase two of the Department's research work was due to begin shortly and that there was an opportunity to include additional elements which would benefit the Council. This would include the application of a unique solar opportunity tool to cover two wards of the City and a web based interactive map. The total cost of the project would be £75,000, the majority of which would be covered by the Department for the Economy, as it intended to replicate this process across other areas. The maximum cost to the Council would be £15,000, which would be met from the current City and Organisational Strategy Departmental budget.

The Committee agreed to support phase two of the research project and to allocate £15,000 to it.

**Shared Island Initiative – Update on Cork
Belfast Docklands Proposal**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the Cork Belfast Docklands Regeneration Shared Island Initiative.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the update on the progress of the Cork Belfast Docklands Regeneration Initiative under the Shared Island Fund;**
- ii. agree the prioritised project for the Belfast Dockside Regeneration as the Sailortown to Titanic Quarter Active Travel Bridge; and**

- iii. note that further updates on this progress of this funding bid will be brought to future meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees.

3.0 Main Report

Background

- 3.1 As reported to the Climate and City Resilience Committee in March 2023 and ratified by the Council in April, the Council was approached by Cork City Council to work in partnership under the Shared Island Local Authority Development Funding Scheme. Under this funding scheme, more than €4.3m was allocated to 15 lead Local Authorities in the South, working in partnership with 9 Councils in Northern Ireland to develop collaborative cross-border investment projects aligned to the Shared Island Investment priorities of delivering a more prosperous, a more connected and a more sustainable island. Under the conditions of the fund, the Southern Local Authority forms the lead applicant for the bid. €90k was allocated to the Cork-Belfast partnership to develop up a Cork Belfast Solar PV Study and to develop investment opportunities aligned to docklands regeneration. An update on the Cork Belfast Solar PV project was presented to the Climate and City Resilience Committee on 10th August.

Cork- Belfast Docklands Project

- 3.2 The Docklands project focus arose from the opportunity to connect two important maritime economies and drive decarbonisation, growth and innovation. Ports are key hubs for trade and investment and support SME's and employ thousands of workers. Significant capital investment is planned for both the Belfast Waterside and Cork City Docklands areas and these areas represent two of the largest regeneration areas in Europe. Belfast City Council and Cork City Council have secured funding under the Shared Island initiative to assess the synergies and opportunities to overcome the existing challenges within the respective areas. This work will also set out the wider benefits of the proposed Cork-Belfast collaboration under the Shared Island initiative, and to provide a list of potential catalyst regeneration projects

including providing spatial requirements, connectivity infrastructure and place-making requirements and capital investment schedules for the emerging list in conjunction with key stakeholders within each of the respective areas.

- 3.3 The feasibility work will identify opportunities and mechanisms for collaboration aligned to Climate Action, inclusive community connection, heritage, tourism and innovation and to inform/apply for next stages of the application process for the Shared Island Fund. As lead applicant, Cork City Council has commissioned an integrated consultancy team to develop the project across the two locations with a final submission to be made to the Shared Island Fund by September 2023.
- 3.4 The Belfast Docklands project was informed by the ongoing work of the Waterfront Task Force, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and reported through the CG and R Committee and consisting of key delivery and local stakeholders including Maritime Mile, BHC, TQL, DfC, DfE etc. Aligned to the Bolder Vision Key Move "Embracing the River", this work entailed a detailed assessment of the completed developments, planned development, catalyst opportunities and gaps in infrastructure supported through detailed stakeholder engagement to inform an emerging Action Plan and prioritised project list. Stakeholder and Community Workshops were held in June/July 2023 to agree the emerging work and the priority project list with a view to complete the work in August 2023. Once completed the final document will be presented to the CG and R Committee for consideration and approval and to SP and R as appropriate.
- 3.4 The emerging priority project list that was identified and agreed through the Waterfront Taskforce process include:

Sailortown to TQ Bridge – Providing a new cross harbour cycle and walking swing bridge this connection would complete the Harbour Loop, a continuous connectivity loop from the Lagan Gateway to the uppermost point of the northern dockside providing a continuous active travel corridor along both sides of the Lagan.

The Project will improve connections between the Sailortown Community and the Queen's Island economic opportunities, restitching the original ship building

facilities at Clarendon Dock with maritime facilities on the eastern quays.

The proposed bridge will also provide enhanced connections between the North Belfast communities and the education, tourism, employment and innovation opportunities within Queens Island as well as providing a critical sustainable and active link between Yorkgate Train Station and the Queens Island.

Thompson Dock and Harbour Park – This project would provide a new tourism and event destination in the Thompson Dry Dock adjacent to the new Titanic Distillery combined with a new Harbour Park to provide land and marine based biodiversity provision.

City Centre/City Quays/Queens Island Gateway Scheme – this project would provide a key connectivity link between the opportunities of the City Centre, City Quays and Queens Island. It would provide enhanced active travel provision, biodiversity and increased leisure facilities between these three significant areas of employment and city centre living opportunities.

Kickstart the Waterfront Vision – Introducing meanwhile uses along the Maritime Mile to draw footfall and animation along the waterfront, including water-based activities and marine ecological enrichment.

- 3.6 The projects from both Cork and Belfast were considered through a Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) to identify the preferred Shared Island Project. Stage 1 of the MCA undertook a project assessment at a local level with each of the Belfast and Cork Projects undergoing evaluation aligned to the Southern NDP priorities and the Shared Island objectives of Prosperous, Connected, and Sustainable. At Stage 2, the Cork and Belfast projects were paired and evaluated under their potential to progress and elevate at a Shared Island level.
- 3.7 The paired projects are outlined as below and were scored in consideration of the paired projects potential to provide an opportunity for further collaboration & cooperation and how the pair deliver the on the Shared Island regional goals. Following the MCA evaluation process the Cork Water Street Active Travel Swing Bridge / Belfast Sailortown to TQ Active Travel Swing Bridge emerged as the strongest paired project to bring

forward under the Shared Island Docklands Regeneration Initiative. This prioritisation has been agreed across the Waterfront Taskforce partners, subject to finalisation of internal approval processes.

Cork Project	Belfast Project
North Quayside public realm and active travel route	City Centre / City Quays / Odyssey Quays Gateway Scheme
South Quayside public realm and active travel route	City Centre / City Quays / Odyssey Quays Gateway Scheme
Water Street Cycle/Walking Swing Bridge	Sailortown to TQ Cycle/Walking Swing Bridge
Marine Park Phase 2	Thompson Dock & Harbour Park

- 3.9 The pairing of the two bridges will provide connections at a local level for both docklands in terms of reconnecting communities to the areas of opportunities, providing enhanced leisure facilities along the Lagan and the Lee, and provide a significant contribution in terms of delivering sustainable and active travel infrastructure to enable the respective dockland areas to meet their climate obligations.**
- 3.10 At a Shared Island level, the bridges provide an opportunity for the two cities to deliver landmark infrastructure projects underpinned with a collaborative approach to delivering the infrastructure, as well as enhancing shared learning through the project delivery and lessons learnt in terms of delivering successful docklands regeneration incorporating marine and land based biodiversity and ensuring effective connections between the docklands to existing and new communities. This project would also serve as an opportunity for the two dockland areas to further explore longer term collaboration aligned to our shared maritime past and the future opportunities for collaboration under key growth sectors including tourism and innovation.**

Next Steps

- 3.11 Pending approval across the relevant Stakeholders governance arrangements, the final submission to the Shared Island Fund will be complete in September 2023. This submission will outline the potential of the preferred paired projects for the Cork and Belfast docklands areas and the paired projects contribution to the objectives of the Shared Island Fund, a feasibility assessment outlining the project steps to delivery including funding requirements, project risks and issues to enable the paired projects to be considered for a next stage of funding through the Shared Island initiative. Updates on the progress of this work will be presented to future meetings of the CG and R and SP and R Committees.

Finance and Resource Implications

- 3.12 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.13 An EQIA/SEA/Rural Needs Assessment will be carried out on the emerging Waterfront Taskforce work and will be considered through the next stages of any potential next steps of the Shared Island process.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme – Council Response

The Committee approved the Council’s response to the Department for Infrastructures consultation on changes to the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme [here](#) and agreed that it should also stress the need to expand the scheme to other categories, particularly young people, to encourage a modal shift in terms of travel choices and to overhaul the current funding model to create a sustainable service which meets public demand.

Update on Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service

The Director of Economic Development submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the new Northern Ireland Enterprise Support Service (NIESS) – the regional initiative to support business start-up and growth, which will be led by Belfast City Council on behalf of the eleven councils and to seek approval to proceed with the appointment of contractors, pending receipt of the final MoU from the funder.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the update on the new NIESS, including the planned go-live date for the new intervention;**
- ii. note that the final funding agreement/MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) has not yet been received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities;**
- iii. note that officers have reviewed and commented on draft versions of the MoU; and**
- iv. agree that the Chief Executive can, under delegated authority, authorise the appointment of the contractors for the communications and marketing; call handling and service delivery (Engage and Foundation; Growth and Scaling lots) and any other eligible project expenditure, pending receipt and signature of the final MoU.**

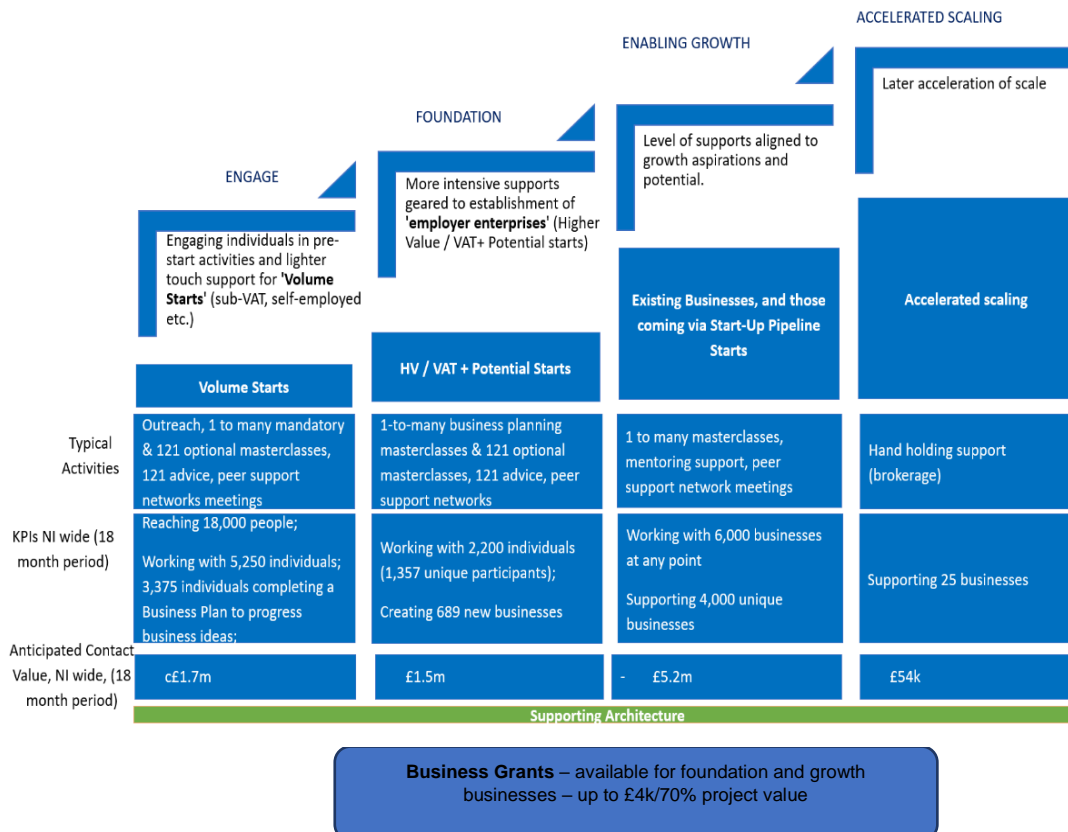
3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the meeting on 17th February, the Committee agreed that the Council should lead on the submission of an application to UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the eleven-council Enterprise Support Service. It also agreed that, subject to additional due diligence and risk management work, the Council should lead on the future development and delivery of the service on behalf of the eleven councils.

3.2 Since that time, a significant amount of work has taken place to finalise the detail of the programme content, start the commissioning process of the new service and set in place the delivery structures so that it can become operational from Autumn 2023. Given the complex nature of the work, this has involved input from a range of council teams including Legal Services; Corporate Procurement Services; Finance; Human Resources and Continuous Improvement; Digital Services; Audit, Governance and Risk; Information Governance and Communications and Marketing. The work

is being led by the Enterprise and Business Growth team. A March 2023 workshop, facilitated by Audit, Governance and Risk Services, helped identify initial risks and associated mitigations and these have guided the interactions with the teams since that time.

3.3 The service is being funded through the new Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). This is the UK Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) fund that was established as a replacement for EU funding (ERDF and ESF). One strand of funding focused on "Supporting Local Business". The Investment Plan for UKSPF in Northern Ireland was launched in December 2022. At that time, the Plan proposed that a central component of the Supporting Local Business strand would be the eleven council Enterprise Support Service. An indicative financial allocation of £17million - £12 million programme delivery and £5million for small grants – was set aside for the service. UKSPF funding is available to March 2025 so the initial programme period will run from Autumn 2023 to March 2025. The service overview is detailed below:



Commissioning of Service Delivery

- 3.4 Taking account of the capacity in the marketplace, the procurement approach for delivery of the business support services (i.e., 121 mentoring support; masterclasses; peer support networks) was broken down into two main areas, namely:
- Engage and Foundation
 - Growth and Scaling.
- 3.5 For both areas, there was a significant focus on ensuring that the needs of the local business base could be considered – given the differences in business sectors, composition, and development needs across the council areas.
- 3.6 An initial procurement exercise for both areas was undertaken in March/April 2023. However, for different reasons, it was not possible to appoint preferred suppliers in either of the areas. As a result, additional market engagement was undertaken to re-scope and re-shape the documentation in a way that could ensure delivery of the original ambitions while reflecting market feedback – and taking account of the expectations of each of the 11 council partners. The Growth and Scaling submissions are currently being assessed and bidders will be appointed in the coming week. The Engage and Foundation submissions are due to close on 21st August and preferred bidders should be appointed by the end of August. The start date for the new service is 1st October, 2023.
- 3.7 In addition to the delivery elements, there are several support elements that are being commissioned or developed in parallel. These include:
- Marketing and communications: this work is being led by Derry City and Strabane District Council. They have completed a procurement exercise for a marketing and communications agency to support with a range of activities including advertising, promotional and brand development. While DCSDC will lead on these elements of work, they will work directly with the overall Programme Lead and the wider team based in the Council, ensuring that there is a singular approach to delivery
 - Call handling: the Go for it programme benefitted from a freephone number through which business and entrepreneurs could be directed to the relevant

- **delivery agent.** That support will continue under the new service; however, it will be extended to cover the full scope of enquiries from entrepreneurs and new and existing businesses
 - **CRM:** to track all business engagement with the service and support the development of relevant reports for funders and individual councils, a customer relationship management (CRM) system is being developed. The Council's Digital Services team is taking the lead on this, and they will be supported by other council services such as the Information Governance Unit (IGU) and Legal Services to ensure compliance with all relevant obligations. The CRM will also be guided by the council's finance and grants management teams, ensuring that it can provide adequate assurances and information required, as set out in the funding agreement.
- 3.8** At present, the Council is still awaiting an MoU from the funder. As such, we are not able to proceed with the appointment of any of the contractors. The procurement exercises for the marketing and call handling have already concluded and the Growth and Scaling contract assessment will be complete by mid-August 2023; with the Engage and Foundation to follow by end August. As time progresses, this presents additional risks for service delivery, given that the end date of March 2025 cannot be extended. Officers have already reviewed the document and have provided commentary on the draft versions, in order to ensure that it is in line with our processes. As at 10th August, DLUHC officials has confirmed that the MoU is with their Ministers for signature but that it cannot release it until it is signed off officially. It has provided official confirmation that, "once approved, the project and all delivery partners can benefit from funding towards costs incurred from 1 April 2023, where this has been profiled in the project application".
- 3.9** In the absence of the final MoU, members are asked to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to authorise appointment of the contractors for the communications and marketing; call handling and service delivery (Engage and Foundation; Growth and Scaling lots) and any other eligible project expenditure. All contracts will have appropriate clauses and conditions to confirm that they are subject to funding.
- 3.10** For Belfast – and all councils – this new service represents an important step forward in the councils positioning their intent to drive their local economies – with an increasing

focus on support for indigenous businesses. This is reflected in the draft Belfast Agenda. This new approach also ensures that the councils, as a collective, can have a strong voice in the development of DfE's new Entrepreneurship Strategy which will be a key pillar for the delivery of the 10x ambitions. It is also important to note that there is a limited window of opportunity in which to make progress so councils will be focused on ensuring that the new service works effectively to meet business needs. However, they will also need to consider how they can position the new service to attract additional funding for delivery after March 2025 – recognising the challenges in the public sector investment environment at present.

Programme Governance and Management

- 3.11 The original development work on this service was undertaken under the auspices of the SOLACE Economic Development Group (EDG), of which Belfast is the Chair. The EDG subsequently assigned the detailed work plan activities to a working group comprising all councils – again led by Belfast as the Lead Council. All key programme decisions have been escalated to the SOLACE EDG for endorsement, as delegated by SOLACE.
- 3.12 As the service moves towards the mobilisation phase, new governance structures will be put in place to support contract management, assurance, and reporting. It is proposed that this will include an internal delivery team across the council. This is likely to incorporate the services referenced at 3.2.
- 3.13 Regular reports will also be brought to CMT and to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. At a regional level, there will be a programme management structure involving the appointed contractors and key officers from the PMO. The Programme Lead will report on a quarterly basis to SOLACE Economic Development Group and any matters requiring escalation to SOLACE will be agreed and actioned at those meetings.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.14 The Council will act as the lead council on behalf of the eleven councils for delivery of the service. To do so, we will establish a delivery and management team which will be fully resourced through the DLUHC funding.

- 3.15 The final budget is subject to completion of the relevant procurement exercises detailed above. The overall indicative SPF budget is in the region of £5million revenue in year 1 and £7million revenue in year 2, with around £5million available across the funding period for grant support.**

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

- 3.16 An equality impact assessment for the service has been completed. Local targets for delivery in each council area have been established and will be part of the contractual commitments with delivery partners.”**

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Festive Lighting Scheme/Future Christmas Programming

The Director of Development informed the Committee that the installation, storage and maintenance of festive lighting was managed through a third party, who had been appointed through a public procurement process. This contract was currently due for renewal and the Council had received requests to expand the scheme to include arterial routes.

He explained that the supplier of lighting had made the Council aware of significant increases in insurance, energy and labour costs. However, the budget for festive lighting had remained unchanged in the last five years and the Economic Development Unit had no additional funding available to expand the scheme. In previous years, extra funding had been allocated through the Council's non-recurrent budget, which had allowed additional features to be added to the lighting scheme. Funding had also been received from the Department for Communities for revitalisation purposes, which the Council distributed via a funding programme to business clusters on arterial routes for some Christmas related activity.

The Director pointed out the aforementioned increase in supplier costs, coupled with the static budget, would mean that the current city centre lighting scheme would have to be scaled back to concentrate on the central business district and not include arterial routes. The City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 9th August, having been advised to that effect, had referred the matter to this Committee for further consideration.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. that a special meeting be held to examine the potential for expanding and funding the festive lighting scheme this year;

- ii. that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the appropriate Committee on the provision of festive lighting from next year onwards; and
- iii. that a letter be forwarded to the Department for Communities advising of the current funding issues being faced by the Council in relation to the provision festive lighting and asking the Department to take that into consideration in terms of potential funding streams.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Update on the Physical Programme

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The Council's Physical Programme currently includes over 400 capital projects via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report includes a stage movement request relating to the Capital Programme, an update on leisure, details on site visits for Members for Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund in line with the approach agreed by Committee, requests for the Council to act as delivery agent and an update on contracts awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is requested:
 - i. *Capital Programme: Stage movement* – to agree to move the HWRC and CAS Containers project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* under the Waste Plan Programme due to operational requirements;
 - ii. *Leisure Programme* – to note that the Leisure Transformation Programme was recently awarded Runner Up in the '*A whole council approach to tackling health inequalities*' category at the MJ Awards and that a detailed update on Leisure will be brought to the Committee next month;

- iii. *Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund* – to note the arrangements for the NRF site visits;
- iv. *Council as Delivery Agent* – to agree, in principle, that the Council act as the delivery agent for Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub project which is receiving external funding from the Executive Office under the Urban Villages Initiative subject to the Council receiving a management fee for the delivery, full funding packages being in place and further discussions with Legal Services; and
- v. *Contracts awarded in Q1 2023/24* – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded.

3.0 Main Report

Capital Programme

- 3.1 Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme which includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), as well as numerous capital programmes that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include National Lottery Heritage Fund, SEUPB Peace IV, the Executive Office, DfC, DfI via the Blue Green Infrastructure Fund and Living with Water Programme, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages, Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and others. When appropriate, the Physical Programmes Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.
- 3.2 Members agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
HWRC and CAS Containers	The project involves the replacement of containers (compactors and skips) at HWRCs and Civic Amenity sites in order to maintain service continuity and health and safety standards.	Move to <i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted</i> (part of Waste Plan Programme)

Proposed Stage Movement - HWRC and CAS Containers (Compactors and Skips)

- 3.3 The network of Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and Civic Amenity Sites (CAS) is an essential business unit within the Resources and Fleet Service. Residents can deposit a significant range of large bulky items for re-use and/or recycling at the sites. The sites accept around 30,000 tonnes of waste per annum and account for almost 25% of the total tonnage of household recycling captured during the year. A number of these containers are coming to the end of their useful/economic life.

The Committee is asked to recommend that the HWRC and CAS Containers project is moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted on the Capital Programme. An Outline Business Case will now be worked up on the proposal with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

Leisure Programme

- 3.4 Members are asked to note that the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme was recently awarded Runner Up in the 'A whole council approach to tackling health inequalities' category in the Municipal Journal Awards. The MJ Awards recognise excellence in local councils across the UK in supporting their communities and making an impact and this award recognises the transformational impact that the Leisure Programme has had across the city. Members will also be aware that the £17m Templemore has recently opened and has received positive media and community feedback and was the sixth out of the seven projects under Leisure Phase 3.

Members are asked to note that work is ongoing on finalising the business case for the remaining project under the current Leisure Programme which is the facility at Girdwood. £6m has been ringfenced for this. This is a partnership project with DfC who have funded the business case and the latest draft has been forwarded to them for

review. In addition, Members will be aware that Space and Place Consultants have been appointed to look at the other centres which have not been taken forward under the other leisure phases - Shankill, Ozone, Whiterock, Ballysillan, Belvoir and Loughside. Members previously agreed that the scope of this work be extended to also look at the leisure focused independently managed community facilities. Members will also be aware that there are a number of other inter-linked pieces underway which relate to leisure including the Sports Development and Physical Activity Strategy and the development of the new 10-year Pitches Strategy which has recently been agreed.

Members are asked to note that a detailed update on leisure, to include Girdwood and Leisure Phase 4, will be brought back to Committee next month.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

- 3.5 Members will recall that in June they received an updated timeline for NRF which confirmed that Member site visits would be arranged for September to Stage 2 projects. Site visits have now been arranged in conjunction with the groups and are as follows:

Date	Time	Sites
Tues 5 Sept 2023	9:30am – 12:30pm	South Site visits to three projects – Sólás New Build Project, Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, and the Redevelopment of Riddel’s Warehouse project
Wed 6 Sept 2023	1:30pm – 4:30pm	South Site visits to three projects – GVRT- Branching Out, Redevelopment of Former School of Music, and Market Heritage Hub project.
Wed 13 Sept 2023	9:30am – 12:30pm	North Site visits to three projects – AYE Youth and Community Hub, USEL- Green Growth & The Circular Economy, and Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment project
Thurs 14 Sept 2023	1.30pm – 3.30pm	North Site visits to two projects – CCRF- Cliftonville Community Enterprise and SRG- St Joseph’s Restoration project.

Wed 20 Sept 2023	9:30am - 12:30pm	West Site visits to three projects – The Mountainview Hotel, Croí na Carraige and Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre
Thurs 21 Sept 2023	9:30am - 12:30pm	West (Shankill) Site visits to three projects – Glencairn Community Project, The ACT Initiative Community Hub & Visitor Centre, and The Road
Tues 26 Sept 2023	9.30am – 1.30pm	East Site visits to four projects – EastSide Container Hotel, Portview Exchange, Impact Belfast and Nevin Spence Centre (NSC) Visitor Experience

Members are encouraged to attend any and all of these arranged visits and all of the Area Working Groups will also be provided with these details. Invitations for these site visits will be issued by Democratic Services. The meeting point for all visits is City Hall and transport will be provided, returning to City Hall afterwards. Members are asked to RSVP as soon as possible when contacted. The Committee is asked to note the arrangements for the NRF site visits.

Council acting as Delivery Agent

- 3.6 Members will be aware that the Council is asked to deliver externally funded initiatives for a range of funding bodies including Urban Villages (UV) projects and DfC match funded schemes. These requests recognise both the successful track record of the Council as delivery agent as well as the unique role of the Council as civic leader in the city. *In total, the Council is acting as delivery agent for over 90 projects worth in excess of £65m (this includes both completed, live and planned projects).* Members are reminded that the Council's Insurance Unit has advised that the Council's Professional Indemnity Insurance only provides cover for services provided to third parties for a fee. This means that, where it is acting solely as the delivery agent for a third party project, the Council can only rely on its professional indemnity insurance policy if a management fee is received. Committee is asked to note therefore that the Council will be advising in the future that it will only be able to consider acting as the delivery agent for any third party projects if the proposal includes a management fee.

3.7 Members are asked to note that the Council has recently received a request to act as the delivery agent in principle for an additional transformational project under the Urban Villages Initiative – the Colin Community Health and Wellbeing Hub. Committee is asked to note that this project is being 100% externally funded with the Executive Office as core funder. An application is also being lodged with SEUPB under PeacePLUS Theme 1.4 (see separate report at SP and R Committee this month). There is no Council financial commitment to the project. *The Committee is asked to agree in principle to the Council acting as delivery agent for this project subject to the Council receiving a management fee for the delivery, full funding package being in place and further discussions with Legal Services.*

3.8 **Contracts awarded – Q1 2023/24**
Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works, including services related to works for Q1 2023/24, in the attached appendix.

3.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Financial – None

Resources – Officer time to deliver as required

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

All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process.”

After discussion, during which the Director of Property and Projects confirmed that the forthcoming update report on the next phase of the Girdwood project would make reference to the outcome of the consultation process, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Falls Parks Event – Request for Support

(Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer Community Provision, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee was informed that a request had been received from VC Glendale, a well-known local cycling club, for the use of the Falls Park for its annual Falling Leaves event. The event, which attracted riders and spectators from across Ireland, had become a well-established fixture on the cyclocross calendar and it was

hoped that another successful event could result in the Falls Park being nominated as the venue for the Irish National Championships in 2025.

It was reported that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting on 8th August, had granted approval for the use of the Park but had referred to this Committee for consideration an additional request from the organisers for financial support of £8,207 to assist with the delivery of the event, on the basis that the City and Neighbourhood Services Department was not in a position to provide funding from its current budget.

The Lead Officer Community Provision pointed out that the event would have been eligible for Support for Sport funding of £1,000 from the Council, however, the organisers had not submitted an application by the requisite deadline.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees not to award £8,207 to VC Glendale for this event, on the basis that it failed to submit an application for funding through the Support for Sport programme and that to provide this funding on an ad hoc basis would set a precedent moving forward.

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

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor Maskey,

That the Committee agrees to provide funding of £8,207 to VC Glendale, on the basis that this was a successful event and there was the potential for the Falls Park to host the Irish National Championships in 2025.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to award funding of £8,207 to VC Glendale and agreed also that a report be submitted to a future meeting providing details on the outcome of ad hoc requests for financial support which had, in recent years, been presented to Committees and examining ways in which such requests could be dealt with in future through a formal process.

Update on Contracts

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 1 below;
- approved the award of Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 2 below;
- approved the modification of the contract, as per Standing Order 37a, detailed in Table 3 below; and
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 4 below.

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of the Meeting of the Shared City Partnership

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

PEACEPLUS

- to agree the ongoing process for developing project concepts to be included in the local action plan submission to the Special EU Programmes Body (subject to further detail being considered by the Partnership);
- to agree that a more detailed report would be submitted to a future meeting on project concepts, governance, management and the proposed implementation plan; and
- to agree that a further meeting be convened to discuss potential priority projects to be included under Theme 1 of the Local Action Plan – Community Regeneration and Transformation (Capital Projects).

PEACE IV

Secretariat

- to note the contents of the report and appendices

Shared Spaces and Services Theme

- to note the contents of the report and related appendix and approve the following:
 - the extension request to 31st December 2023 sent to the Special EU Programmes Body to enable the installation of the signage;
 - the FMCG Governance report (Appendix III); and
 - the proposed approach regarding Volunteer Now payments, having achieved 32% delivery on the Local Ambassadors project.

GOOD RELATIONS

(Updated funding position and Quarter 1 report on the delivery of the Council's Good Relations Action Plan)

- to note the contents of this report, including:
 - the updated position on funding for the Good Relations Action Plan;
 - the revised budget for the Action Plan, as a result of the reduced funding, following receipt of a letter of offer from The Executive Office; and
 - the Quarter 1 update, in particular, the allocation of £154,644 to grants through the Good Relations Small Grant Scheme to those groups listed in appendix 2 of the report.

Membership of the Shared City Partnership

- to note the contents of the report, including the points:
 - that the recruitment process for the Community Representative for North Belfast was ongoing; and
 - that correspondence will be forwarded to the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce seeking two representatives for 12 months, subject to review and reengagement with Belfast City Centre Management to establish if it would be interested in having a representative on the Shared City Partnership from August 2024.

Screening Outcome Report
(Q 4 2022/23 and Q1 2023/24)

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services reminded the Committee that one of the main requirements of the Council's equality scheme was to carry out the screening of new and revised policies. That allowed any impacts related to equality of opportunity and/or good relations to be identified and addressed.

She explained that policies which were identified for screening were placed on an equality screening template and that those were collated on a regular basis by the Equality and Diversity Officer. An overall Screening Outcome report was then produced which, along with the relevant completed screening templates, was published onto the Council's website.

Accordingly, the Committee noted the Screening Outcome Report for Quarter 4 2022/23 and Quarter 1 2023/24.

Operational Issues

Requests for the use of the City Hall
and the Provision of Hospitality

The Committee adopted the recommendations in respect of those applications received up to 4th August, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2023 EVENTS						
Yellow Door catering	3 November 2023	Yellow Door 30th Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner and entertainment. Numbers attending – 150	C & D	Charge as £825 as commercial company	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve Charge £825 Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Royal College of Nursing NI History of Nursing Network	13 November 2023	Celebration of project to commemorate nurses from across Ireland who served in the Second World War – reception including refreshments, presentations	C & D	No Charge as Voluntary group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Nurses received the Freedom of the City and have memorial plaque in City Hall	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>

		and stories to celebrate and remember nurses role in WW2 which are included in a new book. Numbers attending – 150				
2024 EVENTS						
Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation – NI region	28 March 2024	CIHT 200th Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, and entertainment. Numbers attending – 250	C & D	No Charge as charity	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Association of Surgeons of Great Britain & Ireland (ASGBI)	8 May 2024	ASGBI Annual Congress reception– Dinner and entertainment for guests attending their 3 day congress taking place in ICC Numbers attending - 120	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
The Royal College of Ophthalmologists	21 May 2024	RCOphth Annual Congress reception– Dinner and entertainment for guests attending their 3-day congress taking place in ICC Numbers attending - 350	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

British and Irish Group for the Study of Personality Disorder	19 June 2024	BIGSPD 25th Conference Dinner for guests attending their 3-day congress taking place in ICC	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
RNLI	22 June 2024	RNLI 200th Anniversary Celebration- Drinks Reception, Dinner, and entertainment. Numbers attending – 300	C & D	No Charge as charity	Yes, Wine Reception as significant anniversary	Approve No Charge Wine Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Irish Cardiac Society Annual Scientific Meeting Gala Dinner 2024	18 October 2024	BSSH Autumn Scientific Meeting – Dinner for guests attending their 3-day congress taking place in ICC Numbers attending - 170	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

Request for the use of the City Hall Grounds – Fragile Space Exhibition

The Committee approved a request from NI Space Office to place a photographic exhibition in the grounds of the City Hall from 1st to 13th October, in advance of the UK Space Conference taking place in Belfast in November, subject to all the usual conditions being met.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 10th August.

**Request for Artwork to Celebrate the
Oscar Winning Film 'An Irish Goodbye'**

At the request of the Chairperson (Councillor Black), the Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the provision of artwork somewhere in the City to mark the success of the above-mentioned film.

Corporate Communications - Language Policy

Councillor R. McLaughlin drew the Committee's attention to the fact that the City Hall had, on the night of 30th July, been illuminated to commemorate the 130th anniversary of the founding of Conradh na Gaelige.

He explained that the Council had, on that date, posted a social media tweet in English to highlight the occasion but had been unable to accede to a request from Conradh na Gaelige to issue the same Tweet in Irish, as the Council currently did not have a corporate communications policy in place and a political consensus had not been reached.

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that the Council's draft Language Strategy Action Plan, which included actions around social media tweets in all languages, had been subject to pre-consultation engagement with the language stakeholder forums and that it was the intention to submit the final version to the Committee in September for approval.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. granted approval for the Council to issue immediately a social media tweet in Irish marking the 130th anniversary of the founding of Conradh na Gaelige; and
- ii. granted approval, in advance of the Language Strategy Action Plan being approved, for social media tweets marking similar illuminations to be issued in both English and the minority language, with the minority language to be tweeted first, in line with the requirements of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Chairperson