

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 24th November, 2023

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

Also attended: Councillor Collins.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
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;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City Operations;
Ms. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Ms. S. Williams, Governance and Compliance Manager;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. H. Downey, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Alderman McCoubrey.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th October were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 1st November, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Beattie and M. Donnelly declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2j – Update on Hardship Fund, on the basis that the organisation for which they worked operated a social supermarket and left the meeting whilst that item was being considered.

Councillor Nelson declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2n – Update on The MAC, in that he had accepted a ticket for an event there and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2n – Update on The MAC, on the basis that it was a client of the company for which he worked and left the meeting whilst it was under consideration.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following fourteen 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 fourteen 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 2 2023-24

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 2 2023/24 and the half-year Treasury Management Report.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 2, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £2.7m, representing 3.4% of the net expenditure budget, which could be attributed to employee underspends and savings from retendered contracts. The Quarter 2 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £1.4m, representing 0.8% of the net expenditure budget. He pointed out that work was ongoing to identify the drivers behind the overspends within a number of Departments and how their service delivery models could be reviewed to meet the financial challenges ahead.

The Director went on to provide an update on the forecast reserves balance, rates finalisation and capital projects and recommended that the Committee:

- i. note the contents of the report, including the Treasury Management Report and agree to continue for the remainder of 2023/24 with the Finance Strategy, which had been formulated to protect the financial sustainability of the Council; and

- ii. agree that the reallocation of forecast underspends be considered as part of the year-end finance report.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Revenue Estimates 2024-25 and Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing information on the key issues which would influence the rate setting process for 2024/25 and the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2024/25 to 2026/27. The report made reference to the current financial position, business as usual Departmental estimates, uncontrollable costs, the Estimated Penny Product 2024/25, inflation outlook, efficiencies and capital financing and outlined the timeframe associated with the rate setting process.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Discretionary Payments

The Director of Finance reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 22nd September, it had agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting setting out revised criteria which could be put in place to allocate funding from underspends to groups and organisations.

He reviewed the process for the management of in-year underspends and submitted for the Committee's approval the following criteria for 2023/24, with revisions to the criteria currently in place in bold:

1. **The total discretionary payments may not exceed £700k.**
2. **The amount per applicant is capped at £20k.**
3. The application for the discretionary payment links to one or more of the council's corporate priorities / **Belfast Agenda.**
4. There is direct benefit to be obtained to the council or its district or inhabitants.
5. The activity or initiative in respect of assistance being sought is being promoted by a person or organisation living or operating, or otherwise having a direct connection with the City.
6. The request for a discretionary payment does not relate to an event or initiative which falls within a funding stream established through the remit and statutory power of any other committee of the council (in which case it should be so referred).

7. **Whilst it is preferable** that the request relates to a specific event, activity or initiative, **due to funding cuts announced by Central Government Departments, the cost-of-living crisis and increase to the National Living Wage, requests will be accepted for running costs for the 2023/24 financial year**, but not for a contribution to general funds.
8. The benefit to be obtained will be commensurate with the payment to be made.

After discussion, the Committee approved the revised criteria for 2023/24, including the funding amounts, subject to the removal of point 5, the strengthening of point 7 by removing the reference to specific events, activity or initiative and the inclusion of an additional point stating that funding would not be provided to an organisation/group which would be eligible under an existing funding stream.

The Committee agreed also that, in future, reports on applications for discretionary funding should set out clearly the rationale behind the recommendations being made and noted that the Director of Finance would submit to a future meeting a proposed scoring matrix.

Request for Funding - West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Collins drew the Committee's attention to his motion calling for emergency funding of £50K to be allocated to West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre which the Committee, at its meeting on 22nd September, had agreed to consider as part of the Quarter 2 Financial Report.

He stated that it was his understanding that the request would instead be dealt with under the discretionary payment scheme, which was capped at £20k and voiced concern in this regard, given the urgent need to ensure that the organisation was in a position to continue to deliver its full range of services for the remainder of 2023.

In response, the Director of Finance stated that requests of this nature were dependent upon funding being available for reallocation and pointed out that the Quarter 2 finance report, which had been considered earlier in the meeting, had indicated that none was available. The request would, therefore, be dealt with as part of the year-end financial report.

Noted.

Targeted Acquisition

The Committee granted approval for officers to commence 'without prejudice' discussions in respect of privately owned lands in the City centre, located in close proximity to other Council owned lands and which might be available for acquisition for comprehensive housing led mixed use regeneration purposes, as outlined within the report.

The Committee granted approval also for a letter to be forwarded to Invest NI seeking clarification on its future plans for the former Mackie's site.

Update on Smart Belfast Programme

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services drew the Committee's attention to a report providing an update on the current initiatives being progressed under the Smart Belfast urban innovation programme and recommending that it:

- i. approve a contract for funding for £3.8 million with DSIT to deliver the Belfast Wireless Innovation Region Hub programme and agree, in accordance with Standing Order 48(a), that this decision would not be subject to call-in, as the ability not to implement it immediately would result in the breach of a contractual duty;
- ii. approve a £928,373 contract for funding with the Department for the Economy to deliver the 'Augment the City' SME challenge call;
- iii. approve the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and BT Northern Ireland to deliver a joint research and development project within the City Hall exhibition, as part of Belfast 2024, with BT committing a financial contribution to the joint project;
- iv. note the launch of the £100,000 SME Maritime Mile Hub-In challenge competition to support collaborative innovation with local communities;
- v. grant approval for the Lord Mayor to write to the Mayor of Sejong welcoming his invitation to host a Belfast city delegation in May 2024 (fully funded by Connected Places Catapult) and to issue a reciprocal invite to Sejong in 2024;
- vi. approve the Council's continued participation in Innovation City Belfast, the recruitment of a City Innovation Commissioner and the Council's contribution to supporting an office of the commissioner for an initial two-year period; and
- vii. approve the participation of the Challenge Fund manager on the outward visit to Toronto MaRS Discovery District to support the development of the forthcoming Belfast Region City Deal Challenge Fund programme.

The Committee adopted the recommendations and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on the potential for creating a mechanism to ensure that local communities, thematic groups etc. were fully involved in the engagement process for initiatives of this nature. The Committee agreed also that, in future, all reports making reference to community consultation, whatever the issue, would list the names of the organisations/groups consulted.

**Appointment of Strategic
Director of City Operations**

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing details of the recruitment and selection process which had resulted in the appointment of Mr. David Sales to the post of Strategic Director of City Operations.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing an update on the progress on the work programme for the organisational reviews and change portfolio, including timescales, and on the review of the Continuous Improvement Section, which was responsible for progressing organisational reviews and change portfolio projects.

Update on Physical Programme

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration a report seeking approval to move projects within the Capital Programme and providing an update on the Black Mountain Shared Space and Shankill Women's Centre PEACE IV capital projects.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i granted approval to move the IT Programme – Grants Management System project to Stage 3 – Committed and agreed that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated, with the contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
- ii noted, in relation to the proposed Grants Management System, that Digital Services would be informed of the points which had been raised by Members around user friendliness, the migration of data and the need for consultation with existing users;
- iii granted approval for the St. George's Market – New Stalls project to be added as a Stage 1 – Emerging project to allow for a business case to be developed;
- iv agreed that a report be submitted to the relevant Committee on the potential for extending the hours of trading at St. George's Market and that the Market Traders' Association be included in any discussions;
- v agreed that the Special EU Programmes Body be invited to meet either with the Committee or the Party Leaders to discuss the ongoing challenging issues and risks associated with the Black Mountain Shared Space and the Shankill Shared Women's Centre projects, depending upon the outcome of its response, with an opinion on the Council's legal position to be sought; and

- vi agreed that a legal opinion be sought on the validity of the decision to exclude Northern Ireland from the latest round of Levelling Up funding.

(Councillor M. Donnelly declared an interest as soon as reference had been made to the Black Mountain Shared Space project, on the basis that he was on the Board of that organisation, and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion.)

Review of Summer Community Diversionary Fund

The Strategic Director of City Operations informed the Committee that the Summer Community Diversionary Programme, to which £500,000 had been allocated, had been established to support the delivery of community-based festivals and programmes aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour linked to the key dates of 11th July and 8th August. All activity should promote positive cultural expression and contribute to the achievement of the T:BUC outcomes of increasing participants' sense of community belonging and celebrating cultural diversity.

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 21st April, it had agreed that a review be undertaken of the Summer Community Diversionary Programme and, accordingly, submitted for the Committee's approval a proposed Terms of Reference for that review. He added that the Bonfire Panel, at its meeting on 5th September, had agreed that the review should be undertaken by an external consultant, in order to provide an independent perspective and that, should the Terms of Reference be approved, a procurement exercise would be undertaken, with up to a maximum of £15,000 to be allocated from existing Departmental budgets.

After discussion, during which several Members emphasised the need to retain those elements of the Summer Community Diversionary Programme which had been proven to be effective to date, the Committee approved the Terms of reference for the review and agreed that it should also take into consideration those groups in east and south Belfast which were delivering related programmes with demonstrable results.

Update on Hardship Programme 2023/24

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the development and implementation of the Hardship Programme for 2023/24, which sought to alleviate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on vulnerable people across the City. Funding of £1,019,000 was being made available for the financial year 2023/24 and the Committee, at its meeting on 20th October, had approved an indicative budget allocation and delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhood Services and the Director of City and Organisational Strategy to realign in-year underspends within the overall funding framework.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the realignment of budgets agreed through delegated authority in respect of Fareshare (-£40,000), Family Support Hubs (+£25,000) and Social Supermarkets (+£15,000);
- ii. agreed not to accede to the Red Cross' request for an indicative management fee of 22% (£16,666), with a report to be presented to the meeting in December on potential options for the redistribution of its allocation of £75k to support persons over the age of 55, having explored other delivery organisations and any scope for an open call process;
- iii. noted the acceptance, subject to letter of offer, of additional funds from the Public Health Agency to enhance and augment the Warm and Well Programme in nine designated hotspots;
- iv. noted the updates on the Schools' Project, communications approach and indicative timescales for the implementation of the Hardship Programme, as set out the report; and
- v. agreed that any further reallocations beyond the £75k referred to above, be allocated to schools.

Belfast 2024

The Committee agreed, in light of a number of issues which had been raised by Members, to hold a special meeting to consider the Belfast 2024 programme, including the commissioning of a bespoke, signature project entitled 'Power Plants', in the form of a series of sculptures by Oliver Jeffers, to be located within the grounds of the City Hall.

Alleygates Phase V

The Strategic Director of City Operations drew the Committee's attention to a report providing an update on Phase V of the Council's alleygating programme and seeking approval to proceed with the next steps, following the completion of the initial consultation exercise on the location of gates.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. agreed to proceed with the publication of a Gating Order for the installation of gates in those streets where the threshold for responses to the consultation had been 40% and above;
- ii. agreed to proceed with a ten-week consultation exercise for all remaining streets, using canvassers, local community groups etc., with Members to be informed when that process had commenced; and

- iii. noted that a report would be submitted to its next monthly meeting on the terms of reference for a local inquiry, where an objection to a proposed Gating Order had been received.

Funding Requests

The Strategic Director of City Operations submitted for the Committee's consideration the following requests for funding, which had been referred to it by the People and Communities Committee and for which no provision had been made within the revenue estimates for 2023/24 and beyond:

Capacity Building Grant Budget – TechDesk CIC

The Committee granted approval to increase the Capital Building Grant Budget by £47,500 per annum for the financial years 2023-26, to enable a grant payment to be made to TechDesk CIC.

New Parks Assets

The Committee agreed to allocate an annual budget of £15,000 to each of the following new parks assets, which did not have specific animation budgets, to allow for the early development of local community programming:

- Ballysillan Park
- Lower Shankill Park
- Marrowbone Park
- Páirc an Lonnain
- Páirc Nua Chollan
- Paisley Park and
- Pitt Park.

Lagan Valley Regional Park

The Committee agreed, in light of the shortfall in funding from the Department for Infrastructure, to allocate £21,000 to the Lagan Valley Regional Park, on condition that it be matched by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and agreed also that a review be undertaken of future funding requirements.

Reusable Period Product Scheme

The Committee agreed to allocate an additional £35,000 to enable the existing Reusable Period Product Scheme to be continued, with the future of the scheme to be reviewed in the context of whether The Period Products (Free Provision) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, being introduced in May, 2024, included reusable period products.

The Strategic Director of City Operations submitted also for the Committee's consideration the following additional request for funding:

Coláiste Feirste

The Committee agreed to allocate approximately £50,000 to Coláiste Feirste to assist with the provision of sporting facilities for public use.

Update on the MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre)

The Committee agreed to defer to a special meeting a request to provide The MAC with funding of £50k to assist it in addressing a significant in-year operating deficit.

The Committee agreed also that, in order to facilitate a timely decision, the special meeting be held before 11th December and that the Council delegate authority to the Committee to take any such decision or decisions as may be determined.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Mental Health Accessibility Audit

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Garrett and seconded by Councillor McCormick, to this Committee for consideration:

"Northern Ireland (NI) has the highest prevalence of mental health problems in the UK.

It is estimated that only 40% of people in NI who seek help can access effective mental health care and 79% of those do not receive the service they need.

This Council will conduct an online survey open to everyone who lives in the Council district to assess accessibility to mental health support within each District Electoral Area.

The survey will include but not be limited to assessing stakeholders' ease of access to mental health support, sample stakeholders' understanding of their rights regarding mental health, document the source of stressors and the number of services perceived to be providing mental health and well-being support in the district.

As leaders in the field of mental health provision, this Council will work with MindWise in co-designing and hosting the survey and will invite a representative from MindWise to give deputation to the relevant or interested Committee or Committees.”

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

Motion - Childcare Provision

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Maghie and seconded by Councillor Bower, to this Committee for consideration:

“This Council recognises childcare as vital social and economic infrastructure, a crucial form of early intervention, early education, an anti-poverty tool and a means by which to improve productivity and gender equality in the labour market across the Council area; believes that childcare should be child-centred, high quality and accessible to all children; and commits to reviewing how the Council can support childcare provision in the area, including reviewing whether schemes supported by the Council during school holidays can be expanded.”

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion, with the report to be submitted to a future meeting on how it could be facilitated to examine also the provision of childcare support for Council staff.

Motion - Rugby World Cup

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Lyons and seconded by Councillor Maghie, to this Committee for consideration:

“This council recognises the historic success of the Irish rugby team in the Rugby World Cup 2023 and agrees to hold a civic reception in its honour.”

The Committee agreed to adopt the motion.

Motion - Right to Food - Response from Department of Education

The Committee agreed to refer to the Social Policy Working Group a response which had been received from the Department of Education to the motion on a Right to Food, as passed by the Council at its meeting on 4th October.

Governance

Schedule of Meetings 2024

The Committee approved the following schedule of meetings for 2024, with all meetings to commence at 9.30 a.m.:

- Friday 12th January (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday 19th January
- Friday 23rd February
- Friday 22nd March
- Friday 19th April
- Friday, 24th May
- Friday, 21st June
- No monthly meeting in July
- Friday 23rd August
- Friday 20th September
- Friday 25th October
- Friday 22nd November and
- Friday 13th December

Change of Date of Council Meeting

The Committee approved the change of date of the Council meeting in January from Tuesday, 2nd to Monday, 8th, with proceedings to commence at the usual time of 6.00 p.m.

Code of Conduct - Disclosure of Restricted Information

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 At the Council meeting on 4th October, the Chief Executive, in response to a Member’s query, agreed to consider in conjunction with the City Solicitor, any internal measures which could be taken in respect of Members posting restricted information on social media, particularly when there were commercial sensitivities.

1.2 The City Solicitor has provided this report, which outlines the general duty of confidence in this regard and the steps that may be taken if a Member discloses confidential information.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the contents of this report, including the provisions within the 2014 Act and the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors in respect of the treatment of restricted information;**
- ii. note the steps that may be taken should a disclosure of confidential information be suspected; and**
- iii. consider the proposal to include a reference to ‘restricted’ reports and the duty of confidence in the Chairperson’s statement.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Access to Meetings and Documents

Part 8 of The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (‘the 2014 Act’) sets out the rules around public access to council meetings and documents.

A meeting of the council must be open to the public at all times, except where the council by resolution has excluded the public during an item of business whenever it is likely, due to the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item, that either:

- ‘confidential information’ would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence, or**
- ‘exempt information’ would be disclosed to the public.**

‘Confidential information’ means ‘information provided to the council by a government department upon terms (however expressed) which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public; and information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under any statutory provision or by the order of a court’.

‘Exempt information’ is defined in Section 51 and Schedule 6 of the 2014 Act.

The Council has the power by resolution to mark certain reports as ‘restricted’ and to exclude the public from proceedings whilst such reports are discussed. Reports which are marked restricted are required to describe the nature of the ‘exempt information’ from the categories listed in Schedule 6 of the 2014 Act.

3.2 The Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors

The Code of Conduct for Councillors Paragraph 4.15 is clear that a Member must not disclose any confidential information to the public unless authorised to do so. Confidential information includes any information discussed during a closed session of a council meeting.

Code paragraph 4.15

‘You must not disclose confidential information or information which should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential nature, without the express consent of a person authorised to give such consent; or unless required to do so by law.’

The Commissioner’s Guidance for Councillors includes the following guidance in relation to the disclosure of confidential information:

‘Confidential information may take a number of forms. Sometimes, the confidential nature of the information will be explicit, such as when a document is marked ‘confidential’. In other cases it will be clear from the nature of the information or from the circumstances in which it was provided to you that the information is confidential: all of the following types of information are confidential in nature:

- **commercial information, such as information relating to a contract or a contractor’s business;**

- personal information such as information relating to a person's employment;
- information which is confidential as a result of a statutory provision. For example, the Commissioner's investigations must be conducted in private and therefore all information relating to his investigations should be regarded as confidential;
- information discussed in the closed sections of meetings should always be treated as confidential; and
- legal advice obtained by your council, whether it was provided by external lawyers or by your council's own legal staff, is covered by legal privilege and should not be disclosed without the permission of the council'.

3.3 What are the next steps if a disclosure of information is suspected?

- 3.3** It is clear from reading the provisions in both the 2014 Act and the Code of Conduct that Members are not permitted to disclose any confidential or exempt information which is the subject of discussion during a closed session of a council meeting.

If such an occurrence takes place, whether intentionally or otherwise, there are a number of steps that could be taken, including:

- that the Council deal with the matter internally;
- that the Council may refer the matter to the Commissioner for Standards; or
- that any person may refer the matter to the Commissioner for Standards.

3.4 Steps the Council may take Internally

In the majority of cases, the Chief Executive or the City Solicitor may recommend that the Council deal with the matter internally and will immediately alert the Member concerned to their duty of confidence under the Code of Conduct. This may take place during the council proceedings or immediately afterwards if the disclosure is not apparent at the time. The Member will also be advised to remove any such disclosure of confidential information from social media or any other medium where it may be viewed or listened to.

(Note: Whilst the Council has developed an Internal Dispute Resolution Protocol, it can only be used to deal with potential breaches under 'Code Paragraph 4.13(a) – You must show respect and consideration for others'. The Protocol is not designed to deal with complaints made under any other provisions of the Code and such complaints should be made directly to the Local Government Commissioner for Standards).

Recommendation to add to the Chairperson's statement re restricted items

As Members will be aware, prior to dealing with restricted items the Chairperson reads a statement seeking approval to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting (see excerpt below).

Proposal to Exclude the Public from the Committee Meeting

'That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the Press and public from the Committee meeting during discussion of agenda items <> to <> inclusive as, due to the nature of those items, it is likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42 (4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.'

It is recommended that the following short sentence is added to this statement:

'Members are reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussions which take place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information may be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct'.

Member Training on the Code of Conduct

Members are also reminded that Council officers offer regular training on the Code of Conduct with the last session having been provided after the election in June 2023 and delivered by the Chief Executive, the City Solicitor and the Commissioner for Standards. Members are encouraged to avail of this training as and when it is offered.

3.5 Council may refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards

Depending on the nature and seriousness of the disclosure, the Chief Executive or the City Solicitor may in certain circumstances decide that it is in the interests of the Council that they refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards to

investigate an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct. These instances are rare and often involve allegations of serious misconduct and/or conduct which could cause reputational damage to the Council.

3.6 **Any person may refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards**

Any person can refer a matter to the Commissioner for Standards with respect to an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors. Such referrals will usually be from another Councillor or from a member of the public and will often be in relation to allegations of serious or clear breaches of the Code of Conduct.

3.7 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no financial or resource implications connected to this report.

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

There are no equality or good relations implications connected to this report.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed that, in future, the Chairperson of each Committee would make reference to restricted reports and Members’ duty of confidence under the Code of Conduct in their opening statement.

Election Accounts May, 2023

The Committee considered the following report:

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

1.1 To advise the Committee of the cost to the Council of the Local Government Elections held in May, 2023.

2.0 **Recommendation**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

3.0 **Main Report**

Key Issues

3.1 The local council expenditure for delivering Local Government Elections is, under the provision of the Electoral

Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962, constrained by a scale of expenditure set by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

- 3.2 The Local Election Fees and Expenses Scale for Belfast City Council for May, 2023 was £909,463. This excludes the cost of candidates' mailing, which is not included within that maximum. However, that cost still must be met by the Council.
- 3.3 The direct cost to the Council was £292,476.96 and the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland's costs charged to the Council were £551,858.00.
- 3.4 Therefore the cost of administering and delivering the election was £844,335, which was £65,127.68 under the budget set by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).
- 3.5 With the additional cost of candidates' mailing being £26,345.28 this brings the total cost to the Council to £1,120,353.92.
- 3.6 Compared with the cost of the Elections in 2019 of £853,008.64, this is an increase of £267,345.28.
- 3.7 This increase is due principally to the general increase in costs since four years ago, particularly staffing costs. Given this increase, a review of how we administer and deliver the elections will be undertaken to identify any potential cost saving measures going forward.
- 3.8 A breakdown of the cost is attached to this report.

3.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None associated with this report. The Council sets, each year during the rate setting process, an amount into a specified reserve to cover the cost of elections and there was sufficient funding in the budget to cover this year's election.

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

None associated with this report.”

Appendix

Local Government Election Account

Staff Costs

Polling staff, Count staff, training, security	527,073.55
Staff Costs Total	527,073.55

Administration Costs

Advertising	9,726.67
Stationery and Printing	63,290.00
Postage (poll cards, proxy poll cards, postal votes, staffing)	143,157.00
Use of Premises	12,680.00
Transportation	25,557.00
Equipment	56,142.00
Materials for verification and count	6,709.10
Administration Costs Total	317,261.77

SUB TOTAL 844,335.32

Postage

Candidates' Election Addresses	276,018.60
Candidates' Election Postage Costs Total	276,018.60

GRAND TOTAL 1,120,353.92

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Asset Management

Gasworks Northern Fringe

The Committee approved the disposal of c68 m² of land on Site A Gasworks Northern Fringe and of c24 m² on Site D to Radius Housing Association, with the Council to receive £12,500 and £3,200 respectively.

2 Royal Avenue

The Committee approved the surrender of a lease to AIB Group NI PLC in respect of the ATM structure at 2 Royal Avenue, for which the Council had received a nominal rent.

Cherryvale Playing Fields

The Committee granted approval to commence the vesting process in respect of c25 m² of land separating Cherryvale Playing Fields from the public footpath and Road, with the Council to be liable for the costs associated with the application and maintenance of the land moving forward.

Gregagh Green

The Committee approved the grant of a licence to Cregagh Wanderers Football Club for general container provision at Cregagh Green, with the licence to be drafted by the Legal Services Section on the instructions of the Estates Management Unit.

Station Street Car Park

The Council approved the renewal of a licence agreement with the Department for Communities in relation to the Council operated off-street car park at Station Street, with the Council to pay a licence fee, as assessed by Land and Property Services and retain all revenue generated.

Leisure Centres

The Committee granted approval to enter into seven-year legal agreements with electric charge point operator EASYGO to regulate the operation of electric vehicle chargers at the seven leisure centre sites listed below, with the legal agreement for each site to be finalised and agreed with the Legal Services Section and EASYGO to be responsible for the installation, maintenance and operation of the charging points for the duration of the term:

- Avoniel Leisure Centre
- Ballysillan Leisure Centre
- Brook Leisure Centre
- Girdwood Community Hub
- Grove Wellbeing and Treatment Centre
- Whiterock Leisure Centre and
- Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

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, with the term of the St. Patricks Day contract with Tradfest to be renegotiated to one year and a report to be submitted at the earliest opportunity to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee providing:
 - i. further information on the difficulties which had been experienced around the tender process for this contract, in terms of preparedness for future years; and
 - ii. an update on the award of the contracts for the other three elements of the St. Patrick’s Day programme; and
- approved the modification of the contract, as per Standing Order 37a, as detailed in Table 3 below.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short Description of Goods / Services
Maintenance, repair and inspection of grounds maintenance plant and equipment	Up to 5 years	£750,000	D. Sales	Maintenance, repair and inspection of grounds maintenance plant and equipment to fulfil the requirements of the OSS service
Telephone service provision - calls / lines / broadband	Up to 12 months	£152,131	P. Gribben	The corporate telephony solution required so that all devices and users have ongoing service provision
Planned preventative maintenance for backup generators to 7 Council Properties	Up to 3 years	£120,000	S. Grimes	Recurring contract for backup generators to 7 properties to cover callouts, repairs and planned maintenance
MTC for fire and intruder alarms maintenance	Up to 3 years	£210,000	S. Grimes	Recurring contract which covers callouts, repairs, planned

				maintenance and small works to fire and intruder alarms systems to all council properties
Online civic engagement platform	Up to 4 years	£78,000	P. Gribben	Current contract for civic engagement platform expires in Aug 24
Collection and recycling of scrap metal and abandoned vehicles	Up to 4 years	£900,000 (Income)	C. Matthews	Recurring contract to ensure the Council recycles scrap metal and maximises associated income.
Supply and delivery of office furniture including office design and fit-out service	Up to 5 years	£250,000*	N Largey	Various departments and buildings in the ongoing office furniture needs covering simple repair/ replacement requirements through to new office fit out and redesign services. * Estimated £50k per annum spend. Spend is cross-departmental and not solely Legal and Civic Services.
The provision of external mail collection service for outbound mail from the centralised mailroom	Up to 3 years	£400,000	P. Gribben	To provide the continued operation and support of the mailroom and outbound post

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Support and maintenance of eSourcing tendering solution	Up to 2 years	£73,000	P. Gribben	Licences for the continued use of eSourcing until new finance system is in place	Bravosolutions UK Ltd	3
Provision of a city centre weekend music programme as part of the overall St Patrick's	Up to 3 years	£210,000	J Greer	A formal tender process was carried out which resulted in a NIL return. A direct award is being made to a local social	Belfast Tradfest	1

day celebrations				enterprise with experience in delivering musical festivals.		
Booking system for Belfast Castle and Malone House	Up to 3 years	£36,000	P Gribben	Continued use of the booking system at BC and MH until a replacement system can be procured. Based on current programme of work within Digital Services, capital investment required and associated planning required it is unlikely this would be actioned until 2 to 3 years. Kinetic Solutions are the only supplier of the current booking system and associated licences/software.	Kinetics Solutions	3

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T2335 Procurement of a Local Area Energy Plan for Belfast and Queens Island (Fully funded)	Up to 11 months	Additional 4 months	J. Tully	Requesting a 4 month extension of contract period up to 31 March 2024 to due to implementation delay. No additional expenditure	Energy Systems Catapult

**Accounting Treatment of
Belfast Investment Fund**

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide the Committee with information on how the accounting treatment of the Belfast Investment Fund.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 At the Council meeting on 1st October, the Chief Executive agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee outlining the accounting treatment in relation to the allocation of funding for the Belfast Investment Fund..

3.2 The Belfast Investment Fund was first set up to support partnership projects across the city, with a recurring amount included in the revenue estimates of £3.27m. The intention being to borrow the money to pay for the projects with the recurring budget covering the borrowing costs.

3.3 Due to slippages in delivery of projects to date, the majority of projects have been funded by the recurring budget without the need to borrow. As at period 7 (31 October 2023), the fund has an amount of £5,379,365 allocated to it.

3.4 The fund would be designated as a cash backed fund, however, this does not mean that the Council has £5.4m sitting in an account waiting to be spent on Belfast Investment Fund projects. Similarly, it does not have cash/investments to support all its useable reserves. For information, as at 31st March 2023, the Council had useable reserves of £87,787,629 but only held cash and cash equivalents of £19,140,662.

3.5 This is due to the Council using its cash to fund capital expenditure, referred to as internal borrowing, and then only using external borrowing as and when required to ensure it has adequate working capital.

- 3.6 By applying this approach to managing its cash balances the Council minimises its cost of carry, i.e., the difference borrowing rates and investment returns.

Accounting Treatment

- 3.7 As mentioned above, the annual amount include in the estimates is £3.27m. Every month 1/12th of this amount is debited to the cost centre and credited to the balance sheet, BIF Account. At the end of the financial year an amount is transferred from the BIF balance sheet account to finance the capital expenditure incurred on Belfast Investment Fund projects.

- 3.8 **Financial and Resource Implications**

None

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

None.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Social Policy Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Social Policy Working Group of 14th November.

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 6th November, including the recommendations:

Schedule of Meetings

- to approve the schedule of meetings for 2024, with a commencement time of 1.30 p.m.;

Membership of Shared City Partnership

- to note the update and approve the approach for the filling of vacant positions, as set out within the minutes;

Good Relations Scope of Work

- to note the update and that an updated Action Plan would be submitted to the meeting of the Partnership in December, which would aim to further build sustainable good relations within communities; and

Peace Plus

- to note the update.

Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 – Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Annual Monitoring Return

The Committee approved the Annual Monitoring Return to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for 2022-23 [here](#), which provided evidence of how the Council had met certain duties under the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016.

Modern Slavery Act 2015: Updated Modern Slavery Statement and Corporate Action Plan

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement to meet the obligations of the Modern Slavery Act, 2015 and an update on the related corporate action plan.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. note the updated annual Modern Slavery Transparency in Supply Chains Statement (the 'Transparency Statement') [here](#);**
- ii. approve the addition of the Transparency Statement to the UK Government's online registry; and**
- iii. note the progress made on the action plan [here](#)**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the 'Act') aims to address slavery and trafficking by enhancing support and protection

for victims, giving law enforcement the tools needed to target today's slave drivers and ensuring perpetrators can be severely punished. It also includes a provision in Section 54 to encourage organisations to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free, known as the Transparency in Supply Chains arrangements ('TISC').

3.2 Key Issues

The Council has voluntarily published an annual Transparency Statement on its website since 2015. This sets out what the Council has done to ensure there is no modern slavery in its supply chains or any part of its business.

This year, the annual Transparency Statement has been reviewed by Commercial and Procurement Services, the Council's Safeguarding Officer, the Council's Registrar for Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships and the Equality and Diversity Officer and has been refreshed to reflect current guidance on its content. An updated version for 2022-23 can be accessed in paragraph 2.1 above which, following Council ratification, will be published on the Council's website.

3.3 Recent changes to the Transparency Statement Requirements

The TISC provisions currently apply to commercial organisations, however, in recent years both the UK Government and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice have reviewed and consulted on these provisions and their potential application to the public sector:

- In July 2018, the Home Secretary undertook an independent review of the Act and made recommendations, one of which was to strengthen Section 54 by extending the requirement to publish Modern Slavery Statements to government and the public sector;
- In July 2019, the UK Government launched a consultation on measures to strengthen the TISC arrangements and published its proposals on how it planned to take this work forward. Many of the proposed changes will require legislative change which has not happened to date. The proposed changes would see a strengthening of the TISC arrangements for commercial businesses, and would, for the first time, extend them so they apply to the public sector; and

- In January 2022, the Northern Ireland Department of Justice ('DOJ') published its report, summary of responses and next steps in response to its consultation on TISC. It found that overall, there is widespread support for the strengthening of TISC arrangements.

3.4 Approach to Modern Slavery in Northern Ireland

In October 2022, the DOJ launched a public consultation on a new three-year draft Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy.

The DOJ noted in its consultation that the UK Government plan to make additional changes to the TISC provisions in the Act. The additional changes include:

1. Reporting on specific topics;
2. Publishing the MS statement on a public registry;
3. Setting a deadline for submitting a statement annually;
4. Extending the requirement to publish a statement to public sector organisations with a turnover of over £36million; and
5. The introduction of financial penalties for those that do not publish a slavery statement.

The public consultation closed in January 2023. The DOJ Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit has advised that a report has been drafted and is awaiting sign off.

- 3.5 It should be noted that the Legislative Consent of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be required to extend any UK Government changes to Northern Ireland.

Alongside the consultation, the DOJ published a progress report on the commitments laid out in the 2021-22 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Progress Report states in part that the DOJ 'will engage further with public sector procurement leads once the additional measures to strengthen TISC are progressed in legislation and will become mandatory for all businesses with an annual turnover of over £36million.'

- 3.6 In March 2021, the UK Government launched an online modern slavery statement registry. Since its launch, over 7,000 statements have been submitted covering over 23,350 organisations on a voluntary basis.

Members asked to approve the addition of the Belfast City Council Transparency Statement to this registry.

3.7 Action Plan

In October 2021, the Council approved an action plan to tackle modern slavery to be taken forward by various departments. This was based on guidance from NILGA. An updated version can be accessed in paragraph 2.1 above.

Members should note that the suggested action of developing a Council protocol for reporting suspicions of Modern Slavery has been removed because Government guidance states that suspicions should be reported either to the police or to the Modern Slavery Helpline.

Members should also note that an initial awareness session for relevant Council managers on recognising Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking was held on 17 November 2022 by the Department of Justice.

3.8 Reporting

The Governance and Compliance Manager co-ordinates an annual report on progress to be brought to CMT and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

3.9 Financial and Resource Implications

The implementation of the action plan will involve staff from City and Neighbourhood Services, Legal Services, Governance & Compliance Services, Commercial and Procurement Services, Corporate HR and Marketing and Corporate Communications.

3.10 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Any equality, good relations or rural needs implications will be identified using the council's usual screening process."

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Equality and Diversity Annual Report to the
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2022-23**

The Committee was advised that the Council was required, under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to provide the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland with an annual report on the progress of the implementation of its Equality Scheme, as well as an update on the delivery of its Disability Action Plan.

Accordingly, the Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's approval the annual report for 2022/23.

The Committee approved the annual report [here](#) and noted that it would be submitted to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland following Council ratification.

Draft Changing Places Toilet Policy

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committee's consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's approval to issue the draft Changing Places Toilet Policy for public consultation.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to grant approval to issue the draft policy [here](#) for public consultation.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

A motion proposed by Councillor Ross McMullan calling for the introduction of a Changing Places Toilets Policy for Belfast City Council was referred to this Committee by the Council on 1st September 2021. The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report be brought back to a subsequent meeting providing details on how it would be facilitated, resourced and managed.

An update report was brought to the Disability Working Group in February 2023, summarising the motion and the proposed approach. A Changing Places Toilet Policy officer working group has met regularly over the past few months and their input has helped inform the various factors which the policy must consider including how it will be facilitated, resourced and managed.

A further update was brought to the Disability Working Group on 10th October, which endorsed the draft Policy and recommended that it be brought back to this Committee for approval.

3.2 Draft Policy and Key Issues Arising

The final draft policy being presented for Committee approval can be accessed. A summary of the policy is included below.

Buildings

- Members will note that the requirement to provide Changing Places Toilet (CPT) facilities in all large new builds of a certain size is enforced through the amended Building Regulations rather than through this policy.
- The policy restates this requirement but goes further by adding consideration of CPTs where we extend or refurbish existing buildings, even if the provision of CPTs were not required by the amended building regulations.

Council Estate

- The policy, as drafted, would also commit the Council to carrying out a review of where CPT facilities could be installed on the council estate.
- When reviewing the provision of any future CPT facilities within the Council estate we will consider the existing level of provision on the Council estate and also the availability of CPT facilities in non-Council assets.
- Whilst cost alone will not be the deciding factor in any decision, the cost of installing any specific Changing Places facility will need to be carefully considered in conjunction with all of the other capital programme priorities identified by the Council.
- The management and maintenance of any such CPT facility will need to be carefully considered when examining any proposal. Following installation there will be ongoing costs associated with cleaning, checking and maintaining the equipment within the facility.

Events

- The draft policy extends to events and creates new requirements upon both the Council and external events organisers.
- When organising public events, the Council will consider if it can take place at a venue that already has a Changing Places facility or will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that customers have access to either a fixed or portable Changing Places facility as part of the design of the event.
- The Council will require external organisers of all large-scale public events (e.g. concerts, festivals) on council property to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that customers have access to either a fixed or portable Changing Places facility as part of the design of the event.
- It will be a condition of hire that any large-scale event (whether it needs an entertainments licence or not) must have a Changing Places facility. This should be included in the lease agreement between council and the event organiser. It should also be a condition of hire that event organisers must complete the Planning Checklist at Section E of the Council's 'Inclusive Events Guide' for review by the EDU team.
- As a further step, we will consider the requirement to include an access audit within the Event Management Plan which is submitted in support of the event. It would then be for the organiser to justify why they would not be required to include a CPT as part of their site set-up. An officer of the Council involved in management of the land for hire must ensure these steps are followed.
- The Council when organising smaller public events, will encourage small scale events organisers to undertake an accessibility audit and provide a Changing Places facility where possible.
- The Council's 'Inclusive Events Guide' has been refreshed. The new Small Scale Events Checklist has been circulated to the Committee.

Responsibility

- The Legal and Civic Services Department will be the corporate lead for this policy however actions will be required across different departments including Place and Economy and City and Neighbourhood Services.

3.3 It is proposed that an application be made to the Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion Programme in 24/25 to secure funding which could contribute towards the purchase of a mobile changing places unit which could be used at events.

3.4 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are potential resource implications associated with this policy and its implementation may result in the need for future capital funding by Council.

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

A Changing Places Toilet Policy may have potential equality, good relations and rural needs implications and will be subject to our normal screening process as appropriate.

3.6 The introduction of such a policy will present an opportunity for the council to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life.”

The Committee adopted the recommendation to issue the draft policy for public consultation.

Operational Issues

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 16th November.

Update to Health and Safety Policy Statement

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services informed the Committee that there was a statutory requirement upon the Council to have a Health and Safety Policy Statement in place and to revise it, as and when required. The Statement provided information on the Council as an organisation and its commitment to health and safety and the work being done to achieve its commitments

and was signed on an annual basis by the Chief Executive, the Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and the nominated Director for health and safety matters. The document had last been reviewed and signed in April, 2019, prior to the Coronavirus pandemic.

She reported that a review of the Statement had recently been undertaken and drew the Committee's attention to a minor amendment relating to the commitments on setting objectives and targets.

The Committee approved the revised Health and Safety Policy Statement [here](#) and noted that it would be communicated to Council staff through Interlink, health and safety committees and corporate health and safety training.

Requests for the use of the City Hall Grounds for Events in 2024

The Committee approved the following requests for the use of the City Hall Grounds and noted that each organiser would be required to submit an event management plan and risk assessment in advance of their event:

- Action Cancer Breast Foot Forward Walk – 7th June;
- Pride Picnic – 20th July;
- Féile Rocks Pride Concert – 27th July;
- Belfast One Film Screening – 10th and 11th August; and
- Belfast Mela Carnival Parade Party – 17th August.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group of 16th November.

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations in respect of those applications received up to 10th November, as set out below:

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2024 EVENTS						
Pharmacy Forum	8 February 2024	Rewarding Excellence Awards celebrating excellence in pharmacy profession and fellowships awarded for outstanding contributions. Numbers attending – 100	B & C	No (charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
European Youth Parliament	27 February 2024	NI Regional Session of Youth Parliament - teams of secondary students debate and present their ideas and solutions on current topics. Numbers attending – 100	B & D	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for soft drinks on arrival</i>
Indian Women Association Belfast	10 March 2024	International Women's Day Celebration - Cultural programme of lunch and entertainment. Numbers attending 100	D	No charge as not for profit group	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Association of Canadian Studies in Ireland (ACSI)	9 May 2024	Reception for the 21st Biennial International Conference of the Association of Canadian Studies in Ireland for guests attending their 3 day congress taking place in Queens University.	A & B	No as (Charity and linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

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		Numbers attending - 150				
British Council Northern Ireland	5 September 2024	Study USA Graduation 2024 for students returning to Northern Ireland following completion of their year's study in the United States under the Study USA programme and in recognition of their achievements and to celebrate the success of the programme, Numbers attending - 120	A &B	No (Charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
DFK International	7 November 2024	DFK Annual Gala Ball - Dinner and entertainment for guests attending their 7 day congress Numbers attending - 130	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality
Polish Educational and Cultural Association	23 November 2024	Polish Independence Day 2024 – Celebration event to promote diversity and reflect on positive contribution of Polish community. Numbers attending – 160	C & D	No charge as Charity	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>

2025 EVENTS						
Ulster University (Local organiser for the British Accounting & Finance Association Conference)	1 May 2025	British Accounting & Finance Association Conference Dinner and entertainment for guests attending their 3 day congress taking place in Ulster University. Numbers attending - 400	A &B	No (Waiver as linked to Visit Belfast)	No hospitality	Approve No Charge No hospitality

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Request for Update on Motion on
Overdose Prevention Facility in Belfast**

The Committee agreed, at the request of Councillor Smyth, that a report be submitted to its next monthly meeting providing an update on the above-mentioned motion, which had been passed by the Council at its meeting on 1st March, with specific reference to meetings held, legal advice sought and partners engaged with.

Chairperson