

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 15th December, 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,
Harvey, Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin,
R. McLaughlin, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Smyth
and Whyte.
- 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. 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. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
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

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 24th November were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 4th December, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ferguson declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2e - Update on Area Working Groups – Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund Stage 2 Development, insofar as it related to a recommendation within the minutes of the meeting of the North Belfast Area Working Group of 21st November to move the Belfast Orange Hall refurbishment project to Stage 3 - Delivery, on the basis that the Orange Lodge of which he was a member held meetings in that building and left the meeting whilst those minutes were being considered.

Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in relation to agenda item 2g – Leisure Transformation Programme Phase 3 – Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, on the basis that he was a member of the Girdwood Community Forum and left the meeting whilst that item was under consideration.

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in respect of agenda item 2e - Update on Area Working Groups – Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund Stage 2 Development, insofar as it related to a recommendation within the minutes of the meeting of the West Belfast Area Working Group of 23rd November to move Fáilte Feirste Thiar – The Mountainview Hotel to Stage 3 - Delivery, in that she was employed by Fáilte Feirste Thiar and left the meeting whilst those minutes were being considered.

Councillor Smyth declared an interest in relation to agenda item 4e - Department of Health Consultation – Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Services in Northern Ireland, in that he worked with young people within the care system. However, as the report did not become the subject of discussion, he did not have an opportunity to leave the meeting.

Restricted Items

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

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

**Appointment of Strategic
Director of Place and Economy**

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing details of the recruitment and selection process which had resulted in the appointment of Mr. Damien Martin to the post of Strategic Director of Place and Economy.

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, as detailed in Table 3 below;
- noted the award of retrospective Single Tender Actions, in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions, as detailed in Table 4 below; and
- agreed that the next quarterly report on employees on temporary contracts and agency staff include detailed information on those off-contracts for the recruitment of temporary staff for posts which could not be filled by the current contracted provider.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short Description of Goods / Services
Office Supplies (including copier paper, and IT consumables) Approximately contract value for all Councils across 4 years. BCC spend approximately £690,000 across 4 years.	Up to 4 years	£2,478,000	T. Wallace	The Council will be procuring, on behalf of all councils in NI, a contract for the supply and delivery of various office supplies. The new contract will include a 2% retrospective contract rebate payable to BCC (as a contract management fee).
Implementation of two modules from the F5 security suite	Up to 3 years	£48,000	P. Gribben	Protection of the Council network and controlled access for suppliers and staff with non-Council devices.
General Building Services	Up to 3 years	£225,000	S. Grimes	The provision of building works not carried out by the Property Maintenance Unit including internal demolition, alterations, concrete work, brickwork, plastering, tiling etc.

Electrical Remedial Repairs	Up to 3 years	£180,000	S. Grimes	To ensure all insurance electrical remedials are carried out to keep Council properties compliance with regulations.
Portable Appliance Testing 'PAT'	Up to 3 years	£75,000	S. Grimes	The Council requires the necessary PAT inspection and testing to ensure that electrical equipment is maintained properly so as to prevent risk of injury.
Arboriculture Services	Up to 5 years	£4,000,000	D. Sales	The current contractor is unable to meet the resource capacity obligatory to facilitate the Councils arboriculture requirements and we will not be renewing their current contract beyond 31 March 2024. We are requesting that we start work on a new Arboriculture tender and break the new tender into three smaller lots across the city to encourage greater competition and ensure the Council has adequate resource capacity going forward.
Supply and delivery of fertilisers, pesticides and grass seed	Up to 5 years	£550,000	D. Sales	Fertilisers, pesticides and grass seed required for the maintenance and development of sports facilities, parks and open spaces within Open spaces and street scene.

<p>The distribution of City Matters (Belfast City Council's resident's magazine)</p> <p>*Approved March 2023 for 2 years, now reviewed to 3 years (no additional cost)</p>	<p>Up to 3 years</p>	<p>£140,000</p>	<p>E. McConville</p>	<p>Secure and effective delivery of City Matters is required for over 160k homes in Belfast and boundary areas within the Belfast City Council district area.</p>
<p>Integrated software solution/ In-cab technology for fleet telematics and vehicle routing</p>	<p>Up to 10 years</p>	<p>£4,300,000</p>	<p>C Matthews</p>	<p>To replace the existing fleet telematics system and limited routing functionality (both currently provided under separate STAs) with an integrated and more comprehensive solution in line with organisational needs.</p>

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
<p>MTC Mechanical Services Cover</p>	<p>Up to 3 months</p>	<p>£150,000</p>	<p>S. Grimes</p>	<p>This tender/contract has experienced ongoing issues due to a previous legal challenge which prevented the award of contract.</p> <p>This STA is required to ensure continuity of service until the completion of the tender evaluation process with handover/implementation of the new contract.</p> <p>This will ensure the incumbent contractor WJM Building Services Ltd will continue to carry out essential mechanical services including callouts, repairs and planned maintenance</p>	<p>WJM Building Services Ltd.</p>	<p>11</p>

				until the new contract is in place.		
Continued use of the HR and Payroll System	Up to 2 years	£313,325	S. McNicholl	STA is required to allow for the continued processing of payroll for all BCC employees and Councillors and for implementation of Time and Attendance for BCC Employees. Zellis are the only supplier for associated licenses and maintenance support of the HR Payroll System.	Zellis UK Ltd	3
Provision of a Carnival Parade / Pageant for St Patrick's Day 2023	Up to 1 year	£45,000	J. Greer	A formal tender process was carried out which resulted in a NIL return (Lot 1 under T2441 tender competition). A direct award is being made to a company with experience in delivering parades of this nature.	Luxe	1

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T2077 Delivery of Enterprise Awareness Activities	Up to 3 years	Additional 3 months	J. Greer	There will be a continued need to provide business plan assessments over the next 3 months and requires an extension of contract length with no further budget allocation.	Podiem Ltd

<p>T1872 Provision of animal healthcare services at Belfast Zoo</p>	<p>Up to 64 months</p>	<p>Additional 2 months</p>	<p>J. Greer</p>	<p>An additional 2-months is required to ensure continuity of service whilst tender process is completed.</p>	<p>Jubilee Veterinary Centre</p>
<p>T2377 Provision of catering services (retail and small to medium sized events) at Belfast Castle This is a concession contract with estimated annual gross revenue of £1,180,000 for the contractor (based on pre-Covid figures), of which a minimum 5% commission will be payable to the Council.</p>	<p>Up to 1 year</p>	<p>Additional 4 months</p>	<p>J. Greer</p>	<p>A contract modification is required to allow for a new tender process to be completed. Work is currently underway to review and update the current specification in line with Departmental requirements and to advertise the tender.</p>	<p>Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)</p>
<p>T2422 Provision of catering services (retail and small to medium sized events) at Malone House This is a concession contract with estimated annual gross revenue of £435,000 for the contractor (based pre-Covid figures), of which a minimum 5% commission will be payable to the Council.</p>	<p>Up to 8 months</p>	<p>Additional 4 months</p>	<p>J. Greer</p>	<p>A contract modification is required to allow for a new tender process to be completed. Work is currently underway to review and update the current specification in line with Departmental requirements and to advertise the tender.</p>	<p>Café Nosh</p>

Table 4: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Requirement for temp Partnership Support Officer in the PCSP Team	Up to 12 months	£62,400	D. Sales	The existing contracted provider for T1792 Provision of Temporary Agency Resources: Matrix SCM were unable to fulfil the required role of Partnership Support Officer within the contractually agreed time period.	Honeycomb Recruitment	11
Annual property asset valuations *Previously approved March 2023 for £165,000 for 3 years, now reviewed discussions/ negotiations with LPS.	Up to 5 years	£310,000	S. Grimes	LPS are the only suitable supplier who can deliver the service BCC requires due to conflicts of interest that exist with other local estate agents.	LPS	3

STA/ Direct Award Reasons

Reason Code	Reasons in line with Public Contact Regulations
1	No response following advertised procurement exercise.
2	Creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance.
3	Competition is absent for technical reasons (no reasonable substitute exists).
4	The protection of exclusive rights, including intellectual property rights.
5	Extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by BCC, the time limits for a procurement cannot be complied with.
6	Products manufactured purely for the purpose of research, experimentation, study or development.
7	Additional deliveries which are intended either as a partial or extended replacement of supplies or installations where a change of supplier would result in supplies of different technical characteristics causing incompatibility or disproportionate technical difficulties in operation and maintenance.
8	Supplies quoted and purchased on a commodity market.
9	Supplies or services on particularly time-limited advantageous terms e.g. supplier winding up its business activities.
10	New works and services consisting of the repetition of similar works or services, provided that the possibility of a direct award is disclosed during the original tender process.
11	Other – Reason not in line with Public Contract Regulations (PCR 2015).

Update on Hardship Programme 2023/24

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th October, it had been provided with an update on the development and implementation of the Hardship Programme for 2023/24 and had approved an indicative budget allocation in respect of the £1,019,000 of funding which was being made available.

The Committee was reminded further that, at its meeting on 24th November, it had agreed not to accede to the Red Cross' request for an indicative management fee of 22% (£16,666) and had requested that a report be presented to its next meeting 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.

The Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty informed the Committee that, given the time bound nature of the funding being made available through the Department for Communities and the lead-in time and resources required to put in place the necessary processes, an open call process would not be feasible.

Accordingly, he recommended that, of the £75k which had been allocated initially to the Red Cross, the Committee:

- i. agree to allocate £50k to Age NI, a well-established regional organisation with close links and pathways in place, linked to organisations in the City which delivered services directly to older people and was a member of the Belfast Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership; and
- ii. agree to allocate an additional £25k to the Warm and Well Programme, to be used for the provision of oil, gas and electric vouchers, of which the majority of users would be over the age of 55.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- i. that Council officers explore with Age NI the potential to establish formal referral pathways with a number of existing community-based constituted groups and, should that be feasible, if it would consider administering the full £75k, as demand would be likely to increase;
- ii. that, should Age NI be unable to administer the full £75k, the Warm and Well Programme be allocated an additional £25k;
- iii. that any future Hardship Programme being brought forward should seek to factor in an element of open call; and
- iv. noted the recent publication of the Cost-of-Living Support Guide and associated press release.

Asset Management

Unit 5, St. George's Market

The Committee approved the renewal of a lease for Unit 5, St. George's Market for a further 10 years from 1st May, 2020, with the Council to receive a revised rent of £13,900 per annum and an associated uplift in the fixed 10% service charge of £1,390 per annum.

Belfast Stories Site, Union Street

The Committee approved the use of part of the vacant land on the Belfast Stories site by BRINK! Stories Community Interest Company for meanwhile use, under a short-term licence, with the Council to receive a licence fee of £125 per acre per month, to be calculated pro rata, depending on agreement of the final site boundary and area.

Lagmore Activity Park

The Committee approved the surrender of a small portion of Council leased land at Lagmore Activity Park back to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to enable the contractor currently constructing a

social housing development to carry out improvements to the adjacent road junction.

Cavehill Country Park

The Committee granted approval for the Council to enter into a retrospective easement with St. Gerard's Church, with both parties to be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and repair of pipework contained within their respective lands, to address water drainage issues.

Springhill Millennium Park

The Committee approved the part surrender of a lease for the lower portion of the lands at Springhill Millennium Park back to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Update on Area Working Groups - Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund Stage 2 Development

North Belfast Area Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the North Belfast Area Working Group of 21st November, comprising the following recommendations:

- i. to note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. to note the information on the Stage 2 projects;
- iii. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to *Stage 3 – Delivery* in North Belfast, with the allocations as stated:
 - Ulster Supported Employment Ltd. – Green Growth and the Circular Economy project, £518,191;
 - Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum – Cliftonville Community Enterprise project, £1,452,700;
 - Sailortown Regeneration Group – St. Joseph's Restoration project, £154,696;
 - Ardoyne Youth Enterprise – AYE Youth and Community Hub project, £154,696; and
 - Belfast Orange Hall – Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment project, £154,696.

- iv. to note the Stage 3 process and that the projects and allocations would be reviewed in 12 months' time; and
- v. to note the approach regarding feedback and support to those groups that are not progressing to Stage 3 – Delivery.

West Belfast Area Working Group

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the West Belfast Area Working Group of 23rd November, comprising the following recommendations:

- i. to note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. to note the information on the Stage 2 projects;
- iii. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to *Stage 3 – Delivery* in West Belfast, with the allocations as stated:
 - Fáilte Feirste Thiar – The Mountainview Hotel, £1,500,000;
 - Michael Davitt's GAC – Michael Davitt's Community Heritage Centre, £647,000; and
 - Glór na Móna – Croí na Carraige – 'The Heart of the Rock' Phase 1, £500,000;
- iv. to note the Stage 3 process and that the projects and allocations would be reviewed in 12 months' time;
- v. to note the approach regarding feedback and support to those groups that were not progressing to Stage 3 – Delivery; and
- vi. to hold a special meeting of the West Belfast Area Working Group in January, 2024 to consider the Shankill projects.

South Belfast Area Working Group

The Committee was requested to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group of 27th November, including the following recommendations relating to the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund:

- i. to note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. to note the information on the Stage 2 projects;

- iii. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery in South Belfast, with the allocations as stated below:
- Sólás Special Needs Charity – Sólás New Build project, £800,000;
 - Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Branching Out project, £224,949;
 - Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group (LORAG) - Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, £224,949;
 - Hearth Historic Buildings Trust - Redevelopment of Riddel's Warehouse, £224,949;
 - Fitzroy Presbyterian Church - Redevelopment of Former School of Music, £224,949; and
 - Market Development Association - Market Heritage Hub, £224,949.
- iv. to note the Stage 3 process and that the projects and allocations would be reviewed in 12 months' time; and
- v. to note the approach regarding feedback and support to those groups which were not progressing to Stage 3 – Delivery.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the Committee agrees that the list of projects to be progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery in South Belfast and corresponding allocations be amended as follows:

- Market Development Association - Market Heritage Hub, £650,000;
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Branching Out project, £650,000;
- Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group (LORAG) - Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, £300,000;
- Fitzroy Presbyterian Church - Redevelopment of Former School of Music, £300,000; and

- Sólás Special Needs Charity – Sólás New Build project, £24,744.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth,

That the Committee agrees that a special meeting of the South Belfast Area Working Group be held to enable further consideration to be given to the projects to be progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery.

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

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie,

That the Committee agrees to adopt in full the recommendations of the South Belfast Working Group in relation to the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

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

The original proposal, standing in the name of Councillor Garrett and seconded by Councillor Bunting, was thereupon put to the meeting when thirteen Members voted for and five against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the South Belfast Area Working Group of 27th November, as amended.

East Belfast Area Working Group

The Committee was requested to approve and adopt the minutes of the meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 30th November, including the following recommendations relating to the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund:

- i. to note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. to note the information on the Stage 2 projects;
- iii. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to *Stage 3 – Delivery* in East Belfast, with the allocations as stated below:

- Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre - Portview Exchange, £620,000;
 - Impact Belfast – Impact Belfast Hub, £270,000;
 - Ulster Rugby – Nevin Spence Centre Visitor Experience, £270,000; and
 - Eastside Property Belfast Ltd – Eastside Container Hotel, £750,000;
- iv. to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to *Stage 2 – Development* in East Belfast:
- Dundela Football, Athletic and Social Club - Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park; and
 - East Belfast Mission - Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road; and
- v. to note the Stage 3 process and that the projects and allocations were to be reviewed in 12 months' time; and
- vi. to note the approach regarding feedback and support to those groups that were not progressing to Stage 3 – Delivery.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Smyth,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees:

- i. that a special meeting of the East Belfast Area Working Group be held to enable further consideration to be given to the projects to be progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery; and
- ii. to proceed with the Dundela Football, Athletic and Social Club and East Belfast Mission projects to Stage 2 – Development.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Maghie,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees to adopt in full the recommendations of the East Belfast Working Group in relation to the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

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

The original proposal, standing in the name of Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor de Faote, was thereupon put to the meeting and passed.

Accordingly, the Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the East Belfast Area Working Group of 30th November, as amended.

Discretionary Payments

The Committee noted the contents of a report providing information on the revised criteria and scoring matrix to be used to assess applications for discretionary funding in 2023/24.

Leisure Transformation Programme Phase 3 – Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility

The Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the Council's Leisure Transformation Programme.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the preferred option emerging from the business case for the Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, as set out within the report, and approved this as the facilities mix;
- ii. agreed to proceed to the next step in the process, that is, to submit a business case to the Department for Communities, to be taken through the Department of Finance's approval processes, with Council officers to simultaneously review the detailed designs and progress planning;
- iii. noted the current funding gap identified within the report and that various options would be considered moving forward;
- iv. noted that a consultant had been appointed to examine those centres which had not been taken forward under the phases of the Leisure Transformation Programme to date, namely, Ballysillan, Belvoir, Loughside, Ozone and Whiterock, as well as the leisure focused independently managed community facilities;
- v. agreed that a report providing an update on the consultant's work to date be submitted to its monthly meeting in February;
- vi. endorsed the proposal to hold workshops for all Members in the new year to identify future capital priorities and linkages to the medium-term financial plan, with further details on these to be presented to the Committee thereafter;

- vii. noted that the aforementioned workshops would extend to the maintenance of Council assets, including leisure facilities; and
- viii. agreed, in response to the latest incident, that a report be submitted to its monthly meeting in January providing an update on the implementation of the measures for increasing security at the Henry Jones Playing Fields, which had been approved by the Committee on 22nd September.

Revenue Estimates 2024/25 and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the development of the revenue estimates for 2024/25 and outlining the next steps in the rate setting process.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the update on the development of the revenue estimates and the setting of the District Rate for 2024/25;
- ii. approved the next steps in the process, namely:
 - a. that a special meeting of the Committee be held on 12th January, to receive an update report on how an indicative rate could be achieved;
 - b. that Party briefings be held in early January in advance of the special meeting on 12th January;
 - c. that the Committee, at the special meeting on 12th January, agree the cash limits for Committees and the level of the District Rate to be set for 2024/25;
 - d. that special meetings of the City Growth and Regeneration, People and Communities and Planning Committees be arranged for week commencing 15th January to approve their respective cash limits;
 - e. that the district rate increase for 2024/25 be agreed at the Committee meeting on 19th January, after final consideration of the Chief Finance Officer's statements on the adequacy of the Council's reserve position and the robustness of the revenue estimates, as required by the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011; and

- iii. noted that the setting of the District Rate was a decision which must be made at a meeting of the Council and that, legally, this must occur by 15th February, 2024.

Update on Physical Programme

(The Committee agreed that this item be considered also under Restricted Items.)

The Committee:

- i. noted that the Templemore Baths project, which had been delivered under the Council's Leisure Transformation programme, had been shortlisted as a Regional Finalist in a number of categories in the Civic Trust Awards 2024, which sought to recognise outstanding architecture, planning, and design in the built environment;
- ii. noted the update on capital letters of offer for the period from 1st October to 1st December, 2023;
- iii. noted the update on the award of tenders for capital works, including services related to works, for the period from July to November, 2023; and
- iv. noted the update on the Black Mountain Shared Space and the Shankill Shared Women's Centre projects.

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

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Removal of the Maximum Capital Value Cap on Domestic Rates

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McDowell and seconded by Councillor Flynn, to this Committee for consideration:

"This Council notes that, for ordinary domestic Belfast rate payers, it is a struggle to make ends meet at present, especially with rates reaching 7.99% in 2023/2024. For the better off in society, rates are not such a struggle to pay.

There is a maximum capital value cap on Domestic Rates known as the Max Cap, which is currently set at £400,000, that limits the rates those in more affluent homes are compelled to pay. The Max Cap has not been

altered since 2009. It is prescribed in legislation: The Rates (Maximum Capital Value) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007, as amended.

A rebalancing of the rates burden needs to take place so that all rate payers pay their fair share. There is no good reason for the poorer to pay more in percentage terms when they are struggling financially.

The Council, therefore, urges the Government to remove the Max Cap and phase it in over several years. This will allow affluent rate payers a graduated response to rate rises over a period.

In light of consultation that will take place on this issue, the Council will also make this motion a collective submission to the consultation".

Amendment

Moved by Councillor R. McLaughlin,
Seconded by Councillor Garret,

That the Committee agrees to replace the penultimate paragraph with the following:

The Council, therefore, calls on the DUP to end its boycott of the Stormont Executive, to ensure that a fully restored Executive can make collective decisions on these important devolved matters.

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

The motion, as amended and set out hereunder, was thereupon put to the Committee and adopted:

"This Council notes that, for ordinary domestic Belfast rate payers, it is a struggle to make ends meet at present, especially with rates reaching 7.99% in 2023/2024. For the better off in society, rates are not such a struggle to pay.

There is a maximum capital value cap on Domestic Rates known as the Max Cap, which is currently set at £400,000, that limits the rates those in more affluent homes are compelled to pay. The Max Cap has not been altered since 2009. It is prescribed in legislation: The Rates (Maximum Capital Value) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007, as amended.

A rebalancing of the rates burden needs to take place so that all rate payers pay their fair share. There is no good reason for the poorer to pay more in percentage terms when they are struggling financially.

The Council, therefore, calls on the DUP to end its boycott of the Stormont Executive, to ensure that a fully restored Executive can make collective decisions on these important devolved matters.

In light of consultation that will take place on this issue, the Council will also make this motion a collective submission to the consultation".

Motion - Right to Grow on Council-Owned Land

The Committee was informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Flynn, to this Committee for consideration:

"This Council notes the pressures upon food security caused by many issues, including the cost-of-living crisis, the impact of the pandemic and climate change. It is, therefore, vital that the Council plays its part to ensure that our citizens have access to enough fresh food for day-to-day living.

The Council, therefore, agrees to adopt a right to grow on Council-owned land which is suitable for cultivation. This would probably involve licensing cultivation of suitable land via community groups."

The Committee adopted the motion and noted that the report to come back to the Committee would set out parameters which would need to be put in place around the use of Council assets.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

30 Under 30 Climate Change-Makers Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To inform the Committee of an approach to the Council for support for the 30U30 (30 under 30) Northern Ireland Climate Change-Maker's programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. agree to contribute £8,750 plus VAT to the overall 30U30 Northern Ireland Climate Change-Makers programme costs;**
- ii. note that, whilst the Council's support represents a modest proportion of the overall budget (circa £100,000 in total), it will be crucial in making the initiative (the themes of which complement and supplement the Council's climate programme) a reality;**

- iii. note that the Council's support will resource the launch along with six modules/events featuring world-class speakers/experts taking place from January – June 2024; and
- iv. note that the collaborative, cross sectoral initiative, featuring world-class speakers and experts, will be supported by organisations such as Pinsent Masons, Coca Cola and Danske Bank with a request for local authority involvement being addressed through this approach to the Council.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The 30 under 30 initiative is a climate focused programme where young leaders from Northern Ireland have the opportunity to take part in an international learning programme, led by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and Podiem. Following an exceptionally successful, multi-award-winning pilot programme (supported by the Council last year) a new cohort of young leaders will be competitively selected and there is a request for the Council to support the programme of activity they will undertake. Most of the 30U30 modules are being delivered in Belfast City Centre and the vast majority of the participants will either reside or work within the Council footprint. The cohort will be diverse with a broad range of backgrounds, sectors and interest/expertise areas represented. Within the pilot programme over 55% of the group were female with a mix of those in education, employment and currently economically inactive.

3.2 Within the modular programme, participants will learn from globally renowned thought leaders and exemplars across a range of relevant topics. These topics have been carefully crafted to create a cohort of leaders who will return to their fields of expertise with the tools to become planet positive change-makers in the short/long term. Speakers and facilitators from the pilot programme included globally renowned individuals such as:

- Alice Thompson, an international speaker and social business leader who co-founded Social Bite in Edinburgh and helped to establish 'The Worlds Big Sleepout' which took place in 52 cities around the world;
- Gerry Hussey, Ireland's leading health, wellbeing and performance coach, who has worked with many leading sports people and teams, and author of 'Awaken Your Power Within';

- Philip Hesketh, an international authority on influence and persuasion, who has worked with clients such as the BBC, Nestle, Walt Disney, Nike, Microsoft and Bank of America, among others; and
- René Carayol MBE, who has worked with leaders such as Mikael Gorbachev, Nelson Mandela, Sir Richard Branson, Bill Clinton, and Kofi Annan, and authored the book 'SPIKE'. He has been Chairman, CEO and MD of businesses and served on the boards of Marks and Spencer's and Pepsi. He is an authority on inclusivity and leadership.

- 3.3 The programme includes an international element which will encourage and enable the NI climate change-makers to build relationships and collaborations with climate change-makers from other parts of the world through the 30 under 30 programme currently run by the North American Association for Environmental Education.

Potential benefits for the Council

- 3.4 The programme coordinators will ensure that the Council will be positioned as championing (along with the other partners) the creation and development of the next generation of local leaders who will lead work to address climate change in Northern Ireland. This will support the cities ambition, articulated in the Belfast Resilience Strategy, to 'transition to a low-carbon economy in a generation'. It will also build on work undertaken by the Council Climate Unit with young people through the Belfast Climate Commission and Council funded research on young people's perceptions of the climate crisis undertaken during COP26 in 2021. Should the Council support the initiative, the Climate Unit will explore opportunities to align with our existing climate programme and the work being undertaken with young leaders through Belfast Climate Commission and within other projects such as Belfast One Million Trees Programme, the UPSURGE project, the Belfast Retrofit Hub and the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership. In supporting this programme, the Council will be going well beyond its own carbon footprint and direct activity, it is proactively inspiring and equipping those who have the ambition to transform industries (similar to Artemis and Responsible, both from Belfast) and create global solutions (for example Catagen, also from Belfast) to our most pressing climate and environmental challenges.

- 3.5 In terms of profile, the Council brand will be prominent on all of the initiative marketing material which will be launched to ensure mass awareness. The Council brand will also be highly visible at all of the modules (including the finale event) and a Council representative will be invited to participate in the press photos launching the event and at the finale event.
- 3.6 There is also an opportunity for a member of the Council's Climate team to present on how a city is playing its part in helping to avert a climate crisis. The cohort will feature some of NI's finest future leadership talent (including those from the local government sector), so this content will be very useful and relevant to the participants.
- 3.7 There is an opportunity for the Lord Mayor of Belfast to greet the group and hear how they are planning to create meaningful impact as a direct consequence of the programme. A short video of the Lord Mayor greeting the group as part of the pilot programme is visible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3wl5qXyd48> There is also an opportunity to host one of the modules in the City Hall and secure the press coverage associated with that. This would be the ideal event for the Lord Mayor to greet and listen to the group and the positive planet impact they plan to create.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 £8,750 plus VAT which will be allocated from existing City and Organisational Strategy budgets.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications

- 3.9 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Review of Energy Efficiency Requirements and Related Areas of Building Regulations - Council Response

The Committee approved the Council's response [here](#) to the Department of Finance's pre-consultation document on potential proposals in respect of energy efficiency measures and related areas of the Building Regulations.

Draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls/Foundational Action Plan/Reaccreditation of the Safe Employer and Safe Place Awards

The Committee approved the Women's Steering Group's response [here](#) to the Executive Office's consultation on Ending Violence against Women and Girls and noted that the ongoing work, through the Gender Action Plan, to raise awareness and provide support around domestic violence and abuse had been recognised at the Onus Annual Awards, with the Council being reaccredited with the Platinum Safe Employer award and Safe City award.

**UNESCO Learning Cities –
Belfast Festival of Learning 2024**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update the Committee on the work underway in support of Belfast's membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and the repositioning of this work in the context of community planning. on the proposed approach to Belfast's Festival of Learning 2024 and request Departmental consideration of support for the development of events for inclusion in the Programme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. reaffirm the Council's commitment to Belfast's designation as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities;**
- ii. note the proposed Belfast Festival of Learning will run from 22nd April (recognised worldwide as Earth Day) – 27th April 2024;**
- iii. note the proposed focus (Climate Action) of the Belfast Festival of Learning in April 2024;**
- iv. note the synergies with the ambitions and plans across the Council;**
- v. approve the proposed £10k match-funding to be allocated from existing budgets in support of the festival and associated work; and**

- vi. consider and agree the proposed open call for small grant funding (up to a maximum of £500 to support community groups to design and delivery events.

3.0 Key Issues

Background

- 3.1 Members may be aware that Belfast joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018, in recognition of the City's commitment to promoting and encouraging lifelong learning for people of all ages. Within The Belfast Agenda, we have a vision that our city should be a great place for everyone to live and providing lifelong learning opportunities is a core part of this. Learning has the potential to transform lives for the better- it can build better relationships and help enhance quality of life for everyone in the city.
- 3.2 Belfast was awarded a UNESCO Learning Cities Award for outstanding learning in 2021. Whilst Belfast continues to play its role as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities as well as a member of an All-Island Network of Learning Cities, it is felt there is a real opportunity to build on Belfast's Learning City status and to bring city stakeholders together to reenergise our focus and maximise the opportunities presented. It is important to recognise that it's not about creating new initiatives but rather connecting and enhancing existing programmes and initiatives as well as aligning policy ambitions across multiple partners. A Learning Cities Leadership Group currently exists and comprises representatives from QUB, UU, BMET, BHSCT, PHA, Education Authority, Libraries NI, community partners and Council.

Festival Learning Week

- 3.3 A key focus of the annual programme of work has been a 'Festival of Learning' which is a week-long programme of free interactive and engaging events. The festival showcases the range of learning opportunities that already exist in Belfast. Council officers are currently in the process of developing a citywide programme of 'learning' events to take place as part of a week-long festival of activity from 22nd April-27th April 2024. We want to work with as wide a range of partners as possible to deliver an inclusive programme of citywide events with three key aims:

- to shine a light on the value of learning in all its forms and promote Belfast as an inclusive learning city for all;

- to engage and inspire people of all ages, in a wide range of settings across the city, with a variety of learning opportunities; and
- to raise awareness of the engaging, fun and surprising ways in which we can learn.

3.4 Given the significance of the climate challenges facing the City and the need for significant behavioural change as well as leadership, it is proposed that this climate action is an overarching theme for the 2024 Festival of Learning. A core stand of the festival will be events which promote citizen awareness of, and engagement in initiatives focusing on lifelong learning in the context of the local and global climate emergency. This would align with the focus of the UNESCOs 6th Annual Conference on Learning Cities (2024) which is 'Learning Cities at the forefront of climate action'.

3.5 This proposed focus not only aligns with UNESCOs global call for member states to strengthen the collective approach to urgent issues around climate change, but it also provides alignment across a number of internal and external strategies and priority areas, for example:

- Refreshed Belfast Agenda's commitment to Our Planet;
- Belfast Agenda emphasis on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel;
- Belfast 2024's principles of People, Place and Planet;
- The draft Economic Strategy for Belfast's commitment to Enabling a Path to Net Zero;
- A Bolder Vision for Belfast;
- Healthy Cities 6 thematic areas: People, Place, Prosperity, Participation, Planet, Peace
- QUB commitment to Net Zero;
- UU Sustainable Travel ambitions and plans;
- NIHE commitment to retrofitting housing.
- Green Port and Net Zero zones established in Titanic Quarter; and

- Belfast in top 10 ranking of Global Destination Sustainability Index for tourism.

- 3.6 It is felt that there are significant opportunities to align with a seek to progress many of these linkages as part of the planning and implementation of the 2024 Festival of Learning. We are also actively exploring the potential for senior officials from UNESCO to visit Belfast during the festival week and contribute to the emerging programme as well as strengthen the All-Island Network of Learning Cities.
- 3.7 Feedback from recent engagement events undertaken as part of the refresh of the Belfast Agenda has highlighted a need for a citywide education programme which helps build awareness around the need for and benefits of effective planning to address climate challenges. The messaging needs to land with residents in terms of for example, helping to tackle poverty (reducing heating costs), creating new jobs and opportunities through green growth, helping alleviate impact of flooding and securing a city (place) for our future generations.

Grant Funding

- 3.8 As part of the Festival Week, it would be the intention to develop an open call for small grants (up to a maximum of £500) to help local groups to develop and/or showcase an event. This approach is subject to SP&R Committee consideration and approval. It should be noted that £10,000 funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the festival and officers are actively exploring other sources of possible funding to enhance the programme.
- 3.9 It is proposed that a £10,000 match funding is allocated and ring-fenced from within existing departmental budgets within council to support the Festival of Learning

Next Steps

- 3.10 In order to deliver on the festival, it is proposed that a festival planning group to be established comprising of representatives from: Healthy Cities, Libraries, QUB, UU, MET, VCSE and from BCC Cultural, EDU, Climate, City Regeneration and Marketing and Comms teams, with a view to co-designing an impactful festival programme. The emerging programme should take account of the need to:
- Engage and inspire people of all ages, in a wide range of settings across the city, with a variety of learning opportunities, looking at 'learning' in its broadest sense; and

- Promote understanding of and discussion around climate change and the need to transition to a green economy in the broadest sense / enabling action to address climate issues/ looking at climate, poverty and health inequalities with a particular focus on food, energy and transport.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.11 £10K funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the delivery of the Festival of Learning. An additional £10k match funding from Council is proposed and will be funded through available in-year budgets within City and Organisational Strategy.

Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.12 There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Department of Health Consultation on Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Services in Northern Ireland

The Committee approved the Council’s response [here](#) to the Department of Health’s consultation on the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Services in Northern Ireland.

Update on Common Purpose – NI2035 Legacy Programme Sponsorship

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the Council’s sponsorship of the Common Purpose – NI2035 Legacy Programme.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the programme update and consider the potential opportunities for the Council to support and engage with the programme.

3.0 **Main Report**

3.1 **Common Purpose – NI2035 Legacy Programme.**

Background

The Committee will recall that, at the meeting on 18th August, it approved the £10,000 sponsorship request from Common Purpose to support the delivery of the NI20235 Legacy Programme in Belfast.

The programme aims to build on previous funding provided by Council in 2021 alongside other organisations such as Allstate Northern Ireland, Belfast Charitable Society, Belfast Met, Halifax Foundation for Northern Ireland and Power NI which enabled Common Purpose to engage 40 young leaders aged 18-25 from different communities, backgrounds, beliefs and experiences to consider ‘What will the legacy of our generation be?’

The success of the previous programme has encouraged Common Purpose to extend its delivery in Belfast and the new NI2035 Legacy Programme aims to engage with a new cohort of up to 100 young leaders across the City.

Update on NI2035 Legacy Programme

3.2 The NI20235 Legacy Programme is currently being developed by Common Purpose with support from Council officers. Whilst some elements of the programme have yet to be confirmed, a brief overview is provided below:

- **Delivery Dates:** 24th and 25th January 2024 have been confirmed as the delivery dates for the programme (in person, over two full days). An introductory pre-programme session, lasting roughly 30 minutes will also be held online in advance of the programme to inform participants of the agenda and to discuss any questions or queries (date TBC).
- **Venue:**
 - 24 January 2024 – MCS Group, 10th Floor, The Ewart, 3 Bedford St, Belfast BT2 7EP;
 - 25 January 2024 - Belfast City Hall, Belfast BT1 5GS
 - The City Hall will be used to host participants on the second day of the programme (25th January). The Banqueting Hall has been booked to accommodate the participants throughout the day

whilst a tour of the council chamber has also been requested.

- **Participants:** The programme aims to recruit and engage up to 100 young people aged 18-25. Participants will stem from a range of areas, backgrounds, and cultures to provide opportunities to build relationships and understanding amongst those taking part. As a project sponsor, Council will have the opportunity to refer a minimum of 10 young people to the project (staff, community networks, and partners). Common Purpose will be responsible for managing participant registrations and updating on progress.
- **Programme Overview:** The Northern Ireland Legacy Programme will be an interactive and engaging initiative that will inspire young people to believe in the power of their ideas, the strength of their passions, and their potential to transform the place where they live and rewrite the narrative. Whilst the programme will focus on leadership activities and workshops it aims to provide a purposeful movement fueled by the energy and vision of young people to encourage them to ensure that their voices are heard to help shape a lasting change in Northern Ireland.

Participants will hear from and engage with a wide range of guest speakers and facilitators over the course of the 2-day programme. Activities and workshops will focus on highlighting key issues and challenges in today's society, visioning a future for NI and local communities, as well as identifying interventions that should be delivered to bring about positive social change. Participants will present their ideas, interventions, and visions to a panel of senior officers from Belfast City Council and partner organisations who will provide feedback and guidance to support young people to action their ideas and encourage them to develop ideas and interventions to address those issues. The full programme agenda has been circulated.

- **Council Involvement:** In addition to assisting with logistical planning and recruitment of at least 10 participants, the Council will directly engage and support the delivery of the programme in several ways.
- The Lord Mayor's availability has been confirmed for the morning of 25th January. Common Purpose has requested that the Lord Mayor welcome the

participants to City Hall, engages with participants by sharing his leadership experience and participates in a short Q&A session with the young leaders. A photo opportunity with the Lord Mayor has also been requested.

- There will also be opportunities for senior Council officers to engage in discussions / workshops and sit on panels to provide feedback to participants on presentations and programme activities (officers TBC). This will also provide an opportunity for BCC officers to inform young people of the work that Council and partner organisations are delivering through the recently refreshed Belfast Agenda to improve outcomes for young people across the city.

Next Steps

- 3.3 NI20235 Legacy Programme Marketing Materials and FAQs have been circulated with this report. Members are asked to circulate the materials through their relevant networks to raise awareness of the programme and the opportunities available for participants.

The registration link for eligible participants can be accessed [here](#) or through <https://commonpurpose.org/legacy/northern-ireland-legacy>

A further update will be provided to the Committee in due course.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.4 The £10,000 funding has been sourced from in year departmental budgets thus there are no additional finance or resource implications contained within this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.5 There are no equality implications contained in this report as the initiative seeks to offer opportunities for young people of all communities and background.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Public Health Agency Consultation on the Substance Use Strategic Commissioning and Implementation Plan – Council Response

The Committee approved the Council's response [here](#) to the Public Health Agency's consultation on the Substance Use Strategic Commissioning and Implementation Plan.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Update on Physical Programme

The Committee noted that this item had been dealt with earlier in the meeting under Restricted Items.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee noted the key issues arising at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel of 5th December and approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting.

Equality and Good Relations

Equality and Diversity: Equality Screening Outcome Report and Rural Needs Impact Assessment - Quarter 2 2023/24

The Committee was reminded 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. An equality screening template was completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality Diversity Officer. On a quarterly basis, the Equality and Diversity Officer collated all completed templates into a Screening Outcome Report, which was then published on the Council's website, along with the relevant screening templates.

Accordingly, the Committee noted the Screening Outcome Report, including rural needs impact assessments, for the quarter ending on 30th September, 2023.

Update on Race Equality Action Plan

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update the Committee on the development of the Race Equality Action Plan.

1.2 Following the decision, in April 2022, to appoint a CMT representative as Executive Sponsor for Race to champion and take forward the development of a Race Equality Action Plan in the Council, work has been ongoing across departments to identify appropriate activity. This report sets out progress to date.

2.0 **Recommendation**

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

3.0 **Main Report**

Background and context

3.1 In 2022, the Council, in partnership with Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, commissioned research into the inequalities experienced by Black, Asian, minority ethnic and Traveller people residing in Belfast at that time. The research was undertaken by Lucy Michael Research with the African and Caribbean Support Organisation of Northern Ireland (ACSONI) and Polish Language, Culture, And Affairs (POLCA).

3.2 The research identified that while minority ethnic residents have made significant and lasting contributions to the city many face challenges of racism, isolation and poverty. These have impacted on how they can participate in political, social, and economic life. There are a wide range of challenges identified for both minority ethnic and migrant individuals in gaining employment, accessing suitable housing, healthcare, education, leisure, political participation, access to justice, safety, economic inclusion, receiving language support and cultural integration.

3.3 Members will recall the decision to appoint a CMT representative as Executive Sponsor for Race, to take forward the development of a Race Equality Action Plan to help the Council lead the way in the city to help address these challenges.

3.4 CMT agreed that the Director of City and Organisational Strategy would be best placed to lead on this work and engage with relevant officers across all Council departments. A cross departmental working group and three subgroups were set up to consider three distinct strands of work:

- **Workforce:** attracting more ethnic minority applicants and supporting our existing ethnic minority staff in the workplace;
- **Accessibility to services:** promoting access to Council services to ethnic minority customers and citizens; and
- **Civic leadership:** championing ethnic minority inclusion in decision making, in communities and in public life.

3.5 A variety of staff including officers from Corporate HR, the Equality and Diversity Unit, Good Relations, Employability and Skills, departmental policy officers, community safety, the Customer Hub, Marketing and Communications etc. have worked together to ensure necessary linkages with existing relevant service delivery, activity and work plans.

Provision of Support and Assistance

3.6 Members will be aware that the Good Relations Unit has a significant level of engagement with people from Minority Ethnic Backgrounds and have regular contact with support organisations through the Council led Migrant Forum. In March 2023, the Council received Home Office Dispersal funding through TEO to support proposals to develop support and services for people seeking asylum.

3.7 Through this funding Council is supporting a number of initiatives to support those seeking asylum in the city. This includes:

- **An Asylum Support and Triage Project**, providing a bilingual helpline and casework support for people seeking asylum, delivered by the Red Cross;
- **A Family Help Project**, Supporting parents and children coping with displacement through conflict, with a focus on school readiness, child development and parenting, delivered by Barnardos;
- **A Community Integration Programme and trauma therapy intervention**, delivered by LORAG;
- **A Language, mentoring, training befriending and integration programme**, delivered by Conway Education Centre; and

- An integration and well-being outreach project, delivered by Belfast City of Sanctuary.

- 3.8 In addition to the Council's integral role in organising and hosting the Ukrainian Assistance Centre, the Council had also provided funding to the Red Cross to develop a bilingual helpline for Ukrainian Nationals to support them with accessing services.
- 3.9 Following a proposal at the SP and R Committee meeting in August 2023 to explore funding opportunities for a migrant hub or hubs, officers have commenced work to commission a scoping of the current services offered as well as an assessment of need, demand and gaps in provision. As part of this project extensive engagement will be undertaken with key stakeholders, with those who have a lived experience of coming to Belfast and navigating services, existing service providers and statutory agencies. Following the completion of this first phase and presentation back to Members, the next steps will include a site options appraisal to identify the right location for a resource that would serve communities new to Belfast, identification of the specific services and agencies to be involved and identification of potential funding sources.

Belfast Agenda Refresh

- 3.10 To ensure that the voices of everyone living in Belfast are heard, conversations have continued with a wide range of stakeholders, including the new communities in our city. The need for Belfast to be a Compassionate City - a welcoming, caring, fair and inclusive city where no one is left behind, has again emerged as an important theme to ensure the Council's inclusive growth and anti-poverty ambitions. This engagement across the city has helped shape the specific actions in the draft Belfast Agenda that is now in the final stages of preparation.

Belfast Business Promise and Race at Work Campaign

- 3.11 Aligned to our inclusive growth ambitions, the Belfast Business Promise includes a number of pledges aimed at encouraging employers to commit to and implement inclusive recruitment and workplace practices for all communities facing additional barriers to employment. Having participated in the pilot exercise, it has been identified that the Council already fully meets the Recruit Inclusively pledge criteria.
- 3.12 Signing up to Business in the Community Race at Work campaign also demonstrates the Council's best practice and commitment to attracting employees from minority ethnic

groups and supporting them in the workplace. Among other things it requires the Council to:

- **Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying;**
- **Make it clear that supporting equality in the workforce is the responsibility of all leaders and managers;**
- **Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression; and**
- **Support race inclusion allies in the workplace.**

3.13 Further appropriate actions and outreach are being considered for the action plan.

Building Capacity and Understanding

3.14 In October, Livingstone Thompson of Living Cultural Solutions, a contributor to the inequalities research project referenced at paragraph 3.1, delivered Anti-Racism training to a number of directors and other members of the working groups. In addition, the Executive Sponsor for Race and working group members have been engaging with people with lived experience, both groups and individuals, to learn more about what changes are needed. Feedback from this 'lived experience mentoring' has identified opportunities to further build capacity and understanding.

3.15 A draft Race Equality Action Plan, incorporating all three strands of work, has now been produced and shared with Dr Lucy Michael and Livingston Thompson in their role as 'critical friends' for this work, and detailed feedback on the draft plan has been received following this engagement.

3.16 A key recommendation from this engagement is that the Council should continue to build capacity in this area ahead of the final publication of the plan. This approach will ensure that senior council officers and elected members are fully equipped with the relevant knowledge and understanding to maximise the positive impact of the Race Equality Action Plan and further support senior decision makers in identifying appropriate actions to underpin the Belfast Agenda ambitions.

3.17 TEO approved the use of £20,000 Home Office Dispersal funding to support the procurement of a cultural competence training programme for the Council. This will be used to commission both awareness raising training for elected members, directors, senior managers and other relevant staff, and further consultancy support to assist the working

group to finalise the development of a Race Equality Action Plan that will make a difference to the lives of people from minority ethnic communities living and working in our city.

Resource Implications

- 3.18 There are no direct resource implications in terms of costs or human resources associated with this report at present. Further resource implications will be identified through the development of a Race Equality Action plan and costed for future approval.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.19 Work on screening of the Race Equality Action Plan is ongoing as the plan is being developed. Actions, which promote the inclusion of black and other ethnic minority communities in employment and civic life, would have a positive impact on equality and good relations within the city.”

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

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 11th December, including the recommendations:

Membership of Shared City Partnership

- to note the update and approve the approach outlined by the Good Relations Manager;

Good Relations Action Plan 2024/25

- to approve the submission of the Good Relations Action Plan to The Executive Office for delivery during 2024/25;

Update on The Executive Office Asylum Dispersal Funding

- to note the report and the risk that further funding through Home Office Dispersal Money had not been confirmed for 2024/25;

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 – Update on Local Action Plan

- to note the report; and

Other Business - Increased Levels of Hate Crime in the City

- to endorse the approach agreed following discussions between the Partnership and officers.

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 7th December.

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 5th December, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2024 EVENTS						
Voicing the Void	26th January, 2024	Reclaiming Lives, Renewing Hope Launch of mission and plans, research from focus groups and networking event to provide a platform to those offering assistance with substance misuse. Numbers attending - 70	D	No (Voluntary 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>
Social Change Initiative	5th February, 2024	Reception for delegates attending the conference on Countering Violent Conflict and Polarisation Bringing together leading players from the world of philanthropy, peace building, civil society, multi-lateral agencies to hear/learn from the NI peace process. Numbers attending - 100	A and D	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>

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
Sisters In (charity) and Podiem	7th February, 2024	<p>Celebration/ Recognition of Female Entrepreneurship</p> <p>–</p> <p>organised as part of Belfast City Council's Enterprise Pathway Programme which Podiem is delivering. The purpose of the event is to celebrate/recognise the role of female entrepreneurs and inspire the attendees to consider pursuing an entrepreneurial journey themselves.</p> <p>Numbers attending – up to 350</p>	C and D	No (charity)	Yes, Tea and coffee Reception	<p>Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception</p> <p><i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i></p>

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 in 2024 and noted that each organiser would be required to submit an event management plan and risk assessment in advance of their event:

- Little Amal (Belfast 24 Programme) – 17th to 19th May; and
- Belfast Marathon Christmas 10k – 16th November.

Minutes of the Meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 1st December.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Trademark Belfast – Future Location

The Committee agreed, at the request of Councillor Murray, that the Council forward to Linen Quarter BID a letter in support of Trademark Belfast's request to take over the short-term lease of a portion of land on Bankmore Square. Linen Quarter BID currently leased the land from the Department for Infrastructure and the proposed arrangement would allow Trademark Belfast, which was required to vacate its space on the Dublin Road by the summer of 2024, to continue to trade until a long-term location had been found.

Chairperson